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“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
Commonplace Book

An Event, *and* History: The Gissing Centenary Conference

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When Napoleon died, Prince Talleyrand is reputed to have said, “Not an event, just history.” The recent Gissing Centenary Conference in London was *both* an event, *and* history. A major Gissing conference every four years is now a certain event in the international calendar of literary studies. This is significantly due to Dr. Bouwe Postmus, who led the way with the stylish Amsterdam conference in 1999. The recent Centenary Conference in London has now firmly established the cycle. Bouwe and I now plan to invite papers for a second Amsterdam event in 2007. And amongst the new generation of young Gissing scholars who crowded the halls in London there will certainly be willing successors for 2011 and beyond.

Eighty-eight scholars came together from many countries (the UK, America, Canada, France, The Netherlands, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, and Sweden) at the prestigious Institute of English Studies at the University of London, itself located in the heartland of Gissing territory—a few yards from the old British Library reading room, and from Gissing’s homes in Colville Place, Gower Place, Huntley Street &c. Thirty-one papers were presented, including The Centenary Lecture delivered by Professor Pierre Coustillas. It is hoped that a selection of papers will be published by Palgrave Macmillan, who have an option on books which arise from conferences at the Institute. The Institute has a very successful, high-quality publishing programme jointly with Palgrave. Recent books have included *Macmillan, A Publishing Tradition*, edited by Elizabeth James (2002). I am now editing the papers.

There were many Gissings to be met with at the London conference: the classicist, the guilt-ridden innocent, the purist struggling against Grub Street, the provincial outsider, the internationalist, the country nostalgic, the pessimist who (unlike H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett) could not take

ad-vantage of the new conditions of literature, the figure once briefly captured by Marxist studies (jargonized ; sunk beneath the burdens of historical mystification ; but now happily sprung free again), and a Gissing seemingly captured in new times by the feminist critic. A more traditional Gissing—the original, creative and careful craftsman, the meticulous researcher, the literary master of his diverse material—survives this regular re-labelling and competing academic auction-bids, too. Gissing’s life, at the conference commemorating the centenary of his death, was a substantial and not merely spectral presence.

The event proved successfully inter-disciplinary. This more than fulfilled the intentions of myself and my colleagues (whose support I much valued and from which I greatly benefited). The conference itself had a definite “buzz.” Many new friendships were forged, with old friendships refurbished. The speakers included an art historian, a social geographer, and a scholar of publishing history, as well as literary scholars. One of the best received and most notable papers was given by Dr. Richard Dennis, Reader in Geography at University College, London, on “Buildings, Residences and Mansions. George Gissing’s ‘Prejudice against Flats’”. Dr. Francesco Badolato, one of the distinguished leaders of the modern “Gissing Revival” in Italy made available a complimentary copy of his *George Gissing: The Zest of Life* (Barzago, Italy: Marna Scuola, 2003) as a gift to all participants. The excellent book display by Ros and Michael of Idle Booksellers was itself a valued feature.

The Conference was officially opened and closed by Professor Warwick Gould, the distinguished Yeats scholar and Director of the Institute of English Studies, and session chairs included Dr. Michael Baron of Birkbeck College, London, whose guidance and enthusiastic support (as, too, that of his colleague Dr. Sally Ledger) made the event possible. The Saturday morning walk, led so expertly by Robin Woolven, proved a great attraction. This enabled many—including born Londoners like myself—to see old things with new eyes. All delegates also relished the special evening reception kindly sponsored by the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, University of Glamorgan.

In my opening remarks I mentioned the cultural change that has come about in my life-time, and the situation of Gissing and his works. In 1969 I had to found a publishing company in order to obtain well-edited copies of the novels ! In 1971 when we held the exhibition at the National Book League—only yesterday, to those who were there ; as ancient as the history of Napoleon to many who were with us at the Centenary Conference—

Gissing's star was rising but not yet stellar. Then there were still with us Alan Clodd, of The Enitharmon Press, whose recent death robbed us of a strong advocate of Gissing and a direct link to Gissing's friend Edward Clodd, and the poet and critic William Plomer. He, too, has gone before ; he opened the 1971 event, and Alan published his remarks. Other leading scholars very much alive—Professor Jacob Korg (and his wife Cynthia), Professor Shigeru Koike, and Professor Michael Connolly were unable to attend on this occasion. So, too, was Professor John Halperin, whose excellent paper was read by Professor Robert O'Kell. All were much missed.

We can now look forward with great optimism in the next short space to important events which will re-inforce the impact of the new work displayed in the papers at the Centenary Conference: notably, to the publication of Professor Pierre Coustillas's long-needed bibliography, to replace the entirely unsatisfactory and unreliable work by Michael Collie, and to good books by several scholars who presented papers in London—for example, Simon James, *Unsettled Accounts. Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (due from Anthem Press in October 2003).

These are good times. I am sure we look forward to renewing acquaintance in Amsterdam in 2007.

Papers read at the Conference

New Woman on Grub Street: Art in the City, Meaghan Clarke

Blatherwicks and Busybodies. Gissing and the Culture of Philanthropic Slumming, Diana Maltz

Atomism, Individualism and Social Will in the City, Regenia Gagnier

Between Dreamworlds and Real Worlds. Gissing's London, Scott McCracken

Gissing's Urban Neurasthenia, John Halperin

From the Upper World to the Nether World. Investigating the London Poor, Christine DeVine

Fantasies of Recuperation in Eve's Ransom, Constance Harsh

Eve's Ransom: Narrative Strategies and Politics of Gender, Maria Teresa Chialant

Sexing the City. Navigating Women in The Odd Women and In the Year of Jubilee, Elizabeth F. Evans

Gissing, Literary Bohemia, and the Metropolitan Circle, John Sloan

A Notable Young Lady of Camberwell. Exploration of Suburban London Selves in Gissing's In the Year of Jubilee, Karen M. Bayne

In Public: Technologies of Communication in Gissing's City, Simon J. James

"Muddy Depths." *The Thames in Gissing's Fiction*, Christine Huguet

Gissing and the Ethnographer's "I", Richard Pearson

"Citizens of London ?" *Working Women, Leisure and Urban Spaces in Gissing's 1880's Fiction*, Emma Jane Higgins

Buildings, Residences and Mansions. George Gissing's "prejudice against flats", Richard Dennis

Mapping the Citizen: Characterisation and the City in The Odd Women, In the Year of Jubilee, and Eve's Ransom, Arlene Young

The Clash of Space and Culture: Gissing and the Rise of the "New" Suburban, Lara Baker Whelan

Gissing's Saturnalia. Urban Crowds, Carnavalesque Subversion, and the Crisis of Paternal Authority, Luisa Villa

"Amid the dear old horrors." *Memory, London, and Literary Labour in The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Mary Hammond

Naturalism, Fantasy and the European City: Gissing, Zola and Galdos, Deborah Parsons

Against the Modern. Rural Idylls and Urban Realities in Gissing's Fiction, Lewis D. Moore

Rebellion in the Metropolis: Gissing's New Woman Musician, Laura Vorachek

Imaging the Female Mind. Gissing's Lexicon of Female Reflexiveness, J. D. Ballam

Gissing's Scrapbook. Elements of Drama, to be Fused and Minted in his Brain, Bouwe Postmus

"A new worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home." *Professionalism and Domesticity in the Urban Geography of The Odd Women*, Susan Colón

"Children of the Street": *The Construction of Gender in Gissing's London*, Margaret E. Mitchell

In the Valley of the Shadow of Books. Gissing's Suicidal Novels, Eitan Bar-Yosef

Women and Work. Travel and Travail in George Gissing's The Odd Women, Josephine A. McQuail

The Complex Problem of a Woman Violinist in The Whirlpool, Akemia Yoshida

A Life in Death. The Cavalcade of Gissing Criticism in the Last Hundred Years, Pierre Coustillas

George Gissing's London Residences 1877-1891

ROBIN WOOLVEN
Willersey

Detailing the many London residences used by the peripatetic and initially poverty-stricken George Gissing between his arrival in the metropolis in late 1877 and his removal to the rural tranquillity of Exeter in 1891 would require either a long table or a rather repetitive narrative so, in the spirit of compromise, the notes below briefly list his residences together with some additional comments. The comments note, where relevant, the present state of the property or its site, the work on which Gissing was engaged whilst in residence and, using the Gissing letters and his works, his comments on the property or its inhabitants. Further Gissing occasionally set scenes in his novels in these neighbourhoods that he knew well and relevant quotations are included below in italics. The notes are given in an abbreviated form to include the maximum of information; they are intended for reference only and avoid any literary criticism !

On his arrival in London, in early October 1877, Gissing spent "one night in a Coffee-house near King's Cross railway station" [that serving the North and North East of England], then found a room in a lodging-house some six minutes' walk from the station at **62 Swinton Street**, off the eastern side of Gray's Inn Road. [see Charles Booth, *Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1889*, on which "the streets are coloured according to the condition of the inhabitants" – Swinton Street is shown as "Fairly comfortable, good ordinary earnings"] The style of the terrace of which no. 62 was part can be guessed by the remaining terraces on the southern side of the road. No. 62, on the northern side of the road, was demolished some years ago and is now occupied by a large modern medical (audiology) institute. In Gissing's time there was a manufacturing chemical business to the rear of the property and several of the houses on either side of the underground railway (here emerging at surface level) were demolished as the railway tracks were widened in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Whether he was joined at Swinton Street by Nell Harrison is not recorded but, by 30 January 1878, they were both living at **22 Colville Place**, Tottenham Court Road [Booth – Fairly Comfortable], initially in an upper rear room but later moving down to a cheaper room, the basement, where he wrote by the light which came through the iron grill. Built in around 1762, the terrace of which no. 22 was a part was on the south side of the narrow (18 feet wide) alley and is now occupied by a pleasant garden

as the buildings were demolished by a German V1 flying bomb in 1944. After the war the site was used as a car park and the garden was later created for public use by Camden Council. Gissing recollected some 30 years later in the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*:

I see that alley hidden on the west side of Tottenham Court Road, where, after living in a back bedroom on the top floor, I had to exchange for the front cellar ; there was a difference, if I remember rightly, of sixpence a week, and sixpence, in those days, was a very great consideration—why, it meant a couple of meals (I once found sixpence in the street, and had an exultation which is vivid in me at this moment.) The front cellar was stone-floored ; its furniture was a table, a chair, a wash-stand, and a bed ; the window, which of course had never been cleaned since it was put in, received light through a flat grating in the alley above. Here I lived; here I wrote. Yes, “literary work” was done at that filthy deal table, on which, by the bye, lay my Homer, my Shakespeare, and the few other books I then possessed. At night, as I lay in bed, I used to hear the tramp, tramp of a posse of policemen who passed along the alley on their way to relieve guard ; their heavy feet sometimes sounded on the grating above my window.

The iron gratings remain *in situ* in front of the Colville Place houses and the reason for the frequent tramp of police boots was that the rear entrance, in Whitfield Street, to the former Tottenham Court Road Police Station was only 50 yards from Gissing’s basement, opposite the end of Colville Place, and the latter was the obvious route for police patrolling westwards. Gissing’s lodgings here, like the others he used in this area, were very convenient for his regular visits to the British Museum and, while living here, he spent some time working as a clerk at St. John’s Hospital in Leicester Square.

By 15 September 1878, George and Nell had moved a short distance north to **31 Gower Place**, off Gower Street [Booth – Fairly Comfortable], where they “could have had two splendid rooms for 15/- a week ... [but] we have one for 6/6 [...] I am as usual penniless.” The house was on the north side of Gower Place, about a third of the way along the road from Gower Street. Gower Place is now unrecognisable as a former residential area due to the recent construction of the new University College Hospital on both sides of Gower Street. Within three months of Gissing moving there, and “in consequence of some unpleasantness,” on 3 January 1879 he again moved lodgings. He later explained the nature of that “unpleasantness” at no. 31 in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*:

Some of my abodes I have utterly forgotten ; for one reason or another, I was always moving—an easy matter when all my possessions lay in one small trunk. Sometimes the people of the house were intolerable. In those days I was not fastidious, and I seldom had any but the slightest intercourse with those who dwelt under the

same roof, yet it happened now and then that I was driven away by human proximity which passed my endurance. In other cases I had to flee from pestilential conditions. How I escaped mortal illness in some of those places (miserably fed as I always was, and always over-working myself) is a great mystery. The worst that befell me was a slight attack of diphtheria—traceable, I imagine, to the existence of a dust-bin under the staircase. When I spoke of the matter to my landlady, she was at first astonished, then wrathful, and my departure was expedited with many insults.

On the whole, however, I had nothing much to complain of except my poverty. You cannot expect great comfort in London for four-and-sixpence a week—the most I ever could pay for a “furnished room with attendance” in those days of pretty stern apprenticeship. And I was easily satisfied ; I wanted only a little walled space in which I could seclude myself, free from external annoyance. Certain comforts of civilized life I ceased even to regret ; a stair-carpet I regarded as rather extravagant, and a carpet on the floor of my room was luxury undreamt of.

Gissing and Nell returned south “a short distance off where I am glad to say they can provide you with a very comfortable room,” at **70 Huntley Street**, Tottenham Court Road [Booth – Fairly Comfortable]. This well-preserved four-storey house still stands and is used as University College Hospital accommodation. In Chapter 5 of *New Grub Street*, written some ten years later, the narrator (Reardon) recalls that:

From a certain point of Tottenham Court Road there is visible a certain garret window in a certain street which runs parallel with that thoroughfare ; for the greater part of these four years the garret in question was Reardon’s home. He paid only three-and-sixpence a week for the privilege of living there ; his food cost him about a shilling a day ; on clothing and other unavoidable expenses he laid out some five pounds yearly. Then he bought books—volumes which cost anything between two-pence and two shillings ; further than that he durst not go. A strange time, I assure you.

Reardon’s view of the stuccoed 70 Huntley Street can still be obtained from Tottenham Court Road by looking east down the present Capper Street. Although the Georgian terrace, of which no. 70 is the end house, still stands, the rest of Huntley Street has been rebuilt since Gissing’s time. The massive Edwardian hospital building now standing across the alley at no. 72 was, in Gissing’s time, the *British Queen* public house, while to the south both sides of the road were rebuilt with multi-storey Edwardian flats. In April 1879, whilst living in Huntley Street, Gissing received the £300 inheritance from his great-aunt Emily Williams’s estate. He and Nell were still at no. 70 in early April 1879 but, for some unknown reason, they then moved to 35 Huntley Street, a lodging-house no longer standing, owned by a tailor, Moses Sageman.

By 30 June 1879 Gissing and Nell had moved north of the Euston Road to **38 Edward Street** (now Varndell Street), Hampstead Road [Booth – Fair-

ly Comfortable], the lower rent for which produced a saving of 3/- a week. The house was on the south side of the road, between Hampstead Road and the present Mackworth Street. Gissing's mail addressed to Huntley Street was late in arriving at Edward Street as "the *sage* youth [Sage-man] who calls himself landlord had put it in his pocket to bring it hither, but had forgotten it & was gone out of town [with it]." Nothing of the Victorian Edward Street remains as the area was badly bombed in the Second World War and has since been redeveloped as the Regent's Street (public housing) Estate by Camden Council and its predecessors. It was while George and Nell were living at 38 Edward Street that, on 27 October 1879, they married in St. James's Church, Hampstead Road, when he was described as a "Teacher of Languages" on the marriage certificate. The church was demolished some years ago, but the 18th century graveyard remains behind the hospital buildings on the Hampstead Road—unfortunately for Nell, the Temperance Hospital whose façade still stands, was erected after the Gissings' time in the area. The atmosphere in the Hampstead Road area was not ideal, probably due to its proximity to the busy and expanding Euston Station, and George recorded that "the doctors tell Nell that she ought to be living in a northern district, so that at last we have determined to make the attempt." Gissing had finished writing *Workers in the Dawn* by 12 November and, by 7 December 1879 he and Nell had moved to **5 Hanover Street** (now 60 Noel Street), Islington N [Booth – Fairly Comfortable but "with a fair proportion" of well-to-do, middle class], where the rear view of the house was, and is, the Regent's Canal as it enters its tunnel to go under central Islington. Here, Gissing reported, "we have taken two decent rooms and a garret—the latter I shall convert to a study for myself, & I think I can make a comfortable *den* out of it." As he later reflected in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*:

I have been often richly contented in the squalidest garret. One such lodging is often in my memory ; it was at Islington, not far from the City Road ; my window looked upon the Regent's Canal. As often as I think of it, I recall what was perhaps the worst fog I ever knew ; for three successive days, at least, my lamp had to be kept burning [...] Did I feel miserable ? Not a bit of it. [...] I had a book to read ; I had work which interested me ; so I went forth only to get my meals at a City Road coffee-shop, and hastened back to the fireside [...] What a poor feeble wretch I now seem to myself, when I remember thirty years ago.

Gissing remained in these Islington lodgings for a little over a year, then realised the disadvantages of living out of central London when he had to attend the houses of his students for their tutorial sessions. He claimed that he had experienced:

frightful difficulties [...] the terrible waste of time & money involved in living at so great a distance. [...] Accordingly I have taken the plunge, & we have just found two very nice rooms at a quarter of an hour's walk from [Frederic] Harrison's. The rent will be 7/- a week, whereas we at present pay 8/6 ; so here also another saving. [...] My new abode is far away the most comfortable I have ever had. [...] at night, when the blinds are down & the lamp lit, [my study] is a wonderful room. [...] The people in the house are the most respectable I have yet had to deal with, by far. How long shall I stay here I wonder?

To be closer to Harrison's home in Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, Gissing moved on Monday 28 February 1881 to the western near-suburb of Westbourne Park. The "new abode" at **55 Wornington Road** ["Middle class" in Booth's 1909 (2nd edition) maps]) was less than a mile from Westbourne Terrace. The whole of Wornington Road has recently been redeveloped and none of the original houses remain, but, as is the case with many of the houses mentioned in this article, a photograph of no. 55 as it was in the 1960s can be seen in the relevant volume of Gissing's *Collected Letters*. Gissing soon saw the disadvantages of this comfortable suburban lodging with those respectable people for, by 29 July 1881, he wrote:

I long for the neighbourhood of life and bustle and noise. Here in this wretched workman's suburb it grows intolerable. [...] After next Monday my address will be 15 Gower Place [...] back to the old locality, though not to the same house.

By 3 August 1881, Gissing had moved to **15 Gower Place**, Gower Street, [Booth – Fairly Comfortable] which is on the south side of the road, just short of his former lodgings across the road at no. 31 and just west of the present grand steps which ascend to the entrance of the Edwardian extension to University College. No. 15 suited Gissing. He had written to his brother Algernon:

I have found the most delightful lodgings I have yet been in ; three rooms, one a proper kitchen, completely shut off by a door and staircase from the rest of the house. The rooms are moderately spacious, and on the whole it is just like having a house to oneself.

Once in residence, although Nell was still living with him, he found life easier as:

I have got the moving well over. Certainly I am settled here for some years. It is precisely the same as having a house of one's own – a glass door shuts me off from the other part of the house completely. [...] The people are bookbinders ; [...] they seem very respectable and well-to-do [...] Here we have *absolute* privacy. As I sit here in my study—which does not look out upon a street, but onto one side of University College—there are just *four* closed doors of my own between me & the general staircase. Indeed, I don't think there are such lodgings to be found elsewhere in London. [...]

There is this time really no doubt as to my being settled for years, inasmuch as no change could in any way be for the better—save into a house of my own, & then it *must* be in this neighbourhood—the only one for a man of my needs. I am a quarter of an hour’s walk from the Museum—another grand circumstance. From the three great railway Stations—King’s Cross, St Pancras, Euston Square—I am about ten minutes’ walk.

On 19 January 1882, Nell was sent to an invalid home in Battersea and, after periods at Seaford (on the Sussex coast) and Kennington (south of the Thames), she moved to Soho Square. By 8 March 1882, Gissing himself had moved to **29 Dorchester Place**, Blandford Square, NW, [Booth – Mixed Fairly Comfortable and Well-to-do, Middle Class], a lodging-house, very near the old Blandford Square. The site of the lodging-house is approximately the northern end of Platform 2 at Marylebone Station (the Station and Goods Yard were constructed around 1899). Gissing told his sister Margaret:

I have so ordered matters in my new lodgings that I have complete attendance,—no boot-blackening or furniture polishing to do any longer [...] I make a dinner here of tinned meat, & my landlady cooks me four potatoes. [...] Last Monday, Alg. and I, following in the track of the somewhat ridiculous excitement prevailing here now, went to the Zoological Gardens to see the famous elephant Jumbo—of whom you have doubtless heard. There were 16,000 people in the Gardens that day, and [...] on the average, every person gave Jumbo three biscuits or buns.

Gissing wrote the never to be published *Mrs. Grundy’s Enemies* whilst living in Dorchester Place, where his room was on the second floor. Within ten weeks of moving here, he was already having trouble as “the confounded landlady gets more & more disobliging.” Consequently, by 6 September 1882 he had moved to “most admirable lodgings, [...] all for the same sum,” at **17 Oakley Crescent**, (now 33 Oakley Gardens) Chelsea SW [Booth – Mixed Fairly Comfortable and Well-to-do, Middle Class]. This splendid house, now in a very fashionable area just off the King’s Road, is the best preserved of Gissing’s former houses and it bears the “Blue Plaque,” unveiled in 1975 by Pierre Coustillas, commemorating Gissing’s residence there. Gissing’s rooms were rented from a Mrs. Coward, with whom he developed a close relationship. Nell had moved back to live with Gissing by 6 October then, on 27 December 1882, she moved out again, this time with half of the furniture, to live in Brixton, whereupon George, now solo again, moved within 17 Oakley Crescent to:

a little back room [...], & so save[d] all the fearful trouble of removal, &c. [...] Here I am in my new room: very, very small, & choke full of things, but redolent of quiet work. My rent will be 7/- weekly, including attendance ! [...] For a bed, I use my sofa (there would not be room for a proper bed,) hiding away all the clothing during

the day-time. My washing apparatus disappears in a convenient little cupboard. I am once more quiet in mind.

Living here in Chelsea, Gissing wrote in 1883 *The Unclassed*, which he set in the St. Marylebone neighbourhood he had vacated some months earlier. His description of the lifestyle of the residents and their landlords may have annoyed some. In Chapter 3, he described Ida Starr's mother carrying on her profession in Milton Street from her lodgings while presumably being unaware that he would himself soon be living in that very street:

[...] she did not associate herself with the rank and file of abandoned women ; her resorts were not the crowded centres ; her abode was not in the quarters consecrated to her business. In all parts of London there are quiet by-streets of houses given up to lodging-letting, wherein are to be found many landlords, who, good easy souls, trouble little about the private morals of their lodgers, so long as no positive disorder comes about and no public scandal is occasioned. A girl who says that she is occupied in a workroom is never presumed to be able to afford the luxury of strict virtue, and if such a one, on taking a room, says that "she supposes she may have friends come to see her ?" the landlady will understand quite well what is meant, and will either accept or refuse her for a lodger as she sees good. [...] After some three or four years of various experiences, she hit upon the abode in Milton Street, and there had dwelt ever since. She got on well with Mrs. Ledward, and had been able to make comfortable arrangements for Ida. The other lodgers in the house were generally very quiet and orderly people, and she herself was quite successful in arranging her affairs so as to create no disturbance. She had her regular clientèle ; she frequented the roads about Regent's Park and Primrose Hill ; and she supported herself and her child.

The reasons why he moved away from Chelsea are unrecorded but, writing to his sister Margaret, he later admitted that:

I was very comfortable indeed in Oakley Crescent, but the position of my room brought me so much into contact with the family that little by little my work had come to a stand-still. I could only save myself by exile.

Consequently, in mid-May 1884, Gissing exiled himself by moving back to the vicinity of Blandford Square, Marylebone, which was, before the construction of Marylebone Station, the neighbourhood at the southern end of the select St. John's Wood area. The large detached houses of St. John's Wood started just north of Gissing's new lodgings at **62 Milton Street** (now Balcombe Street), Regent's Park NW, [Booth – Fairly Comfortable]—a lodging found for him by Mrs. Coward, his landlady in Chelsea. Gissing's house still stands on the north-western corner of the junction of Balcombe Street and Ivor (formerly Upper Park) Place. He conceded to Algernon that:

It is not a choice abode, being side by side with a small chandler's shop, but the people seem very decent, & the room is large, with two good cupboards. It is on the second floor.

Gissing reported that he again relished the proximity of Regent's Park, "as much as I regret the distance of the river. Every Sunday we have a really good band there, which plays excellent music." Another advantage he now found was "in respect of my morning tub, the Baths being only five minutes off. I profit enormously by this drench every morning." His landlady proved unwilling to co-operate by frequently climbing to Gissing's second floor room and, when Gissing found that his tutoring duties required him to travel by train to Sutton in Surrey "two or three days a week", his Milton Street landlady and her husband proved unwilling to co-operate by rising earlier to provide him with breakfast, so the warnings of a further move grew. "These people of mine are horribly selfish," he told Algernon, "[so]... I get a bad cup of coffee at the station."

On 6 September 1884, he moved back to the Hampstead Road area, this time to **18 Rutland Street** (now Mackworth Street), Hampstead Road NW [Booth – Well-to-do, middle class]. This house was less than 250 yards from his former lodgings at 38 Edward Street but was, according to Booth's classification, in a better class neighbourhood. This caused Gissing to report to Algernon, before his move, that:

There seems a remarkably decent dame. The street is free from shops, & surroundings reputable. I pay 11/- weekly, including attendance. It is only three more than I pay here [62 Milton Street] & therefore very reasonable.

The house was on the northern side of the road some 50 yards from the junction with Hampstead Road, and from his new address he wrote to Algernon that:

I scarcely learn to write one address before another has to be substituted. It is a grievous state of affairs, & I grow weary of it, but it is to be feared it will always be the same. The two rooms I have got here are very tolerable ; after the usual misery I have just finished arranging the books, & there is a sort of appearance of comfort. Miserable enough, though, [...] My experience of removals is "extensive & peculiar."

Here he entirely re-wrote, at his publisher's request, *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies*, completing the work by mid-October. Barely three months after settling in his lodgings at 18 Rutland Street, he complained to his sister Ellen on 28 November 1884 that:

I have had a succession of vile colds, & the latest has only just gone. These rooms are very cold, & the bedroom so much so that my lime-juice and glycerine

has frozen ; also a bottle of Eno got all conglomerated, so that it would not effervesce when mixed with water. It is high time I found warmer quarters, but, alas, the new rooms will not be ready for me till Xmas.

Those new rooms he had found were on the fourth (top) floor of a block of flats whose rear aspect overlooked Baker Street (Metropolitan Railway) Station at **7K Cornwall Residences** (later Mansions), Allsop Place, Clarence Gate, Regent's Park, NW [Booth – Fairly Comfortable]. The apartment block still stands. Informing Algernon of his find, on 24 November 1884, Gissing wrote:

You will be amazed to hear that I have just taken a three years' lease of a good set of chambers in Marylebone Rd. The rent is £40, & I have found a decent woman who will come in daily to do work for 2/6 a week. [...] There is a sitting-room, bedroom, kitchen, pantry, & W.C.,—in fact a complete house. At last I shall be free from the thralldom of landladies, and what is more, be settled for a good long time. [...] The rooms are in a huge block called Cornwall Residences. The access of respectability will be enormous, & the comfort is really astonishing. You must come up before long just for the sake of seeing the place. There is a lease as long as one's arm, of course.

On 2 December 1884 he confirmed that:

I have to-day signed my three years' lease. [...] The whole step is delightful ; I believe I shall enter into possession some days before Xmas. [then on 19 December] I move on Monday [22 December 1884] to 7.K. Cornwall Residences, Clarence Gate, Regent's Park, NW

Gissing spent the Christmas 1884 period in his new apartment and, on 28 December 1884, he wrote to Algernon at some length that:

I date with a sense of assurance ; I am here, thoroughly established, & for the space of three years no man can oust me, save for breaking of covenants. I am warm by my own fireside. I used to have a prejudice agst. flats, but I see that it came of insufficient knowledge, like most prejudices. In a wilderness like London, it is vastly better even than a house of one's own. No rates & taxes, one door which shuts in everything, a large, well-lighted common staircase, &, lastly, a location in a neighbourhood where the rent of a house would be extravagant. The privacy is absolute. I have not yet passed two people in going in & out. You put your name on the door, &, if you like, also have it put up on a sort of index at the foot of the staircase.

Of course the class of people makes all the difference. The ordinary model lodging-houses would be much less agreeable. They are building flats now all over London ; the system will spread enormously. To be sure, prices differ. In Portland Place, for instance, they ask for a single flat—what think you?—£600 ! So you see they are even preferred by people who could take a large house. [...]

I have been trying Crosse & Blackwell's tinned soups of late. Their gravy soup, 8½d a pint tin, makes an admirable & a cheap dinner. I shall use them much, now that I can cook at home. They are so easily put in a pot & boiled.

So now he was in a respectable area and living in a flat in which he could entertain, accommodate visiting siblings and, where necessary, the occasional tutee. He continued to use 7K as his base for some six years—although he spent much time travelling and writing, both on the Continent and across England. It was whilst based at 7K that Gissing not only finished *Isabel Clarendon* but was also busy writing *A Life's Morning*, *Demos*, *Thyrza*, *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street*. The opening of Chapter IV of *New Grub Street*, entitled “An Author and His Wife,” can surely be seen as Gissing reflecting his own situation whilst living on the top floor at 7K as his fictional author Edwin Reardon enjoys:

Eight flights of stairs, consisting alternately of eight and nine steps. Amy had made the calculation, and wondered what was the cause of this arrangement. The ascent was trying, but then no one could contest the respectability of the abode. In the flat immediately beneath resided a successful musician, whose carriage and pair came at a regular hour each afternoon to take him and his wife for a most respectable drive. In this special building no one else seemed at present to keep a carriage, but all the tenants were genteel folk.

And as to living up at the very top, why, there were distinct advantages—as so many people of moderate income are nowadays hastening to discover. The noise from the street was diminished at this height ; no possible trampers could establish themselves above your head ; the air was bound to be purer than that of inferior strata ; finally, one had the flat roof whereon to sit or expatiate in sunny weather. True that a gentle rain of soot was wont to interfere with one's comfort out there in the open, but such minutiae are easily forgotten in the fervour of domestic description. It was undeniable that on a fine day one enjoyed extensive views. The green ridge from Hampstead to Highgate, with Primrose Hill and the foliage of Regent's Park in the foreground ; the suburban spaces of St John's Wood, Maida Vale, Kilburn ; Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, lying low by the side of the hidden river, and a glassy gleam on far-off hills which meant the Crystal Palace ; then the clouded majesty of eastern London, crowned by St Paul's dome. These things one's friends were expected to admire. Sunset often afforded rich effects, but they were for solitary musing.

A sitting-room, a bedroom, a kitchen. But the kitchen was called dining-room, or even parlour at need ; for the cooking-range lent itself to concealment behind an ornamental screen, the walls displayed pictures and bookcases, and a tiny scullery which lay apart sufficed for the coarser domestic operations. This was Amy's territory during the hours when her husband was working, or endeavouring to work. Of necessity, Edwin Reardon used the front room as his study. His writing-table stood against the window ; each wall had its shelves of serried literature ; vases, busts, engravings (all of the inexpensive kind) served for ornaments.

When “plasterers” were due to work in the flat, Gissing spent a fortnight in Eastbourne hoping to write in peace but, on 29 February 1888, the 30-year old Nell died of “chronic laryngitis” at 16 Lucretia Street, Lambeth. Gissing returned to London on receiving the news. On the publication of

the 2nd edition of Charles Booth's *The Life and Labour of the People of London* in late 1889 (the basis of his *Descriptive Map of London Poverty* quoted above for Gissing's residences), Gissing was amused to read that Booth, attempting to gain an insight into the life of the poor, had noted that "something may be gleaned from a few books, such, for instance, as 'Demos.'"

With his lease on 7K about to expire at the end of 1890, he told Eduard Bertz that not only had he begun his new novel, to be called *New Grub Street*, but he had met "a work-girl who will perhaps come to live with me when I leave this place at Christmas." He finished the novel, the lease expired and, in January 1891, Gissing moved to 24 Prospect Park, Exeter. He returned to London to marry Edith Underwood at the St Pancras Register Office on 25 February 1891, when she was aged 23 and some ten years his junior. Like the church where he married Nell some 11 years earlier, that office no longer stands, and his move to Exeter with his new wife makes a convenient event with which to end this listing of Gissing's earlier London residences.

From "Phoebe's Fortune" to "Phoebe"
by courtesy of George Bentley, *Temple Bar's* Hatchet Man

BARBARA RAWLINSON
Nottingham

Having endured three barren years since the publication of his novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, George Gissing was delighted to write to his brother Algernon, on 30 October 1883, that a piece of his work had been published in *Temple Bar's* November issue, and then added that he would try to get the magazine "to take a short tale."¹ In a letter to his sister Margaret three days later, he mentioned that he was writing a short New Year's tale, and by 24 November the story was in Bentley's hands. On 31 December he wrote to his sister Ellen that he expected "Phoebe's Fortune" would appear in the February issue of *Temple Bar*, and suggested that she should read it, as "it deals with a phase of life quite new to you."²

Gissing received the proofs of "Phoebe's Fortune," on 9 January 1884, and clearly at this stage no excisions had been made, since the author's only comment to his brother on 11 January was that his signature had been omitted from the end; this clearly annoyed him, so he had added it to the proofs.³ In the event the story, entitled "Phoebe," was not published until March 1884. Gissing sent a copy of the magazine to Algernon, and although he complained that he had been deceived over his fee—eight guineas instead of the fifteen he had anticipated—he made no mention

that Bentley had tampered with the text.⁴ Curiously, he later wrote of the story: “In many ways I think it the best piece of writing I have done yet.”⁵ In view of this, one can only assume that he never read the final version of the story. Either that or, he was so desperately in need of the money that he decided to accept the matter as a *fait accompli*.⁶ It should also be remembered that Gissing was still awaiting Bentley’s decision on “Mrs. Grundy’s Enemies,” with a problem looming large regarding Chapman & Hall’s imminent publication of *The Unclassed*, so perhaps he was reluctant to aggravate the situation.⁷

Pierre Coustillas’ article “Aspects of the Late Victorian Publishing Scene: George Gissing and his Publishers,” briefly noted that the published “Phoebe” was a severely edited version of Gissing’s original work.⁸ A recent study of the manuscript at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, has revealed the extent to which Bentley bowdlerised the story. Coming near the end of the piece, the excisions and substitutions relate almost exclusively to the calculated way in which Jenny Evans robbed Phoebe of her fortune by introducing her to the demon drink.

In view of Bentley’s nervousness regarding the publication of “Mrs. Grundy’s Enemies,” it is not surprising that he balked at the idea of publishing, unabridged, a story that featured two young women engaged in a drinking bout, but unfortunately the excisions merely rendered the piece colourless. The censor altered the whole tenor of the tale by erroneously casting Phoebe as a gullible fool rather than an innocent abroad, as Gissing intended her to be.

Algernon sold the manuscript to Frank Redway, a Wimbledon book dealer, on 17 March 1915. Consequently, when the collection *Stories and Sketches* was published in 1938, “Phoebe” was reprinted in its bowdlerised form.⁹

¹*The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Two 1881-1885*, ed. P. F. Mattheisen, A. C. Young and P. Coustillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1991), p. 173.

²*Ibid.*, p. 187.

³*Ibid.*, p. 191. Editorial note 1 confirms that the story was printed with Gissing’s signature.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 199-200. Letter to Algernon dated 27 February 1884.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 200. Letter to Algernon dated 4 March 1884.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 195. In a letter to Algernon dated 30 January 1884, regarding the expected publication of “Phoebe” in the February issue of *Temple Bar*, Gissing wrote: “The story is not in *Temple Bar*. If Bentley had busied himself in devising disappointments for me he could not well do more than he is doing. The present one is rather serious, as I needed the cash. [...] as likely as not, it will follow the fate of ‘Mrs. Grundy.’”

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 198. Letter to Algernon dated 20 February 1884: “What will Bentley say, I wonder? And how about ‘Mrs. Grundy’ now? If she comes out close on the heels of ‘The Unclassed’ there will have to be a complication of explanations.”

⁸*The Journal of the Eighteen-Nineties Society*, No. 23 (1996), p. 9.

⁹London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1938, pp. 15-44.

“Phoebe’s Fortune”

Poor Phoebe ! Whether of retrospect or forward-looking, small solace could come to her on this New-Year’s-Eve ; nor was the present in any wise so cheerful as to withhold her thoughts from wandering and wondering, from grieving over what was past, or facing with something like the helpless dread of a timid hunted creature the abyss into which the relentless hours were compelling her. There was a handful of glow in the grate, but no more coal ; in the cupboard there was one piece of bread for tomorrow’s breakfast, but nowhere, as far as she could see, the price of a new loaf when that was done. Bad enough this, even when one is a grown man, whose noisy appetite is in itself a proof of energies eager for their task ; bad indeed when one is a girl of not quite sixteen, weak from a long course of insufficient food, sadly shy under the best of circumstances, afraid of the world, afraid of oneself, with not a soul to turn to for comfort or aid. No wonder she sat so long, staring with her pretty eyes into the patch of red coal, which was as little able to overcome the damp and cold of the leaky garret as she herself to struggle with the dark, dread, unknown powers (“social forces,” we name them, with complacency), which beset her on all sides. She didn’t cry ; even Phoebe would have felt the humorous inefficacy of such a resource ; weeks ago, when her troubles first began, she had cried her fill. But her eyes grew very, very wide, and her forehead wrinkled itself out of all knowledge. And every now and then, when her thoughts had strayed into such labyrinths that she forgot for a few moments her bodily distresses, a shivering fit brought her back to herself. The window rattled loose in its frame ; through the chink beneath the door, and up through the knot-holes in the boarding, swept stinging currents of wind. Her feet were already numb, and she had to hold her hands in her bosom to warm them.

Other life, even liveliness, there was in the room ; but its presence suggested new sadness to her desponding mood. On the mantel-piece before her, placed there for the sake of possible warmth, was a little wooden cage, containing a very brown canary. This was her sister’s bird. That sister had been a mother to Phoebe, the only mother Phoebe remembered ; father too, for the matter of that, since the real father’s relation to his children had for years been merely that of an irregular pensioner, irregular in the times and the mode of his applications, but only too regular in the use he made of their bounty. The day came, indeed, when his importunities were no longer to be suffered ; then the two had escaped him by flight, and made a new

home for themselves, where at least they could enjoy the advantage of what they earned, and hope to live unmolested. But in the first summer of their freedom a sickness fell upon that brave, toiling sister, and the days of her guardianship were numbered. She died, and was kindly buried by the parish. Phoebe knew the place of her grave, but it was also the grave of so many other paupers as could be squeezed into the trench, and there was more pain than solace in going there to weep. The little brown canary remained, however ; bought in a gay moment of the past spring, kept still and zealously tended by the poor child, who was all but its equal in innocence and fearfulness. "Chirrup," they had agreed to call it, and Chirrup still had his sufficing measure of seed, even when his mistress's daily bread was anything but sufficient in quality or quantity. And to-night, as if in very defiance of care and cold, the little fellow hopped ceaselessly from one to the other of his two perches, sharpened his beak as if to get an appetite, and, despite the hour, frequently justified his name with right good will.

Phoebe's sister had been a flower-maker, and Phoebe herself, having gone through her period of apprenticeship to the same handicraft, had now attained the position of "improver." When things went well, she could earn perhaps eight shillings a week ; in time she might hope to become a "hand," and then, if lucky, might receive as much as fifteen. Nay, as years went on, it was within the grasp of possibility that she should even become a fore-woman, in which case she was sure of some five and twenty shillings a week, and, unless her health broke down, might very well keep out of the workhouse to a tolerably advanced age. She might marry, of course, and, as a very gentle and sweet-faced girl, had perhaps a fair chance of doing so ; but that was something quite beyond the sphere of her hopes as yet. At present all she thought of was the opportunity of earning her weekly eight shillings by honest work, and living on it,—well, as the others did ; she knew no other signification of the word "living." Unfortunately, the proverb about the will and the way did not seem to apply to her case. It was no fault of her own that she had lost her work some weeks ago. The season had been a bad one ; the powers and principalities who rule in such matters had decreed that it should be fashionable to wear feathers, and for flowers there was proportionately little demand. Hence trouble in the work-rooms here in Hoxton, where most of the flower-makers live. The employer for whom she worked was a good-hearted man ; he held out as long as he could, and, when the girls came with pinched and eager faces begging him to find them something to do, he had even produced work for which there was really no demand, and, in mercantile phrase, had gone to the City and

“slaughtered” it, just for the girls’ sake. But at length he had to shake his head at every appeal, and, with an irony which he no doubt felt but did not mean, bid them take courage till the new season began, when perhaps things would be better.

Well, Phoebe was still alive. It would be hard to give an account, though, of how she had kept body and soul together in the meantime. When in work, she had paid three shillings a week for her room ; subsequently she had managed to find this one, for which she only had to pay half-a-crown. And a nice room it was. It was a garret at the far end of a court ; which court you reached by passing under a foul archway out of a filthy by-street. Needless to say that the floor had no covering, or that the wall was bare plaster, or that the rickety window lacked blind and curtain,—would, rather, have lacked the latter, had not Phoebe pinned across the lower half a poor little shawl which might better have been on her own shoulders. There was a bed,—mercy, how cold when you crept into it, and how thin the covering when you woke shivering in the night !—there was a chair, a table, a basin on the floor in a corner, also actually a cupboard, made in a recess, wherein should have hung Phoebe’s second dress, but that was represented at present by a little yellow card in her pocket. Well, it was a “home,” after all, and hitherto the rent for it had been paid regularly. A little needlework, a little cleaning of doorsteps, some running of errands, minding of children now and then, helping people in the court to wash and prepare their vegetables for sale in the streets,—Heaven knows how the sum was made up every week ; yet hitherto it had been. But to-night Mrs. Dabbs had waited in vain for Phoebe’s wonted appearance down in the kitchen, and at length had come up to the garret herself, in quest of her dues. Alas, they were not forthcoming. Mrs. Dabbs was not a hard woman ; what woman *could* have met that pale, patient, childish face, and insisted harshly till it was dew’d with tears ? It was the first instance of remissness, so Mrs. Dabbs said she wouldn’t press, and then sat down and talked in quite a friendly way, principally of Mr. Quy.

You couldn’t have spent many minutes in this room without wanting to know who Mr. Quy was. Whether the gentleman so called was impressed with the strangeness of his name to such a degree that it haunted him and compelled him to write it in very legible character whenever writing materials and a plain surface were at hand, or whether his pride in its abnormality brought about the same consequences, cannot now be determined ; the fact remains that this brief and singular appellation stared at you from every part of the plaster round the room, and was even written in places on the

floor ; nay, verily upon the ceiling, where a complete circle of “Quy’s” in charcoal marked the spot whence an ambitious lodger might perchance have desired to see a chandelier depend. Who Mr. Quy was, Phoebe knew already well enough ; on her first arrival, Mrs. Dabbs had lost no time in relating to her all that was known of his history. He had been the tenant of the garret immediately before Phoebe, his tenancy having stretched over a space of well-nigh three years. He was an old gentleman, Mrs. Dabbs said, who had known once what it was to ride in his carriage, and, presumably through loss of this luxury at the time of life when he most needed it, had grown “queer-like in ’is ’ead.” He was always very poor, shockingly poor, yet, as Mrs. Dabbs recorded with appreciative emphasis, had always managed to pay his rent, even if he went without food to do it. He went out every day, and stayed out all day long, “gettin’ his livin’ promiscuous” ; clearer details than this on the subject of Mr. Quy’s pursuits were not to be obtained, at all events not from Mrs. Dabbs, and probably she told all she knew. His end was tragical. His non-appearance one night had caused a good deal of excitement in the court, where the passing of his rusty and decrepit figure at certain invariable hours had become a feature of the daily order of things. Inquiries were very shortly made in all likely quarters, and it was discovered that Mr. Quy, only an hour after he left home that morning, had been run over by a van and killed on the spot. In his pocket was found the sum of three-farthings, and, as he possessed neither means nor connections, he too was kindly buried by the parish. His grave was unmarked ; but the piety of Mrs. Dabbs, who would not suffer the signatures on the plaster to be obliterated,—indeed she had an objection to cleaning of any kind,—left his name for the musing of posterity. Perchance it pointed no particular moral, but it at all events, on the lips of Mrs. Dabbs, adorned many a tale.

The deepest fit of brooding will at length yield to the instinct of activity, and Phoebe, when her eyes had half-unconsciously watched the utter extinction of the last glow in the grate, rose with a little sigh and looked round the room. A pair of stockings which urgently demanded the attention of the needle lay upon the bed, but her hands were too cold for sewing. She was lonely and miserable ; it occurred to her that she might go out for half-an-hour before bedtime, but, as lonely and miserable people will, she shrank from the change which might have proved a relief. Besides, it was none of her habits to run about the streets at night ; her sister had taught her a distaste for that ; and another objection was that she would have to pass the pork-butcher’s just by the entrance of the court, whence, at this hour,

steamed forth odours of hot pease-pudding, “faggots,” saveloys, and other dainties; the trial would have been too bitter. She looked round the bare room, and, inevitably, she thought of Mr. Quy. Poor old Mr. Quy ! No doubt *he* had sat in this room through many a hungry hour, thinking of the pork-butcher’s round the corner ; but then he had the resource of writing his name on the wall. After all, though, she was better off than Mr. Quy ; was there not a friend in Chirrup, who seemed to wish to comfort her, and remind her that she was not quite alone ? She turned and put her little finger through the bars of the cage, to be pecked at. And, by the bye, Chirrup’s cage evidently wanted cleaning out ; Phoebe’s troubles had made her remiss in that duty for two or three days. That would be something to occupy her for a little. So she opened the door, and Chirrup, after pausing for a moment with inquisitive eye on the threshold of his dwelling, fluttered out in the wonted manner, and perched on the brass knob at the foot of the bedstead. Scared thence by the girl’s movements, he flew boldly on to the top of the cupboard, and there remained.

The little house being swept and garnished, Phoebe summoned back its occupant. But Chirrup was not disposed to come. Foolish bird, had he positively gone to sleep up there ? To fetch him down, Phoebe made a little spring at the top of the cupboard, which was much taller than herself. Alas, instead of flying down, Chirrup, with unprecedented perversity, actually scuffled back into the recess, and was lost to sight. Striking against the wood was of no avail ; calling proved equally useless ; there was nothing for it but to climb on a chair and explore, for the first time, the flat top of the cupboard. Phoebe took up her lamp in one hand, and speedily discovered the fugitive, in the remotest corner, amusing himself, apparently, with a game of hide-and-peek.

“Dirty, dirty Chirrup! Why, you’ll be all over black dust ! Come here, naughty bird.—Why, what ever—”

Phoebe’s voice failed her. What were those things that glistened so in the lamp-light, in spite of the layer of dust upon them ?

Money !

Yes, money ; not a doubt of it, and laid here in a most extraordinary way. Half-crowns, shillings, sixpences,—nothing less than sixpence,—arranged in conical heaps, and in such order as to spell out a word, and that word, sure enough, no other than “*QUY*” ! What ! Poor old Mr. Quy after all a miser, hoarding up silver coins like this, here on the top of the cupboard ? And to think they had lain here ever since his death, and that no one had

ever had occasion to look before this onto the top of the cupboard !—How good of Mrs. Dabbs to have such an objection to house-cleaning !

Phoebe came down from the chair, and stood, the lamp still in her hand, looking straight before her, seeing nothing. How long she might have stood there it would be hard to say, had not Master Chirrup all at once grown tired of his game,—which really was too one-sided,—and come flying down onto the mantel-piece, whence he hopped to his cage, and went at once to crack a seed or two out of the fresh supply. In an instant Phoebe was up on the chair again, and this time she did more than gaze. Partly it was awe of the sum of money, but quite as much a very natural feeling that she was somehow interfering with the repose of the dead, which prevented her at first from rudely disturbing the inscription, and would only allow her to remove a sixpence from the top of one of the little heaps. She looked at it; she bit it ; she then descended and rang it on the mantel-piece. A real sixpence, indubitably. Her first thought had been to run down at once to Mrs. Dabbs, and apprise her of the discovery ; the ring of the sixpence dispersed this idea, and awoke in her breast the keen sense of possession. Why tell Mrs. Dabbs ? Mrs. Dabbs was in no way related to the dead old man ; nor was any one else, as far as was known. In quality of landlady, Mrs. Dabbs could certainly support no claim to the treasure trove ; at least so it appeared to Phoebe. In fact, was it not clearly a case for the application of the motto “Findin’s is Keepin’s,”—as poor Phoebe would have delivered it ?

Nay, no longer *poor* Phoebe. A third mounting of the chair, and, behold, the initial letter of Mr. Quay’s name had half disappeared ; in a very few moments not a trace of the embossed inscription remained, but there on the table lay a crowd of coins, impossible to guess at the sum they represented. After gazing at them for an instant, Phoebe, seized with a sudden fright, ran to the door, opened it, and listened. Not a sound in the house. Then she made herself secure with a sharp turn of the key, and returned to gaze.

“Sixpence and sixpence is a shillin’, and ’alf a crownd makes three an’ six, and a shillin’s four an’ six, and another ’alf crownd—”

Impossible to reckon like this ; she was confused already.

“Chirrup, Chirrup !” she cried, abandoning the task and dancing round the table. “We’re rich, birdie ; we’re rich, we’re rich !”

Then, as if with a sudden flash, there came upon her the thought of her sister, who lay this New-Year’s-Eve in the snow-palled cemetery, in an unmarked grave, and an anguish of regret put the climax to her agitation ; she

burst into weeping. She was a good-hearted girl. Oh, could but the dear dead sister come back to share this fortune ; had it but been sent some months ago ; when the poor dying girl needed comforts,—and had to need them ! Good things always come too late in this world.

But really the coins must be counted, and Phoebe at length set to work in earnest. She made separate cylinders of sixpences, shillings and half-crowns ; that seemed, as Dogberry put it, “the efastest way.” There, at last. Forty-six half-crowns ; fifty-three shillings ; twenty-seven sixpences. Yes, but what did that come to ? Here indeed was a mathematical problem which for a long time held Phoebe at arm’s length ; refused to be solved. Never in her life had she reckoned silver up to a single pound ; surely there were here many pounds. She grew hot with vexed impatience ; she *must* know how much it all made ! Arrange them in heaps of ten shillings each ; then, would not every two such make one pound ? With trembling fingers she put her calculation into practice. One, two, three,—*nine* whole pounds, and one shilling, and one loose little sixpence. Phoebe kissed the sixpence.

This time she could not dance round the table ; impossible even to trust Chirrup with such a secret as this. Why, she had forgotten to close Chirrup’s door ; what was she thinking of ? She rose to do it, but, before she reached the mantel-piece, quite forgot her purpose, and stood once more gazing at nothing.

Slowly, slowly, the fact acquired reality in her mind that she was in possession of nine pounds, one shilling and sixpence. Don’t think that she speculated as to how Mr. Quy became possessed of such a sum ; that was a consideration far too remote to enter the scope of her thoughts ; Phoebe’s little brain had enough ado to grasp the certainty of her having inherited such a fortune. Yes, a fortune ; who that she ever knew had been able to boast of such wealth as this ? Her father, she had been told, in the by-gone days before he took to drink, earned sometimes two pounds a week ; that in itself made a man of substance. But nine pounds, and all at once, and ready converted into small change ! Phoebe’s head smote the stars.

Her brooding recommenced, but this time there were no wrinkles on her forehead ; no need to hold her hands in her bosom, she was as warm as if there had been a big fire in the grate. What should she do with it ?—that was the subject of her thoughts. Probably there were some weeks yet to be provided for before she would have work again ; but what was that out of nine pounds ! It left a margin of limitless possibilities ; it brought within her grasp the undreamt possibility of forming and gratifying desires. The girls and women of Phoebe’s class know nothing of social discontent ;

starve them, and they scarcely think it hard, so much is it in the order of events ; give them just enough to keep together body and soul, and it will not occur to them to be other than quite satisfied. Doubtless they peer at time into that far stretch of golden haze which shrouds the Elysium of the wealthy ; they like to read of that country, and dimly to conceive its glories by much toil of the imagination. But they know too well that for them there is no road thither to ever be unsettled by the contrast between such dreams and the reality of their own waking life. And Phoebe imagined even less of luxuries than other girls of her kind. Very seldom had she been out of Hoxton ; even the streets of the West End were strange to her. Her daily work had kept her in dingy little rooms in out-of-the-way streets ; the flowers she helped to make she had scarcely seen in their “mounted” condition ; far less did she know their appearance on the heads and dresses of those who had money to purchase such adornments. You cannot conceive how hard it was for her to even form precise ideas of what she would like. To her excited fancy the whole world lay at her feet ; and the coolest of us would find it embarrassing to have to pick and choose under such circumstances.

Clothing, of course ; warm winter clothing. Not of bright colours ; no, for she had never been able even to put on the semblance of mourning for her sister, and that duty should regulate her choice of hues. She would be newly attired from head to foot ; that at last was clear to her. Little by little she recalled a certain shape of hat she had observed in certain windows ; a particular jacket, also, had unawares stuck in her memory. Then,—a dinner, O a really good dinner ; something vaguely savoury to begin with, and something rather more definitely sweet afterwards. A day of shopping and of gazing at shops ; a day of feasting ! What a pity that poor Chirrup’s appreciation in the matter of food was so limited ; it was hard that he couldn’t eat even a mince-pie. Was there no one for whom she could buy a New Year’s present? Yes, there was Lotty Simpson, whose cough was always so bad ; the only girl with whom she had had anything like a friendship, and who, unfortunately, had gone into service when the bad times began, so that their intercourse had come to an end. She would buy something, and take it to Lotty’s mother, who would send it on. Surely here was employment for a day ? One other thought, however, shaped itself slowly and timorously: the theatre. At the “Britannia” hard-by there was a Pantomime ; the walls around were glorious with advertisements of its unimaginable magnificence. Dare she go to the theatre ? Would her sister have liked it ? Impossible to decide ; she must wait and see when the next night came.

What ever could the time be ? The streets were so still. There, the church-clock was chiming ; now it would strike. One ! Frightened at the lateness of the hour, Phoebe undressed herself in a few seconds, and sprang into bed.

The surging sheen of dream-waves subsided in the moments of waking, but, unlike the manner of dreams, left behind a real, bright windrow. On starting to consciousness, Phoebe's eyes sought the silver-heap on the table, and she bathed her hands in the coins before putting them into the icy water. Only the fear of being heard prevented her from making the money ring a peal to the New Year. Whilst dressing, she was glad to see that it promised to be a clear frosty morning ; rain or snow would have been vexatious, when one wanted to walk about so much. She must have slept long ; the world was alive, and seemed to call to her to come and enjoy herself. She was too excited to have any great appetite for breakfast ; the bit of bread in the cupboard would do well enough for the present, and she ate it as she did up her hair, drinking with it a little water out of a tea-cup. It would be good to be hungry at dinner-time. In a very few minutes she was ready to go out, but then came the question of where she should leave the money. She would have liked to carry it all with her, but that was impos-sible, it would have weighed her down. For a moment she thought of replacing it on the top of the cupboard ; it had lain safe there so long. But she could not venture it. There was only one place ; her box, on which was placed the wash-hand basin, had a lock, and contained all the things she valued, chiefly poor memorials of her sister ; she might safely leave the money there. How much should she take with her ? This point was ultimately decided by the capacity of her shabby little purse ; it admitted rather more than a pound, in large and small coins, and truly had never looked so plethoric. This was enough to begin with ; if she succeeded in laying out such a sum by dinner-time, she could return in the afternoon for more. In the afternoon, too, she might pay her rent ; Mrs. Dabbs would doubtless wonder at that, and still more at the glorious appearance which Phoebe promised herself she would shortly present ; but she might wonder on. Perhaps, on the whole, it might be prudent to move to another lodging ; she would think about it.

So she carefully locked her box, and walked out of the court, and away into the High-Street of Hoxton. Then she began to look into shop-windows. But growing familiarity with her wealthy estate was making her bold. Within walking distance was the City, whither all the flowers went from the work-rooms, that crowded, roaring place, where the shops were far

grander than here in Hoxton, and whither no doubt everybody repaired who had money to spend and wanted the best. To this privileged class she now belonged. Phoebe forgot for the time her poor appearance ; she could only think of the fat purse which, for safety, she held tight in her hand, and the feel of which made her warm through and through. So, with many delays, she got on into Shoreditch, and thence, by haphazard, as far as Cheapside. Here she found so much to look at that there was no getting on at all. A jeweller's shop held her as by a charm. If she only knew the price of this and that ! There was a locket she would dearly like to have ; she would put in it some of her sister's hair, of which she had a tress in the box at home. How much, she wondered, did those ladies' watches cost? They were so very tiny, the price could not be much. Ha, there was the price written above one of them ; and it took away her breath. But this was gold ; there were silver things. Now one of those bracelets ; how would Lotty Simpson like one of those for her present ?

A LIFE's MORNING

Centenary Edition

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But this would never do. It was half past eleven, and, besides, she was positively getting hungry. Then, after all, jewellery was not what she wanted. Over the way she caught sight of a window full of gloves and shining, many-coloured silk things ; that was more to her purpose. Those gloves were beautiful, the lined ones, and only three and sixpence a pair. This was well within her means, but when it came to entering the shop,

then the sense of her shabbiness possessed her. She peeped at the door, but just then a lady came out, and Phoebe walked quickly on, abashed. And so it was everywhere. A large confectioner's reminded her once more of her appetite. Heavens, what an array of delicious things ; the imagination fainted at the sight. She was hungry, keenly hungry, but it was beyond all possibility to think of walking up to such a counter as that, and addressing that superb young lady who stood behind it. Passing on, she was sorely tempted to buy of a man who was selling buns and tarts in a basket ; but she felt that it would be a degradation. Presently she was in St. Paul's Churchyard, and the sight of mantles and furs and bonnets and ribbons once more absorbed her attention. But again the prices marked here and there frightened her, and she knew she would not have dared to enter, in any case. Phoebe began to feel that she had made a mistake ; her mind recurred to those humbler shops in Hoxton, where she would feel much less timid. The hat and the jacket which she had thought of on the previous night came back to her. Had she not better make her way to the streets which were familiar ?

So long had she gazed and wondered and wished that the morning was all but spent. At length she tore herself away, and began to retrace her steps. But she was tired, and so terribly hungry. In a little she again passed the man with the basket, and this time she could not withhold herself ; she bought a bun of him, and ate it as she walked quickly along. It only made her hungrier. A certain vision had been gathering intensity before her mind's eye, a vision of that little shop in the street "at home," where the big cold plum-pudding stood in the window, or had done so yesterday, and where you could get meat and vegetables for sevenpence. She fancied she could smell the very steam that at this hour made the windows dim and curled out of the doorway. Back, back to Hoxton ! And why should she walk all the way, as if she were poor ? Here by the Bank was a 'bus which would take her almost home. She entered it, and was glad to rest her weary limbs.

So Phoebe went and had her dinner at the dirty little eating-house ; a very thin red slice of roast beef, swimming in reddish water, two frost-bitten potatoes, a patch of stringy turnip-tops, and, to finish, a suety cut of cold plum-pudding. It did not satisfy her, and, comparing it with the feast she had anticipated, she felt humiliated, half angry with herself. Never mind, she would have a good tea ; some mince-pies and currant-cake, she knew where. But all at once she had become anxious on the score of her money at home, she must run and see if it was safe in the box. Reaching her

room, she was glad to find everything as she had left it, and, being still very tired, she sat down on her bed, to rest and think.

What a pity that Lotty Simpson was not at home still ; Phoebe could have trusted Lotty with the great secret, and her friend's advice would have been so valuable. What should she buy Lotty ? Suppose she went and asked Mrs. Simpson's advice as to that ? It would not be necessary to explain anything ; indeed Phoebe did not feel that Mrs. Simpson was exactly the person to confide in ; but at all events, the latter could suggest what her daughter was in need of. Phoebe decided to do this, and, this time keeping her purse in her pocket, she started for Mrs. Simpson's abode. It was in a court very much like her own, but, instead of a garret, Mrs. Simpson occupied a cellar-kitchen ; a card in her window told you that washing and mangling were done there. The front door stood open, as usual in these parts, and Phoebe went straight down the cellar steps. Standing in the dark at the bottom, she knocked, and was summoned to enter. At first it was impossible to see anything except a large fire in the grate ; the cellar was full of steam. This came from a quantity of freshly-washed clothes which hung on lines from wall to wall, drying. But Phoebe knew the room. There was a bed at one side, and a few other articles of furniture necessary for use in the daytime ; also a mangle. Here lived Mrs. Simpson and her youngest girl ; Lotty had shared their accommodation, before she went into service.

"Who's that ?" cried the woman's shrill voice. "O, it's you, is it, Phoebe ? Shut the door quick ; the other lodgers doesn't like the steam to get upstairs."

"How's Lotty, Mrs. Simpson ?" Phoebe asked, as she bobbed under the wet clothes.

"She'll never have no more the matter with her, my child," was the reply, in a voice which was sad, but yet confirmed in resignation.

Phoebe stood looking at her as if she did not understand.

"She come 'ome on Tuesday right down bad ; the missis said it was no use keepin' of her, as she couldn't do her work. I got her some stuff from the dispensary, but it didn't do her no good. Night before last, she all at wunst begun coughin', and before I could even get to her she was gone. An' it's best it should be so. She said she'd like to see you, Phoebe, and I was a-goin' to send for you, as it was yesterday ; but it was too late, you see.—There she lies," said the woman, pointing to the bed. "Will you look at her ?"

"No, O no ! I can't, Mrs. Simpson !" Phoebe exclaimed, shrinking back in dread. Then she began to cry, and sobbed out her sorrow. Mrs. Simpson

had not much to say ; who shall blame her if she regarded Death rather as the deliverer than the destroyer ? In any case, she had her day's work to attend to, and no time could be lost in vain mourning. Phoebe only stayed a few minutes. The presence of a dead body awed her, and, when she left the cellar, it was with eyes nervously averted from the direction of the bed.

She sadly took her way home again. The shock had impressed her gravely, and she had not the heart to go at once on her shopping ; that could wait till after tea. Phoebe felt, too, that she could no longer enjoy the feast of sweet things which she had promised herself ; it seemed improper to make merry just after coming away from the room where her friend lay dead. So she bought a few simple things, some bread and butter and tea, and took them up to her garret. Then she visited Mrs. Dabbs in the lower part of the house, for the double purpose of paying her rent and borrowing some fuel till she could supply herself. Phoebe experienced not a little nervousness beneath the landlady's look of surprise and curiosity ; she explained that she had managed to get a little money to go on with, and then she was glad to escape with a bucket containing Mrs. Dabbs's loan of wood and coals. She made a fire, and, as soon as possible, some tea. By that time, she was almost herself again, and, as she grew comfortable, with a cup of warm, sweet tea on her lap, her feet supported by the fender, she reflected how nice it would be to have just one or two mince-pies. And she could get them in a minute. But Phoebe resisted the temptation, and conscientiously went on with her bread and butter, thus paying her tribute to poor Lotty's memory. It is true the butter was spread just a little more thickly than under ordinary circumstances, but we must not demand too much of human nature.

Tea over, she carefully locked her door, and brought out the money from the box. She spread it on the table, and played with it much as a child plays with its "bricks," making heaps and squares and circles; moreover, she counted it again, to make sure that no one had interfered with it in her absence. Cheerfulness was returning, and thoughts of the things she would buy. As if to help her in regaining her equanimity, a lively street-organ all at once struck up somewhere close by, and she heard the scamper of children out of the court to have a dance on the pavement. It was already past nightfall, and the thought of the gleaming shops became an irresistible impulse. Again she went forth, and this time strayed no further than Hoxton Street. Here was plenty of choice, so many delightful shops and such a variety of goods and prices that she wandered from window to window and seemed as far from decision as ever. Now she would all but determine upon

this or that article, but, when on the point of entering the shop, it seemed better to have just one more look at just one other window, and make sure that she would not have to repent her choice.

She came to the doors of the Britannia Theatre. They had that moment opened, and a great crowd of people were swaying, crushing, struggling in the excitement of entering. Phoebe had never in her life seen a Pantomime ; she was carried away by the spectacle of the crowd, and made up her mind to go in. But she did not know how much she would have to pay. Looking around to find some likely person of whom to inquire, she saw a girl of about her own age standing on the edge of the pavement, her hands in the pockets of a very shabby ulster, her eyes casting envious glances at the crowd. Phoebe approached her, and, with some shyness, asked for the information she needed. The girl had rather a pretty face, but it looked hungry, and she shivered as she replied. Phoebe, who had her money in her hand, turned away to take out sixpence for the pit, when, just as she was doing so, a couple of rough lads, rushing by to get a place, bumped against her, and jerked several coins out of her purse. Fortunately it was a well-lighted spot, and the money did not roll very far. The girl to whom Phoebe had just spoken was quick with her assistance, and nothing was lost.

“My ! I only wish I was as well off as you,” said the stranger, looking at Phoebe with a friendly smile, and again shivering as a sharp blast of wind swept down the street.

“Are you going in?” Phoebe asked, the inconsequence of this remark being due partly to her unwillingness to speak of her money, partly to the alarm from which she was just recovering.

The other shook her head, scornfully.

“I’ll pay for you,” said Phoebe, who, to tell the truth, felt lonely in her holiday-making, and welcomed eagerly the prospect of companionship.

“I’d rather you give me the money to get somethink to eat,” replied the girl, who had kept a very keen eye fixed all the time on Phoebe’s face.

“Are you hungry?”

“I had nothink since last night.”

The girl showed her teeth as she laughed ; they were faultless rows, and just now remarkably suggestive of an appetite.

“I’d go with you, and then we could come back together,” said Phoebe, “only we should be late.”

“*That* don’t make no difference !” exclaimed the girl, her eyes brightening. “It’s the same all through, an’ it don’t matter where you begin.”

Phoebe allowed herself to be persuaded that this was indeed the case, and turned away with her new companion. The latter's taste led her to propose that they should feast on whelks at a street stall some little way off. Phoebe assented gladly, without considering whether this were precisely the best form of refreshment for a person who had fasted four and twenty hours, and they consumed the dainties out of oyster-shells, with a sprinkling of vinegar and pepper. Intimacy naturally developed under such conditions. The girl volunteered the information that her name was Jenny Evans, and, by a coincidence, she proved to be, like Phoebe, a flower-maker, also out of work. She was curious about Phoebe's wealth, but Phoebe avoided being too communicative, and gave the same vague explanation which she had invented for Mrs. Dabbs.

They went back to the theatre, and Phoebe paid for both, but, on entering, a cheerless prospect confronted them, or rather no prospect at all. The pit was crowded up to the walls ; there was just standing room left, but as for seeing, that was another question. The orchestra was playing, and in a few minutes an excited movement among the people seemed to announce that the curtain had risen. By dint of much pushing and straining, Phoebe could just manage to catch brief glimpses of magic splendour, which tantalized her so that she could have cried with vexation.

"I told you we should be too late !" she exclaimed reproachfully to her companion.

But Jenny seemed to take the matter very indifferently.

"What's the odds !" she said. "You can come to-morrow. Let's go out. I feel awful faint."

Almost with tears in her eyes, Phoebe followed out of the crush, and they walked slowly along the street in silence. Jenny made a pause in front of a public house.

"Don't you feel as a drop of something warm 'ud do you good after that ?" she asked. "I'm almost ready to drop."

The feast of whelks had made Phoebe thirsty, and the proposal tempted her. Her sister had always taught her to look on public-houses as places to be shunned, and of her own impulse she would never have entered one. But she felt a chill after the heat of the theatre, and it looked so comfortable inside. She allowed herself to be led in, and Jenny had speedily procured two glasses of "something warm," with little pieces of lemon floating on the top. To Phoebe the first sip was grateful ; but the second made her shake her head, and it was with difficulty that she finished her glass. They had sat down on the bench by the wall, and Jenny chatted familiarly.

Phoebe began to feel glad that she had met so pleasant a friend, and in a few minutes found herself disposed to talk with less reserve ; she began even to hint at a certain piece of luck which had befallen her, and to speak of things which she wanted, and had the intention of buying. By the time they went out into the street again, she was in better spirits than she had been since the first thing in the morning. The very first shop they came to, she made up her mind to go in and purchase a hat which she saw in the window. Jenny dissuaded her, but with difficulty.

“I wish I knew where I was a-goin’ to sleep to-night,” Jenny said, all at once. “My landlady’s turned me out, ’cos I owe three weeks.”

Phoebe forthwith proposed that her friend should come home with her, and the offer was cheerfully accepted. Jenny now had the direction of affairs practically in her own hands, and her idea was that they should go home straightway, taking in something for supper with them. Phoebe reluctantly postponed her purchases till the morrow ; but, when they came to the pork-butcher’s shop at the corner of her court, the prospect of the very supper which she had so often in vain longed for drove all other thoughts out of her mind. A pound of boiled pork, two pennyworth of pease-pudding, a pennyworth of smoking carrots, all rolled up together in a piece of newspaper ;—Phoebe felt that at length she was making use of her fortune.

“But we must have something to drink,” Jenny said, when they were up in the garret at last. “Give me some money, and I’ll go get it, while you light the fire.”

“Can you find your way back ?” asked Phoebe, laughing with delight as she turned the mass of animal and vegetable matter out of the paper onto a plate.

“No fear !” replied the other, as she ran off with a shilling.

The fire was crackling up under the kettle when she came back. She had with her a bottle full of a brown liquid.

“Why, ’taint the same what we had before,” Phoebe cried, as she took out the cork and smelt the rum.

“You’ll like it better,” said Jenny. “Got some sugar ? You’re the right sort, Phoebe, you are.—I say, what’s all that writin’ on the walls ? Is it some o’ your larks ?”

Phoebe explained as they sat down at the table. She could hardly speak for laughing ; everything seemed a source of amusement to her. She sipped at the drink which Jenny had mixed for her, and at every sip grew more confidential. At last she leaned her face near to her friend’s,—how pretty she looked, with her extraordinarily bright eyes and the gentle flush on her

cheeks !—and asked if Jenny could keep a secret. Jenny thought she could indeed, and she listened with eyes almost as bright as Phoebe’s own, whilst the latter told all the story of Mr. Quy’s legacy. As a great, great favour Jenny might have just one glimpse into the box. They both went down on their knees together and peeped underneath the lid, then Phoebe made the box fast once more, and put the key back into her pocket with a laugh of triumph.

Very soon after that things began to grow dim before Phoebe’s eyes. She still talked and laughed, but in a fitful way, and without clearly knowing what she said. The fire seemed to grow very hot, and her limbs seemed to ache with weariness ; to be sure she had been walking about all day, it was natural she should be tired. An immense weight was oppressing her eyelids ; every now and then she all but fell forward off her chair in irresistible drowsiness. Of two things only was she distinctly conscious, one the desire to go to bed and sleep, the other to previously impress upon Jenny the tremendous importance of the secret that had been told her, and to exact promises of fidelity. Jenny was all assurances. She too was of opinion that it was bed-time ; she only just wanted to warm her feet at the fire for a few minutes. And Phoebe watched her doing so, her head sideways on the pillow, till Jenny’s form became a great vague shapeless patch in front of the fire’s glow, and then all was darkness.

When the sense of daylight once more visited Phoebe’s eyes, it blended with a dim consciousness of trouble, a dull pain which made it difficult to raise her lids, and a fluttering at the heart which grew as she became aware of it. She struggled to regain remembrance, and at length, as if by a supreme effort of mind and body, was able to raise herself and look round the room. First, Mr. Quy’s sign manual on the wall ; then all the story that hung thereby.

“Jenny!”

She uttered the name with a start, but there was no one to reply to it. She sprang out onto the floor, and was so possessed with dizziness that she had to support her head on her hands for a moment before she could even stand up. There was no one else in the room ; no sign of Jenny anywhere. Only the plates and glasses on the table to prove that it had not all been an unquiet dream. But her box ! Why was the wash-hand basin put down on the floor, and the lid thrown back ? With one bound she was on her knees beside it, throwing the poor contents frantically about, searching for what

she could not find. Where was all her money, all the bright silver pieces, the half-crowns, the shillings, the sixpences ? And where was Jenny ?

It was a dull morning. Thin flakes of snow were falling idly down into the narrow court, and it was bitterly cold. Poor Phoebe !

[The text of Gissing's story printed above is published Courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.]

George Gissing and Morley Roberts The Life of Writing in Late-Victorian England

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George Gissing's picture of the writing life in *New Grub Street* (1891) and his retrospective on that same world twelve years later in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), each novel incorporating significant aspects of his life, contain some of his sharpest observations and most profound sentiments about the lived experience of writing for a living. Michael Collie argues for the need to see Gissing as a literary artist:

Gissing, the writer, quite obviously thought a great deal about how to write a modern novel. He experimented a lot. He revised his early work. He adopted new techniques at various stages of his career. He wrote a range of books that few others could emulate. It is on this level, as a writer, that it seems best to try to meet him. (p.171)

Robert L. Selig states of *New Grub Street* that it “stands as Gissing's masterpiece and also one of the finest novels of the late-Victorian era. Part of its strength comes from his finally having restricted all his major characters in a novel to an occupation that he knew firsthand—that of writer” (p. 46). Most of his other works that include authors do so in a way that looks glancingly at their struggles as writers. In *Born in Exile* (1892), Godwin Peak, ironically, tries to escape the notoriety of having written an attack on Christianity. It is true that Julian Casti in *The Unclassed* (1884, 1895) works seriously at his poetry, but Gissing allows his disastrous marriage to Harriet Smales to swallow his life's aim to write and eventually this destroys him. Morley Roberts' *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (1912) is a novel based on Gissing's life. Roberts, Gissing's schoolmate at Owens College in Manchester and life-long friend, traces his struggles as a

person and a writer. These struggles included two failed marriages and a fear that he would be reduced to poverty. Gissing apparently worried about the latter even though toward the end of his life he was reasonably successful. Both Gissing and Roberts, from slightly different perspective, depict a bleak picture for anyone who pursues literature with aesthetic ideals as the dominant focus.

Whatever Gissing's motivations to write after he returned from the United States in 1877, he soon produced a three-volume novel which he paid to have published. *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) depicts the lives of the struggling poor, the first of five such works. Tired of tutoring and producing a quarterly political letter about England for *Vyestnik Evropy*, the periodical edited by Turgenev's friend, Mikhail Stasulevich, Gissing writes on what he observed among London's poor. However, except for Carrie Mitchell and Samuel Tollady, the major characters are from the middle class. Two, Gilbert Gresham and Arthur Golding, are artists. Both Osmond Waymark and Casti in *The Unclassed* are interested in literature and writing. Casti represents the failed artist, a theme that Gissing explores extensively in *New Grub Street*. More ominously, Casti is the failed artist pulled down by a dissatisfied wife, a theme that Gissing also includes as a central element in his portrait of Edwin Reardon in *New Grub Street*. This latter novel exhibits the widest variety of writers in any of Gissing's works, e.g., Reardon, Jasper Milvain, Harold Biffen, Alfred Yule, Marian Yule, Whelpdale, Quarmby, Hinks, Sykes, Dora Milvain, Maud Milvain, and various other writers who do not appear in the novel but are used as types, often successful ones. Collie remarks that

[...] he depicts a small group of hacks, literary idealists, unsuccessful writers of fiction, littérateurs, and critics, who live partly in the British Museum reading room, partly on the fringes of literary London, whether for mercenary or idealistic reasons eking out a living as best they can. (p. 111)

Just as Roberts remarks in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* that Maitland is not naturally a writer of fiction or other literary work destined for a wide audience, in *New Grub Street* Gissing describes the pedantic critic Alfred Yule in a similar vein, his labored style not saved by his wide learning nor helped by his often caustic tone. His daughter Marian, who wishes anything but the reputation of a literary critic, writes for him when he is too pressed for time. Selig observes that Marian "does literary slave work for her embittered old father, the hack writer Alfred Yule" (p. 47). In *Gissing in Context* (1975), Adrian Poole states, "With his 'peculiar croaking' laugh and 'seamed visage,' he inhabits an angular, desiccated world of

his own, in which a complimentary footnote from a friend is worth more than his daughter's love" (p. 143). Yule's frustration lies mainly in his inability successfully to edit a literary magazine. Thus, failed ambition is a major theme in *New Grub Street*, but one explored in a wide variety of ways. Yule exhibits a natural limit to his talent. He begins his career as an assistant "at a London bookseller's" (p. 18), and through struggles to educate himself thoroughly, succeeds more than one might expect. However, he does not feel successful. Not only does he not prosper when he once becomes a journal editor, but his own writings fail to receive the respect he feels they deserve, especially from Clement Fadge, a rival critic and editor. When Marian eventually receives some of the money due her from her uncle's will (p. 469), she has already refused to let her father have it to start a literary journal and has said she plans to offer it to Jasper Milvain, her intended husband, a man who, Yule believes, has deserted him for the detested Fadge (pp. 399-402). Yule's subsequent blindness seems an apt judgment on his life. He tells Marian, "If you marry, I wish you a happy life. The end of mine, of many long years of unremitting toil, is failure and destitution" (p. 424). Quarmby and Hinks, long-time British Museum veterans who look to Yule for success, especially as they discuss the hoped-for new journal which Marian's money will launch, struggle along as minor critics who publish slim volumes and endure Yule's benign condescension. Gissing studied in the British Museum and was acquainted with the backwaters of literature by means of which one could survive, if barely.

Jasper Milvain, Whelpdale, and Sykes represent another group of writers who focus on other markets than those of Alfred Yule and his friends. While the latter largely restrict themselves to writing about literature, Milvain, Whelpdale, and Sykes have a broader subject, that of culture in general. Dora and Maud Milvain might be included in these three. After their mother's death and the cessation of her income with her life, Dora and Maud face a bleak picture as teachers in nearby Wattleborough. The ever-innovative Jasper has assured them that he will not abandon them when that unlooked-for event occurs. Jasper is at times almost a heroic figure. When he makes this statement to his sisters, he cannot fully support himself in the manner necessary to break through as a writer and editor of a prestigious journal. He has explained that he is learning his profession and slowly making his way. One thing becomes clear in the novel; he knows what he is talking about, and he knows what steps he must take. If no one else, Jasper has told himself to be bold. Consequently, he first suggests that Dora and Maud think about writing religious stories for children and then, the

riskier step, agree to move to London to meet people who will help them in this new career. Both young women have been well educated and are fitted to supply this market, one that Jasper assures them is there to be exploited.

Jasper is the new man in the modern world of writing, perfectly adapted to meet the needs of a wide variety of magazines and newspapers. Beginning with Gissing's view that Dickens identified closely with his period, Poole compares Milvain to Dickens: "Dickens had indeed been the 'man of his time,' and good luck to him. But the 'man of the time' now was, in Gissing's version, Jasper Milvain, the shameless entrepreneur" (p. 110). He admits to his family that he cannot write novels (*New Grub Street*, p. 9), but he adds that for the educated readers he can supply enough matter to give them a sense of being in the know (p. 14). He is studious as far as he needs to be and clever, the *sine qua non* for his ambitions. In addition, he works hard at his profession, and this means working hard across the whole spectrum of what it takes to succeed. Jasper cultivates editors and hostesses at whose entertainments he makes contacts. When Jasper meets Marian Yule and her father in Finden, the latter, as one learns later, is cautious towards him (pp. 99-100), as if he knows that Jasper's desire to succeed transcends everything else. Later in the novel, Jasper tells Marian this when he visits her home in London (p. 120). Near the end of the novel she assures him that he has "more energy and more intellect" than to act, as Jasper supposes she thinks, like a "brute" (p. 499). Earlier, Alfred becomes suspicious that Jasper has written a disparaging article about him (p. 184). While this is not true, Jasper abandons Marian when she inherits only £1,500 instead of the expected £5,000 and says that she cannot neglect her mother and her now-blind father (pp. 471-74, 501-04). Disgusted as Dora and Maud are at his falsity to Marian, nothing shifts Jasper from his intended path. Whelpdale, whom Dora eventually marries, presents a more positive image of someone pursuing a career path similar to Jasper's. He both attempts to write fiction and then, with no success, to advise others on how to do so. After each failure, he tries something else. Journalism is the career in which he succeeds. Writing for *Chat*, he suggests it be renamed *Chit-Chat* and helps launch a success. Eventually named its editor, Whelpdale, with the sure instinct for appealing to the "quarter-educated" (p. 460), is able to marry (pp. 478-79). Whelpdale merely wishes to satisfy a remunerative market and leaves any higher ambitions to his friend Jasper.

Sykes is the true denizen of Grub Street as he desperately writes anything that will bring in money ; he resembles Samuel Johnson's portrait of Richard Savage and other inhabitants of the original Grub Street (*New*

Grub Street, pp. 377-80). Written some years before the *Lives of the English Poets* (1770-81) but incorporated into that work, Johnson's essay on Savage (1744) shows the sometimes frantic writer barely surviving in London and eliciting the reader's sympathy through his many woes. Sykes does the same, especially when Reardon and Biffen visit him and he begs them to give him a "quarter of an hour" (p. 378) to dash off something. While Milvain might be above Sykes' necessary struggles, Gissing notes the former's efforts when he tells Marian at one point that he must go home rather than stay longer with her since he has several hours of hard writing "before seven o'clock" (p. 473). However, Sykes remains the unromantic warning for all who dream of writing for a living without some other monetary support. Henry Rycroft miraculously comes forth from a life such as Sykes endures, but neither Reardon nor Biffen survive even when some chance beckons to both men. Whelpdale, given some of Gissing's own experiences in America, talks lightly of his serious difficulties (pp. 390-95), but neither Reardon nor Biffen offer an opportunity for any distancing from their tragic ends.

Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen, especially, are the only two writers in *New Grub Street* who write novels with aesthetic criteria primarily governing the process. John Goode notes, "[...] whereas Reardon only writes fiction because he feels that it is the only way for the modern writer who can't journalise to make a living, Biffen embraces his own modernity with a modern aesthetic commitment" (p. 139). They are not averse to success, and Reardon actually achieves some with his fiction which is the occasion for his risking marriage to Amy Yule. But, as Milvain tells his mother and two sisters at the beginning of the novel, Reardon now has no leisure to publish a novel every other year. The more pressure he feels to write, the less able he is to respond. Milvain's opinion is more convincing than critic Michael Collie's: "Reardon does not fail because literature had become a trade or because something outside himself prevented his writing a masterpiece. He fails because of himself. He is just one part of the larger scene that Gissing is describing" (p. 112). Fittingly, Reardon appears in his decline, a decline so thorough that he cannot even write a pot-boiler on demand; he cannot enter the world of trade as Milvain describes literature in the present day (p. 8). John Sloan states, "In portraying the actual toil and frustrations of the professional writer, Gissing's aim is clearly to question the conditions which have reduced literature to a commodity" (p. 86). Reardon's wife is one of the last to advise him to write something, anything, so long as it sells. In this, she repeats Milvain's advice on previous

occasions. To the literary tradesman, it seems so simple: produce the work for the market and prosper. To the artist, it is truly death. John Halperin writes, “Nowhere else in Gissing’s work is the malignity of matter so emphasized or the life of the artist characterized so despairingly” (p. 148). Milvain knows Reardon’s creative abilities and also knows that he will fail if it takes two years to write each novel. The economics of the situation work against him. In *The Paradox of Gissing* (1986), David Grylls states the general problem:

New Grub Street deals with Gissing’s most pressing dilemma. Convinced that art, by its very nature, should transcend material desires and cares, he could also perceive that in a market economy it was impossible for this to happen. The artist was compelled to make concessions. (p. 81)

Milvain acknowledges that genius will force its way to the public’s attention and acceptance, but to him, neither Reardon nor Biffen are geniuses, though he accords due recognition to their artistic aims. Unlike Reardon, Biffen never expects to live by his pen. He has striven for years to write his novel, *Mr. Bailey, Grocer*. His work is a realistic portrayal of the life of the ignobly decent. Aesthetic criteria are the sole governing principles in the production of the book, and he, deservedly, makes little or nothing from it in the burgeoning age of advertisement. Who did you think would buy it? one might ask of Biffen. However, he expects it to fail. The act of writing it governs him throughout. Earlier running into his burning building to save the manuscript symbolizes the value he puts on literary creation.

The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft is an autobiographical novel that functions as an aberration. Not only is there a distance between Gissing and the hero of the volume he “discovers” among the writer’s papers and edits, but the general tone of the work at times masks Ryecroft’s harsh struggles before receiving his legacy at fifty years of age. The well-loved home he leases near Exeter, the books, the quiet, the leisure to become participant in the workings of nature—all of these belie the jarring experiences of his earlier life and, along with his resignation, deprive one of the sharp sense of anger and outrage that would be expected. Thus, one senses a tension at the core of the novel. Gissing was briefly a widower after his first wife Nell died, but seems to have rushed to marry again. The silence that Ryecroft relishes in his home is not always what Gissing yearned for, especially if it meant that he was generally alone in that silence. Another difference between him and Ryecroft is that eventually Gissing was, regardless of his worries, a successful and admired writer. Ryecroft is a mix of Milvain and Sykes in that he little valued what he wrote, but had some critical and eco-

conomic success. Gissing, also, neither had nor expected any legacy to rescue him later in life. Both love Italy ; both love the sun, Ryecroft initially in an earlier holiday in Devon ; and both love the English countryside. Despite these and other similarities, Ryecroft is no complete match with Gissing, and this distance might underlie the strength of the book.

Ryecroft employs an elegiac tone and this, potentially, indicates the conflict between the feel of more energy in re-experiencing past difficulties and what the reader would expect Ryecroft to generate. He, thus, has not closed off his earlier life, in the midst of his present comforts, to what amounts to an investigation of its hardships. Protected by his legacy and buoyed by the relief at being where he is, Ryecroft goes back to that time and feels what he felt then. With all the pain of his memories, he does not lament or regret their existence. The very act of writing the book suggests that everything is still alive to him. Gissing, as the putative editor, remarks that Ryecroft wrote the book because he used to be a writer and could not refrain from writing. He even notes that Ryecroft possibly intended to publish it, suggesting that his retirement was not total. Ryecroft does not so much exorcise the pain, a pain that at times seems in inverse proportion to the small number of his complaints, but brings it out to air. He speaks of his once strong will to work and in his declining years, paradoxically, resurrects it. He now has no deadline to meet nor editor to please but surrenders to the creative impulse when it matters. Consequently, Ryecroft seems to address the future or a clear present instead of a past which is finished, closed off, there to be handled but not relived. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850), as an evolving elegy, comes to mind. Tennyson's loss of his friend Hallam was present and had to be dealt with, and so he writes the poem until he rounds off his feelings and gets beyond them enough to continue his life, a progression of anticipation at Hallam's return, despair over his death, resignation at what cannot be changed, and acceptance of all that these feelings entail.

At the risk of overstatement and after so many various judgments by others on the book, it seems clear that most critics miss the substance of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Not all of course and Jacob Korg's statement in his *George Gissing: a Critical Biography* (1963) should orient one toward a better understanding of the novel: "Though it is often difficult to tell where the character, Ryecroft, ends, and the real Gissing begins in these pages, the important fact remains that Ryecroft is a fiction distinct from his author" (pp. 244-45). In *The Born Exile* (1974), Gillian Tindall perceptively discusses the connection between the facts of his life and the

literary uses that either Gissing in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* or Roberts in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* make of them and asserts that “[...] fiction often has a coherence, a probability and a truth of emphasis which the muddled ‘true facts’ lack” (p. 24). Gissing states that the manuscript,

was not intended for the public, and yet, in many a passage, I seemed to perceive the literary purpose—something more than the turn of phrase, and so on, which results from long habit of composition. Certain of his reminiscences, in particular, Ryecroft could hardly have troubled to write down had he not, however vaguely, entertained the thought of putting them to some use. I suspect that, in his happy leisure, there grew upon him a desire to write one more book, a book which should be written merely for his own satisfaction. (p. xx)

Gissing also remarks that Ryecroft was a man whose sufferings had clearly marked him (p. xx). Beginning with this “editorial” observation, one can start to examine the character in ways that set aside many of the statements Poole makes. He writes, “Ryecroft will seem lacking in all but the thinnest emotions, of self-indulgent, self-caressing sentimentality” (p. 204) ; he asserts the work is “the relief of a perfectly defined distance between Self and the World” (p. 206) which “can go hang” (p. 206) ; he observes the book’s “tone of haughty, magisterial judgement on a world that can provide only objects for ironic, self-satisfied contemplation” (pp. 206-07) ; he remarks on “this shallow but seductive structure of desire” reflected “in its state of advanced debility” (p. 207). Clearly this moral condemnation intertwined with a class-based perspective distances itself from the text with every statement.

Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” (1616), Alexander Pope’s “Windsor Forest” (1713), and John Dyer’s “Grongar Hill” (1726) are country-house or topographical poems in which the authors describe the ideal life of reading, writing, or infrequently visiting friends. The urban noise and squalor are conveniently left behind. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* resembles these works but only superficially. The poems’ principal characters have the means to retire and contemplate nature when and if they so choose ; Ryecroft is the survivor of a shipwreck, but far from being the “self-indulgent” retreat alluded to above, his removal from London creates another life. He connects intimately with nature in all its seasons and aspects ; he reads deeply and with real pleasure ; he discovers himself as a fuller human being in his many moods and ideas ; and he remembers, in the process creating a work of social, literary, and cultural criticism that reveals a coherent philosophy. Events and ideas blend in a powerful statement of who he is and what he believes. Godwin Peak’s pursuit of Sidwell Warri-

combe in *Born in Exile* (1892), an upper-middle-class young woman living with her family near Exeter, demonstrates the same yearning that Ryecroft realizes, that of escaping into a better, a fuller life. Ryecroft, using his own statements regarding his past, is living a more complete life even granting his love of peace and silence (*Ryecroft*, p. 61). He writes, "I remember the London days when sleep was broken by clash and clang, by roar and shriek, and when my first sense on returning to consciousness was hatred of the life about me." He adds, "but worse still is the clamorous human voice" (p. 61). In assessing Ryecroft as a character, one must absorb the concrete details of his life ; this will still the superficial ideological reaction.

In his Introduction to the 1958 edition of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, Morchard Bishop speaks of Roberts' fictional presentation of Gissing's life in somewhat negative terms while extolling its general quality. Bishop says that "[...] the book in its execution is strikingly original" (p. 3), but adds that "[...] its true excellences were then [1912] gravely obscured by the fictional draperies that encumbered it: draperies, more-over, that merely irritated the instructed, since in fact they impeded without concealing" (p. 3). Whether Roberts, as Bishop earlier states, "by allowing his book to bear the outward semblance of a work of fiction, deprived it of any pretension to authority" (p. 1), is a matter for readers and critics long after 1958 to decide. However, Bishop's different assessments reveal the difficulty in approaching the work as an imaginary construct. Roberts changes names but uses information on Gissing's life, as far as he knew it, in the guise of writing a novel. Tindall observes that Roberts' work "gives, in my view, a better and truer overall impression of Gissing the man than many subsequent and more scholarly writers have done." She adds, "In fiction, the view is longer, the perspective better" (p. 25). Biographical or autobiographical novels are not unknown and many admired works such as Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850) and Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), autobiographical and biographical, respectively, explore and reflect real lives. In an attempt to understand the significance of actions and ideas in one's own or another's life, fiction can be a creative way to accomplish this. A too strict adherence to the chronological order of the events in a person's life without a concomitant probing may make the work seem mechanical. Roberts and Gissing had known one another since they were youths and kept in fairly regular contact, and this helps him as he struggles to balance the portrait of the man and the writer.

It is not absolutely clear whether or not Roberts wants to write a biography or a biographical novel, though the evidence appears to tilt in the direc-

tion of the latter. In the Preface to the first edition of 1912, Roberts states: "There is no book quite like it in the English tongue, and the critic may take what advantage he will of that opening for his wit" (p. 245). He goes on to say, "Here is life, not a story or a constructed diary, and the art with which it is done is a secondary matter" (p. 246). However, in Chapter I, Roberts, writing as J. H., whom he says "dictated" the book "mostly in my presence" (p. 245), reports: "Once I proposed to him to use his character and career as the chief figure in a long story" (p. 20). Roberts reveals something of his approach to the complex portrait of Maitland at the beginning of chapter VI: "Out of the many times in many years that I saw Maitland comes the intricate pattern of him. I would rather write a little book like 'Manon Lescaut' than many biographical quartos lying as heavy on the dead as Vanbrugh's mansions" (p. 103). Early in Chapter I he states: "I am far more concerned to write about Henry Maitland for those who loved him than for those who loved him not, and I shall be much better pleased if what I do about him takes the shape of an impression rather than of anything like an ordinary biography" (p. 21). Thus, Roberts the literary artist figures in the book with Roberts the memoirist. He generally narrates the events of Maitland's life in chronological order. Speaking of the real individuals rather than the fictive narrator and subject, it seems clear that writing this work helps Roberts understand his friend Gissing and interpret him to others. Roberts, as J. H., sees Maitland's life as an exemplary one: "If Henry Maitland bleeds and howls, so did Philoctetes, and the outcry of Henry Maitland is most pertinent to our lives" (p. 246). Roberts portrays Maitland's pain and suffering as inevitable. He observes, "His whole life, as I saw it and shall relate it, is but a development of the nature which made his disaster possible" (p. 34). However, he does not judge Maitland's life from a moral perspective, but rather through his own eyes assesses his actions and qualities as an experienced man of the world. Roberts was a professional writer of fiction and nonfiction, and through the use of chronology, letters, selected memories of events and conversations, explorations of motives for particular actions, and the manipulation of time, he creates something akin to a historical novel with Gissing as its subject. As Roberts states in the first Preface, "At any rate we have a portrait emerging which is real" (p. 245).

Roberts' strongest statement about Maitland as a writer is that fiction did not come natural to him: "Fiction, even as he understood it, was not for a man of his nature and faculties. He would have been in his true element as a don of a college, and much of his love of the classics was a mystery to

me, as it would have been to most active men of the world, however well educated” (pp. 104-05). This much-contested claim does not seem believable of a man, as Bishop states, “who wrote as many novels as Gissing, and who took such obvious pains with them” (p. 6). In this Bishop follows Frank Swinnerton’s judgment that “[...] the fact that he continued to produce literary work is a proof that it was his chosen occupation, and in the end he was justified by the fame that was his in the last years of his life” (p. 194). Against his own opinion, Roberts offers other aspects about Maitland as a writer. On Maitland, who, he observes, is “perhaps a great man of letters” (p. 42), Roberts remarks that “He rejoiced in every form of Art, in books and in music, and in all the finer inheritance of the past” (p. 42). Roberts later writes on the care Maitland takes with his fiction: “He always wrote with the greatest pain and labour [...]” (p. 79) ; in order “to perfect his control of the English tongue” (p. 82), Roberts says, “He often destroyed the first third of a book. I know he did so with one three times over” (p. 82). Roberts states further on, “There are, indeed, very few of his books of which a great part was not destroyed, re-written, and sometimes again destroyed and again re-written” (p. 135). Maitland’s typical writing day started at 9 a.m. and, with short breaks, ended at 10 p.m., and in that period he wrote for nine hours (p. 159). Roberts also speaks about Maitland’s “sincerity” in his work and states, “In many ways writing to him was a kind of sacred mission” (p. 83). Yet, against his many observations of Maitland the writer of fiction, Roberts appears to hold that “he was a scholar and a dreamer” (p. 82) and felt that his inhuman work schedule “shows, in a way that nothing else can, that he had no earthly business to be writing novels and spinning things largely out of his subjective mind, when he ought to have been dealing with the objective world, or with books” (p. 159). Roberts affirms that Maitland “gave me the most definite permission” (p. 20) “to write his life and tell the whole and absolute truth about him” (p. 20). This possibly explains Roberts’ ambivalence about Maitland and his fiction, seeing him as both a careful artist and a misplaced one.

These three writers, i.e., Edwin Reardon, Henry Ryecroft, and Henry Maitland, all based substantially on George Gissing, give the concrete experience, the self-conscious awareness of writing for a living in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Along with *Born in Exile*’s Godwin Peak, *In the Year of Jubilee*’s Lionel Tarrant, and *The Crown of Life*’s Piers Otway, figures such as *New Grub Street*’s Jasper Milvain, Whelpdale, Harold Biffen, and Alfred Yule fill in the portrait of late-Victorian authorship. Commenting on Gissing’s difficulty in *In the Year of Jubilee* on writing about

his age, William Greenslade states, “This novel, in memorable set-piece descriptions, renders a world Gissing would rather shut out, but which his commitment to realism cannot do without” (p. 271). Experience transformed into language permeated the culture to an extent that transcends its recorded feel in other ages. However, it is a culture in which the mass of what is written is disposable and deserves to be. Grylls remarks that Gissing “did [...] subscribe to the view that newspapers spread infection” (p. 77). Though a few writers who aspire to create art do not outweigh the numberless others who crowd them out, to the modern reader Gissing succeeds as a writer while his own authors often fail if they attempt to achieve more than the mediocre.

[This paper was read by Professor Moore on 4 August (Session D, Popular Literature I) at the 2003 International Popular Culture Association Conference held at Trinity College, Dublin from 3 to 9 August.]

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Notes and News

The publication of a number of volumes of Gissing interest is going to coincide with the commemoration of the centenary of his death. Besides *A Life's Morning*, reissued by the Gissing Trust last July, we can look forward to the illustrated critical edition of *By the Ionian Sea* scheduled to appear shortly under the imprint of Signal Books, the Oxford Publishers, and Interlink in the States. About the same time Simon J. James's critical study of Gissing's works, *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (London: Anthem Press) will also be published, as well as *Clara Collet 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman* by Deborah McDonald (London: Woburn Press).

As announced in our July number, Grayswood Press are preparing a three-volume edition of the *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*. Volume 1, edited and introduced by Pierre Coustillas, will include a long biographical and bibliographical introduction, Gissing's essays, his introductions to the Rochester Edition and the Autograph Edition and his two review articles written for the *Times Literary Supplement*. It will contain an afterword by Alan S. Watts. Publication date December 2003.—Volume 2 will be *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, edited and introduced by Simon J. James. This new edition will use the revised text of 1902 together with further amendments made by Gissing in his own copy of the 1898 edition. David Parker will contribute an afterword. Publication date April 2004.—Volume 3, introduced by Christine DeVine, will consist in a new edition of Gissing's abridgement of Forster's *Life of Dickens*. For the first time his added revisions will be identified and studied. The afterword will be by James A. Davies. Publication date August 2004.

In Japan, a commemorative collection of new essays on Gissing edited by Mitsuharu Matsuoka will appear at the end of the year. It will contain

contributions by well-known Japanese scholars, as well as two essays and a foreword by Jacob Korg and the editor of this journal.

An annotated translation by Christina Sjöholm of *By the Ionian Sea* is to appear in Sweden next spring. Coming in the wake of Japanese, Italian, French and German translations, it will certainly enhance the international prestige of a book of which Patrick Leigh Fermor wrote: “The journey is spell-bound delight. It vibrates with a romantic scholar’s ecstasy.”

Two Italian books published in recent weeks should be placed by the side of the many volumes in which *By the Ionian Sea* is praised in glowing terms. One of them, *Giuseppe Benassai 1835-1878* by Dario Durbé (Reggio Calabria: C.EDI.C) concerns the painter whose work Gissing mentions obliquely in the last chapter of his narrative. It is a splendidly produced album (32 x 23 cm) in which the two paintings described by Gissing, “La Quiete” (1868) and “Aspromonte” (1869), can be seen on pp. 91-93, followed by excellent photographs of Benassai and his wife. A very positive review of the volume by Fortunato Valenzise appeared in *Calabria Sconosciuta* for April-June 2003, p. 58. The other Italian book just published, also album size, is *Saluti da Squillace: Viaggio tra immagini e foto d'altri tempi* by Daniele Cristofaro (AMDSIA), which contains a wealth of photographs of persons, buildings and scenes taken from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s. The street in which stood the inn made famous by Gissing, Via Damiano Assanti, is one of the illustrations, and the legend of an 1894 portrait of Assanti (1809-1894) informs the reader that he was a Garibaldian general and became a Senator of the Kingdom. A review of these two Italian books will be published in a forthcoming number.

Recent Publications

Volume

George Gissing, *A Life's Morning*, Centenary Edition, edited by Pierre Coustillas and Clifford Brook, Wakefield: The Gissing Trust, 2003. A re-issue of the 1984 Harvester edition. Green cloth with gilt titling. With a frontispiece which reproduces a portrait of the author taken in Wakefield on 22 August 1888 by the Hall brothers. £22.00. For orders, see the framed announcement on p. 26.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Patricia E. Johnson, *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001. *The Nether World* is discussed on pp. 159-62 among others.
- Vivian Gornick, "The Passionate Genius of a Neurotic," *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 29 June 2003, pp. 12-13. A good general article on Gissing's life and works.
- Dario Redaelli, "Cultura: Badolato offre alle scuole Gissing in inglese," *Il Besanese*, No. 3 [July] 2003, p. 24.
- Alan York, "Special Tribute for Novelist's Centenary," *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 13 August 2003, p. 20. By the same author, "Writer Remembered: Novel Tribute to mark 100th anniversary of Gissing's death," *Wakefield Post* (Supplement to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*), 17 September 2003, p. 8. A full-page article with illustrations in colour.
- Evelyn Toynton, "A small-town Faust," *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 August 2003, p. 20. This review of Jane Smiley's novel *Good Faith* begins with a mention of *New Grub Street* and a quotation from Biffen.
- Lisa Rookes, "Novel Launch for Centenary," *Wakefield Express*, 15 August 2003, p. 11. With a photograph of Thompson's Yard.
- "Speciale Estate: George Gissing, La terra del sole," *Il domani di Catanzaro*, 17 August 2003, p. 18. A full page of letters sent by Gissing to friends and relatives ranging from 27 November to 12 December 1897, reproduced from *La terra del sole*, edited by Francesco Badolato (1999).
- Anon., "George Gissing Discussion List Inaugurated," *Victorian Studies Bulletin*, September 2003, p. 2. On the internet.
- Mark Rotella, *Stolen Figs and Other Adventures in Calabria*, New York: North Point Press, 2003. This is a book written by a man of Calabrian ancestry who visits the land of his relatives. Gissing appears on pp. 93, 95, 117, 195-96. To be put on the same shelf as John Keahey's *A Sweet and Glorious Land*.