

The Gissing Journal

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

Commonplace Book

Gissing commemorated in the Basque Country and Elsewhere

“Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes”—this beautiful line from *The House of Life*, which Gissing found in his Tauchnitz edition of Rossetti’s poems in 1883, comes to the critic’s mind as the centenary of his death is being celebrated in newspapers and periodicals. Respect and fervour are the keynotes. One reads in private correspondence of toasts solemnly drunk to him and of glasses raised southwards on 28 December, ephemeral tokens of esteem which would cheer the interested party if he could be briefly revived and be shown that indeed, as he confidently foresaw on his death-bed, his work has not sunk into oblivion.

A vivid account of the international London Conference was given by John Spiers in our October number; it was a celebration of the vitality of his work. Now some of us thought that a private visit to Gissing’s grave and to the various places where he spent the last two years of his short life might be contemplated by a small group of friends whom neither season nor distance would be likely to deter. Even in the Basque Country late December is about the worse time of year for a commemorative celebration, but some contacts between a local historian, M. Guy Lalanne, who is also deputy Mayor of Ciboure, and the editor of the *Journal* somehow changed the face of things. Mme Janice Deledalle-Rhodes and her husband had been told during a visit to the Gissing sites in September 2001 that M. Lalanne, who is also President of the cultural association *Jakintza*, might support any attempt to make Gissing better known in the four Basque localities with which his name is connected, and indeed he did. Janice and Gérard Deledalle also suggested that some clearer identification of Gissing’s grave in the Saint-Jean-de-Luz cemetery would be appropriate.

The party of visitors included Jane Gissing, who came all the way from her home in Switzerland, John Spiers, former founder and owner of the Harvester Press, now External Professor at the Business School, University of Glamorgan, and his wife Leigh (who are to be thanked for the photos reproduced here), Frau Karina Of, translator of *The Odd Women* and *By the Ionian Sea* into German and her husband Michael, as well as Pierre and

Hélène Coustillas. Among the local personalities were M. Guy Poulou, Mayor of Ciboure, and M. Claude Lolom, first deputy Mayor of Ciboure, M. François Maïtia, Mayor of Ispoure (who was later to send us a short article on Gissing, appropriately entitled “Le saviez-vous?”, in the municipal bulletin of his village in 1996), and M. Carricaburu, deputy Mayor of Ispoure. Besides M. Guy Lalanne, the local cultural association Jakintza (in Basque: to inform, let know) was represented by Mesdames M. J. Delcoigne, O. Delcoigne, N. Arruti and Messieurs François Lannes (who knew Gabrielle Fleury quite well in Paris in the last years of her life), M. Petit, and J. M. Sallaberry. The brief appearance of M. Chardiet, deputy Mayor of Saint-Jean-de-Luz at the beginning of the ceremony should also be noted as well as the apology expressed by M. Duhart, Mayor of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, who very much regretted it was impossible for him to attend. Two newspapers were represented, *Sud Ouest*, the Bordeaux daily, and *La Semaine du Pays Basque*.

The group of some twenty participants met around Gissing’s grave on Sunday, 28 December at 10.30 a.m. Besides flowers recently laid down was placed a plaque with a medallion made from a portrait of Gissing by the brothers Hall in August 1888, on either side of which can be read: DISTINGUISHED NOVELIST and MAN of LETTERS | ROMANCIER ANGLAIS ÉCRIVAIN DISTINGUÉ, with Gissing’s name and life dates at bottom. M. Lalanne introduced Pierre Coustillas, who in turn introduced the foreign visitors. He pointed out how John Spiers, with remarkable energy, made the writer’s works available to the cultured public in the 1970s and 1980s. He then sketched the broad lines of Gissing’s life and career, saying how he discovered the novelist’s work while a student at the Sorbonne in Paris. The speaker summed up the three phases of Gissing’s career, the years 1888 and 1897 being crucial ones in that his journeys to Italy each time foreshadowed new developments in his many-sided literary production as a novelist, short story writer, critic and scholar bent on exploring historically and spatially the main sites of the Græco-Roman world. Gissing, Pierre Coustillas said, was a European in a sense of the epithet which, culturally, harmonizes with post-World-War II developments. He was a very capable linguist with a thorough knowledge of Latin and Greek as well as a praiseworthy command of French, German, Italian and Spanish based on spoken practice and great familiarity with the literatures in these four languages. The writer, Coustillas stressed, was also a highly observant traveller who visited or lived for a time in America, France, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Germany (which he left rather abruptly after a few days in 1898, finding the militaristic atmosphere unbearable) and Spain at the time he lived in

Ciboure and Ispoure. The Scandinavian countries he had no opportunity to visit, but he satisfied his curiosity by reading Ibsen, Jacobsen and Björnson.

A pacifist and anti-imperialist throughout his life, but particularly so at the turn of the century when the interests of England, France and Germany all too obviously collided, he was labelled a Little Englander by the pro-war parties at the time of the Boer War. After his death, Coustillas recalled, he was more than once styled a good prophet who had predicted large-scale

European conflicts stemming from Teutonic territorial appetites. His elder son was to be killed in the battle of the Somme in July 1916. In retrospect Gissing is seen to have sided with humane, honourable forces. In the days of the Dreyfus case he was pro-Dreyfus and admired Zola's courage, and more generally condemned all forms of arbitrariness and oppression, whether political, social or religious. His work is now acknowledged as that of a supremely honest and scrupulous artist, as that of a humanist who would neither follow blindly nor welcome the allegiance of fellow writers. He lived for literature and the fact that he numbered George Orwell among his staunchest admirers is now regarded as the best permanent hallmark that can be placed on his work, a substantial portion of which is kept in print; he has been translated into a dozen languages; a steady flow of books and articles are devoted to his complex personality, and a quarterly review, the *Gissing Journal*, keeps readers informed of the evolution of his status at world level. This has been an altogether fitting development for a writer who was an apostle of culture as an agent of emancipation and progress. *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* are now considered to be classics.

To conclude, Pierre Coustillas asked himself what vision of Gissing's posthumous vitality can reasonably be entertained after the celebration of this first centenary. He optimistically observed that if anything the number of his active devotees was increasing, and expressed his deep-rooted belief that so long as there are men and women attached to the values he had just called up, there would be in all countries at least an honourable minority of thinking spirits prepared to respect and admire the work of George Gissing.

The ceremony was reported in the Bayonne edition of *Sud Ouest* on 29 December, Section II, p. 8. In his article, Olivier Feyt cleverly combined an account of the commemorative gathering with basic information about Gissing and his work. The full title of the article reads: "Littérature. Une plaque a été posée hier sur la tombe du romancier anglais George Gissing, mort il y a cent ans. Il vécut ses derniers mois à Ciboure et Ispoure. La fin d'un écrivain." Very apropos he recalled that only two graves, those of Gissing and Ernest William Hornung, have been preserved in what used to be called locally "le carré anglais," that is the top part of the Saint-Jean-de-Luz cemetery, along the rue Duconté. (There never was an English cemetery in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, contrary to what Algernon and Ellen Gissing wrote in the 1927 volume of their brother's letters to his family.) Olivier Feyt raised a question: Why was Gissing buried in the "cimetière Aïce Errota" [windmill in Basque] in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and not in the cemetery at Ispoure, where incidentally and predictably, the members of the Elguë

family (the proprietors of the house in which Gissing died) are buried? So that George should be among his countrymen, is Gabrielle's answer in the bulk of unpublished correspondence addressed to his friends. In a shorter article which appeared in *La Semaine du Pays basque* for 1-7 January, p. 17, Vincent Martin was more specific about some aspects of Gissing's career, notably its European dimension, its artistic originality and the credible concern it reveals for peace and social justice.

This international meeting around Gissing's grave in a very specific part of southern France which had roused his curiosity and interest was prolonged by visits to the other Gissing sites. Among these was the town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz itself where, as is attested by Gabrielle's *Recollections* published in Volume 9 of the *Collected Letters*, the novelist and his "wife" had a number of acquaintances and friends. Other places that beckon to readers of the correspondence are the Pension Larréa, no longer a tempo-

rary establishment for the casual visitor, but a house apparently uninhabited now numbered 59 on the Quai Maurice Ravel in Ciboure. Also in Ciboure, the Villa Argizabal, which Gissing invariably named after its owner, Mme Lannes, is in better condition than ever, and surely more striking to the eye than on the postcard reproduced in Volume 9 of the *Letters*, which shows this impressive building as it was shortly before the Great War. As an American visitor noted a few years ago, the Anglican temple in Saint-Jean-de-Luz no longer claims to be a religious edifice, only a house for more mundane uses.

A trip to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port enabled the party to see the town centre, a very busy place in summer when tourists flock to the Basque Country. There stands the establishment already called the Hôtel de France in Gabrielle's time. The railway station is still very much as it used to be in 1903. There the visitors imagined Gissing, Gabrielle and Maman accompanied by Bijou in early July of that year, as they got off the train, then betook themselves to the small, adjacent village of Ispoure. Outwardly the Maison or Chalet Elguë, behind its row of plane trees, is also much as it was in 1863—the year it was built—but not only was an extension built behind it in the latter part of the twentieth century, its environment has changed, but not for the better, since some of us first saw it in 1962. In 1903 Gissing used to take walks with his genial little dog along the quiet road by which the house stood. Nothing of the kind could reasonably be done nowadays. The flow of traffic from both sides is so steady that taking photographs of the house from across the road requires much patience. On the way to Saint-Jean-le-Vieux, you now promptly reach, no longer the gipsy encampment mentioned by Gabrielle, but a supermarket where people come from the neighbouring villages. If Gissing could see his former home again, he would be only a little less baffled than George Bowling in Orwell's 1939 novel, *Coming Up for Air*, when he revisits Lower Binfield. Little by little Gissing's homes and haunts are being altered out of recognition and not a few of them have been wiped away by such new developments as those he so perspicaciously analysed in his last three-volume novel, *In the Year of Jubilee*. The usefulness of centenaries lies in the opportunity they offer to measure the passing of time in more subjective and colourful manners than the mechanisms of clocks and watches.

The approaching centenary of Gissing's death gave many authors and editors a chance of paying homage to his impressive achievement. The volumes listed under "Recent Publications" certainly appear at an opportune moment. The most extraordinary, though not totally unexpected homage,

comes from Japan, in the form of a volume of about 440 octavo pages, edited by Professor Mitsuharu Matsuoka, of Nagoya University. It is entitled *The World of Gissing: In the Year of the Centenary*. A review of it by Professor Fumio Hojoh will be published in this journal later this year, but a preliminary description of it will serve as a temporary reply to those friends and correspondents who have enquired about the contents. The book is bound in red imitation cloth gilt with a pictorial dustjacket featuring the portrait in oils from photographs by Lily Waldron and, on the back, the well-known portrait of young George taken c. 1865. The publisher, Eihosha, it should be noted, is one of the many houses that brought out editions of Gissing's works, for instance *A Daughter of the Lodge* (1955), *Spellbound* (1962), and *A Victim of Circumstances and The Light on the Tower* (1958) in a bilingual series. For our benefit, Mr. Matsuoka explains that the sun on the front of the dustjacket is used as a double symbol: the sinking sun suggests the hundredth anniversary of the writer's death, while the rising sun is an auspicious sign of the beginning of new Gissing studies in Japan. The publisher has produced 600 copies, the manufacturing of which has been subsidised by contributors—signal evidence of their admirable attachment to Gissing—and more particularly by the editor. Judging by all its aspects, Mitsuharu Matsuoka is totally justified in flattering himself that his volume is far more substantial than other academic books on English and American literature recently published in Japan. Non-Japanese readers who chance to have a copy in hand will be struck by the number of illustrations rarely to be found elsewhere—photographs of Gissing's native place, no. 55, renumbered 60 Westgate, Wakefield, apparently reproduced from Takashi Shimizu's *Introduction to Gissing Studies* (1977), Marianne Helen Harrison, Edith Underwood, Gissing's grave as it was in the 1970s, Gabrielle with Bijou and, among the more out of the way material, the frontispiece in the Wayfarer's Library edition of *Demos*. After the prologue, the preface by the editor of this journal, and a primary bibliography of Gissing's works, the contents include a biography by Jacob Korg, a survey of Gissing studies since 1903 by the present writer, chapters on *The Unclassed* (by Harumi Kuramochi), *The Nether World* (by Saburo Kuramochi), *New Grub Street* (by Mitsuharu Matsuoka), *Born in Exile* (by Ryota Kanayama), *The Odd Women* (by Mihoko Takeda), *Sleeping Fires* (by Ayaka Komiya), *The Whirlpool* (by Ryoko Ohta), *By the Ionian Sea* (by Yakimitsu Namiki), and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (by Noriaki Kato). Then three chapters are devoted respectively to The Other Novels, by Jacob Korg and Takashi Kozawa, The Short Stories, by Masahiko Yahata, and Gissing and

Dickens, by Shigeru Koike. Western scholars will be struck by the succession of new names, a good omen for the future of Gissing studies in Japan. The long chapter on Gissing Information Resources (pp. 341-65) contains a large number of entries about articles in Japanese which, to all appearances, have never been listed in Anglo-American bibliographies as well as the addresses of many websites of interest to critics or mere browsers. Even the film made from *Demos* (American title: *Why Men Forget*), of which Frederick Nesta recently discovered a highly favourable review in *The Times*, is mentioned on p. 353. For Japanese readers, the volume will be sure to prove a thorough and stimulating guide.

On 28th December, Professor Matsuoka also created on the Web a Hyper-Concordance to Gissing's works:

<http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/gissing/>

which is one of the two subcategories in "The Victorian Literary Studies Archive": <http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/>, an Archive which includes many Victorian writers, from Ainsworth to Oscar Wilde, besides Shakespeare, the Bible, some 20th century authors, and four Americans, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville and Twain. The Hyper-Concordance is written in C++, a programme that scans and displays lines on a command entered by the user. The main advantage of the C++ programme is that it not only identifies the concordance lines but the words occurring to the left and the right of the word or phrase searched. It also reports the total number of text lines, the total word count and the number of occurrences of the word or phrase searched. The full text of the book is displayed in a box at the bottom of the screen. Each line of the text is numbered, and the line number and the term(s) searched provide a link to the full text. This KWIC concordance (Key Word in Context) offers a clear survey of Victorian literary texts. Users will find it very helpful when tracing quotations, collecting supporting evidence, or writing a paper with special reference to a theme.

There have been other, fairly numerous, forms of celebration, yet as a rule more oblique or at least shorter. The well-known journalist and critic D. J. Taylor who, in the last few years, published big studies of Thackeray and Orwell—that is, a novelist of whom Gissing wrote that he interested him still more than Dickens, and an artistic and political figure whose praise of Gissing has been extremely influential—paid a warm homage to Gissing in the *Guardian* on 10 December:

For anyone professionally involved in the world of books, to read a résumé of the melancholy career of George Gissing (1857-1903) is the spiritual equivalent of a dose of castor oil.

His first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, sold a sobering 63 copies [actually even less, 49], and even at the end of his life, when a certain amount of public kudos had come his way, he was still chronically hard up and fretting over his inability to finish the novel (*Veranilda*) that lay uncompleted at his death.

Gissing's best known work, *New Grub Street*, is a particularly dreadful book to anyone whose livelihood depends on their ability to produce a weekly quota of words. Its subject, effectively, is the writer who loses the knack of writing. Edwin Reardon, its diffident and scholarly hero, has a freak success with a novel. On the strength of this he marries a refined young woman, Amy, who imagines that she has hitched herself to a genius. Almost immediately, though, Reardon begins to struggle.

All this is observed, not unsympathetically, by the couple's interesting young friend, Jasper Milvain, a journalist who writes "for the market" and urges Reardon, with complete lack of success, to do the same. When, after countless vicissitudes, including the failure of his literary career and the collapse of his marriage, Reardon dies (as did Gissing) of lung disease, prudent Jasper marries the widow.

The real reason for Reardon's meltdown, it is implied, is not simply his diffidence and his writer's block (chillingly outlined), but his lack of clubbability—his reluctance to attend the right parties or toady to the right professional patrons.

Needless to say, all this has a horribly familiar ring. On one level *New Grub Street* is no more than a mordant late-Victorian curio, and yet you have an idea that the 21st-century literary landscape is full of Gissing's and Reardon's moral equivalents: writers manifestly detached from the professional loop, scribbling on in dismal obscurity for no other reason than their desire to write. Such people, it goes without saying, are rarely asked to contribute to Books of the Year selections or anthologies of writers' public shame, but the literary world would be a poorer place without them.

Who, one wonders, would venture to disagree? In our opinion, there is no novelist and critic writing for the English press, who is so sincerely and so consistently attached to Gissing as David Taylor. We often receive press-cuttings or e-mails from English readers who have found relevant allusions in his articles and book reviews. Examples traced in the last half-year begin with "Pointless Prose" (*Guardian*, 29 July), which lucidly shows that "in an age when art has lost all formal influence, the opinions of a few 'committed' writers count for nothing": "When I first set out on my journey through what the Victorian novelist George Gissing called the Valley of the Shadow of Books—contributing novel reviews to the *London Magazine* at £30 a time—I took the proper attitude, common to practically every British writer since the 1930s, that in however marginal a way I was 'committed.'" After expounding some of the reasons for his disenchantment, David Taylor concludes: "For the first time in my life, awful to relate, despite Bush, Blair and the terrors of 'liberation,' I feel thoroughly *dégagé*." The list goes on with a review entitled "Working-class hero" of Dave Harker's book on Robert Tressell in the *Sunday Times* (10 August), in which Tressell's world is said to be "a kind of gloomy compound made up of George

Gissing's novels, H. G. Wells's earnest young men, shabby-genteel poverty and the clump of the landlord's boots ascending the carpetless stair." Then with "Gordon Who?" (*Guardian*, 22 October) where the valley of the shadow of books is called Gissing's "deathless phrase," and the list ends with Taylor naming Simon James's critical study of Gissing's works in "The Best Reads of 2003" in the *Independent on Sunday* (21 December).

Some reviewers seem to take their cue from him. During the same six months at least five articles in various newspapers introduced Gissing's name into discussions of widely different subjects. One by Sunder Katwala, "How not to succeed?", in which Gissing, Orwell and Taylor are found side by side apropos of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (*Observer Review*, 6 July). Another by Samantha Ellis, "West End Girls and East End Bombs," a review of Matthew D'Ancona's novel *Going East*, in which *The Nether World* is quoted about London, "a city of the damned...swarming with a nameless populace" (*Observer*, 13 July). The third by Alison Light, who casts another glance at *The Nether World* (*Guardian*, 9 August) in a commentary on the "City of lost children." The fourth by Evelyn Toynton, "A small-town Faust," which consists in a review of Jane Smiley's novel *Good Faith*, beginning with a quotation from—Harold Biffen (*Times Literary Supplement*, 15 August). The fifth by Alexei Sayle, for whom, in the "Books of the Year" listed in the Books Section of the *Daily Telegraph* for 22 November, the depressing lives of present-day writers are much the same as those of the Victorian writers depicted in *New Grub Street*.

Other commemorations of Gissing's achievement were listed on p. 48 of our October number. The earliest was "The Passionate Genius of a Neurotic" by Vivian Gornick (*Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 29 June). More "colourful" was Alan York's "Special Tribute for Novelist's Centenary," an illustrated article which appeared in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (13 August), and again, in another version, in the *Wakefield Post* (a supplement to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*) under the title "Writer Remembered: Novel Tribute to mark 100th anniversary of Gissing's death" (17 September). The whole of page 8 was devoted to Gissing, with numerous illustrations. The *Wakefield Express* also honoured the city's most famous son on 15 August with a portrait of him on the front page and an article by Lisa Rookes. *The Times* for 7 October had a way all its own to remind its readers of what it was like to live on 7 October one hundred and fifteen years ago when you were a struggling novelist who had managed to save enough money for a Continental journey. A long passage from Gissing's letter to Bertz of 7 October 1888 is quoted and it certainly gives us the feel of the period. On

5 December the *Times Literary Supplement*, through its columnist J. C., who is often taken to task—more or less kindly—by readers for his inaccuracies, paid its tribute to Gissing, having him expire on the last day of 1903 and asking for a cheap reading edition of the lesser-known novels. On 19 December Pierre Coustillas corrected J. C.'s slight error, giving material details about the exact circumstances of Gissing's death and asking in turn for new editions of *The Unclassed*, *Thyrza* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*.

Journalistic celebrations known to us by the end of "the old Year" ended with this item, but the early months of 1904 will undoubtedly produce some kind of overflow. Among the earliest we can confidently expect a review article by D. J. Taylor in the *TLS*. It will deal with the recently published volumes described in the present issue of the *Journal*.

Research steadily continues. Wulfhard Stahl reports the discovery of an incomplete serialization of *New Grub Street* in Polish from 30 January to 29 April 1892. It appeared irregularly in only eight chapters in *Gazeta Narodowa* (The People's Gazette) and the text is heavily abridged. Copies of the periodical can be found in the Austrian Nationalbibliothek in Vienna and in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Krakow. Like Adele Berger, the author of the translation into German, the Polish translator had difficulties with the title. The fact that it means, literally translated into English, "A Son of the Age," suggests a translation from the German translation rather than from the English original. Gissing is not likely to have heard of this Polish version of his novel.

Discoveries in old newspapers, even those which, like the London *Times* and the *New York Times* are commonly thought to be well indexed, have recently been made. For instance Frederick Nesta tells us that the "banishment" of the *Ryecroft Papers* in Japan, shortly before the Second World War, was echoed in the *New York Times* for 20 April 1938, p. 14. "Japan Curbs Reading," the title of the article reads, "John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell on School Ban List." Also, though *By the Ionian Sea* was not published in the States until 1905 (by Scribner's Sons), readers of the same American newspaper were told about the serialization of the travel narrative on two occasions, on 23 September and 2 December 1900. Later a journalist on the staff of the *New York Times* was reminded of Gissing's chapter on Reggio after the terrible earthquake of late 1908.

The new year will see the publication of the three Grayswood Press volumes of Gissing's Works on Dickens, edited respectively by Pierre Coustillas, Simon James and Christine DeVine, as well as that of *New Grub Street*, edited by Stephen Arata (Broadview Press). The two letters from

Swinburne to Gissing of 24 and 29 October 1883 published in the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, Vol. 2, will be reprinted in *Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, edited by Terry L. Meyers (Pickering and Chatto) in May 2004. Barbara Rawlinson's study of The Other Gissing, that is the short story writer, the essayist, the critic, and the poet, will very likely be published by Rodopi, the Amsterdam firm which brought out *A Garland for Gissing*. The volume of new critical essays to be issued by Ashgate will not appear until the autumn of 2005, we are told, but the publication of the new *Dictionary of National Biography*, with entries on Gissing as well as his brother Algernon and Morley Roberts contributed by the editor of the *Journal*, has been announced for next September.— P.C.

**In Darkest London:
George Gissing's *The Nether World* as Urban Novel**

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Per me si va nella città dolente,
Per me si va nell'eterno dolore,
Per me si va tra la perduta gente
[...]
Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.

Dante, *La Divina Commedia*

The day after George Gissing's former wife, Nell Harrison, succumbed to the consequences of her alcohol addiction in one of London's poorest quarters, he noted in his diary:

In nothing am I to blame; I did my utmost; again and again I had her back to me. Fate was too strong. But as I stood beside that bed, I felt that my life henceforth had a firmer purpose. Henceforth I never cease to bear testimony against the accursed social order that brings about things of that kind. I feel that she will help me more in her death than she balked me during her life. Poor, poor thing.¹

Following his so-called "working-class novels" *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), *The Unclassed* (1884), *Demos* (1886) and *Thyrza* (1887), *The Nether World* (1889) has often been regarded as the pinnacle as well as the end of Gissing's creative preoccupation with the urban working classes.

At the same time, some critics have repeatedly pointed to the terminological inaccuracy in speaking of Gissing's early novels as "working-class"

fiction. Werner Urlaub, for instance, refers to the fact that of all Gissing's novels written in the 1880s, *The Nether World* is the only one in which all the characters belong to the urban proletariat, even though the main protagonists stand morally and intellectually above it.² A terminological compromise—as Urlaub further suggests—in favour of the less rigid expression “social novel” would, on the other hand, support Gissing's main preoccupation during the 1880s, namely the social determination of his fictional characters. Particularly in Gissing's early work, this social determination seems to be inseparably linked with the industrialised, urban environment of the modern metropolis.

Taking these facts into account, the following discussion of *The Nether World* will focus mainly on the kind of urban predicament Gissing has chosen to portray in this novel; it will show that in doing so, the novel can also be read as a distinctly urban novel. The analysis will therefore concentrate mainly on the most important, genre-specific criteria of the “urban novel” or “city novel”: the presentation of the urban setting, the influence of this urban environment on the development of character and plot and, last but not least, a possible abstract or symbolic image of the city.

With regard to the presentation of the urban setting in *The Nether World*, the first sentence of the opening chapter strikingly establishes the kind of topographical exactness that directs the reader through the novel, almost as a map directs him through the respective quarters of London: Clerkenwell Green, St. James's Church, Clerkenwell Close, St. John Street, St. John's Square, Shooter's Gardens, Farringdon Road, Hanover Street, Islington, etc. The main location is Clerkenwell, a part of London, north-west of the City, already considered to be among the most squalid areas of the metropolis in the early 19th century and which continued to deteriorate as the railways were being built and overpopulation hit the inner urban districts. In this context, Gissing's topographical and documentary precision is remarkable. It can be seen, for example, in the narrator's digression on historic Clerkenwell in chapter VI:

The exit from it [St. John's Square] on the south side is by St. John's Lane, at the entrance to which stands [...] the embattled and windowed archway which is all that remains above ground of the great Priory of St. John of Jerusalem. Here dwelt the Knights Hospitallers, in days when Clerkenwell was a rural parish, distant by a long stretch of green country from the walls of London. But other and nearer memories are revived by St. John's Arch. In the rooms above the gateway dwelt, a hundred and fifty years ago one Edward Cave, publisher of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and there many a time has sat a journeyman author of his, by name Samuel Johnson, [...]. There it was that the said Samuel once had his dinner handed to him behind a screen, because of his unrepresentable costume, when Cave was entertaining an aristo-

cratic guest. In the course of the meal, the guest happened to speak with interest of something he had recently read by an obscure Mr. Johnson; whereat there was joy behind the screen, and probably increased appreciation of the unwonted dinner.³

Gissing seems to take equal care with respect to the urban historical and sociological facts presented in the novel. The narrator's description of the destruction of the slum called "Shooter's Gardens," as well as his comment on the building of the new housing estate, the Farringdon Road Buildings, are of special interest here, since both describe authentic measures taken by the London Housing Authorities in the late 1870s in order to clear away Clerkenwell's most deplorable poor quarters.

In the first volume of *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Charles Booth gives a detailed description of the kind of houses referred to by Gissing's narrator:

One can see what were the original buildings; in many cases they are still standing, and between them, on the large gardens of a past state of things, has been built the small cottage property of to-day. Houses of three rooms, houses of two rooms, houses of one room—houses set back against a wall or back to back, fronting it may be on to a narrow footway, with posts at each end and a gutter down in the middle. Small courts contrived to utilize some space in the rear, and approached by archway under the building which fronts the street. Of such sort are the poorest class of houses. [...] these little places are often called "gardens," telling their story with unintended irony.⁴

Apart from this topographical and documentary precision, the authenticity of the setting and the time frame of the story, Gissing's naturalistic tendencies and his love of powerful symbolic language often seem to overlap. Thus, the novel opens with the description of an old man lately returned to Clerkenwell:

In the troubled twilight of a March evening ten years ago, an old man, whose equipment and bearing suggested that he was fresh from travel, walked slowly across Clerkenwell Green, and by the graveyard of St. James's Church stood for a moment looking about him. (p. 1)

The choice of words, setting and mood conveyed in these opening lines and those that follow, immediately establishes the dark atmosphere of the whole novel: that of a life lacking in light, a life that cannot be redeemed even in death, the life, in short, of a metaphorical underworld called Clerkenwell.

The next two paragraphs show the old man entering the infernal regions of Clerkenwell. In their strong Dantesque rhetoric and imagery, these lines are reminiscent of the "Inferno" in the *Divina Commedia* and are therefore cited in their entirety:

The burial-ground by which he had paused was as little restful to the eye as are most of those discoverable in the byways of London. The small trees that grew about it shivered in their leaflessness; the rank grass was wan under the failing day; most of the stones leaned this way or that, emblems of neglect (they were very white at the top, and darkened downwards till the damp soil made them black), and certain cats and dogs were prowling or sporting among the graves. At this corner the east wind blew with malice such as it never puts forth save where there are poorly clad people to be pierced; it swept before it thin clouds of unsavoury dust, mingled with the light refuse of the streets. Above the shapeless houses night was signalling a murky approach; the sky—if sky it could be called—gave threatening of sleet, perchance of snow. And on every side was the rumble of traffic, the voiceful evidence of toil and poverty; hawkers were crying their goods; the inevitable organ was clanging before a public-house hard by; the crumpet-man was hastening along, with monotonous ringing of his bell and hoarse rhythmic wail.

The old man had fixed his eyes half absently on the inscription of a gravestone near him; a lean cat springing out between the iron railings seemed to recall his attention, and with a slight sigh he went forward along the narrow street which is called St. James's Walk. In a few minutes he had reached the end of it, and found himself facing a high grey-brick wall, wherein, at this point, was an arched gateway closed with black doors. He looked at the gateway, then fixed his gaze on something that stood just above—something which the dusk half concealed, and by so doing made more impressive. It was the sculptured counterfeit of a human face, that of a man distraught with agony. The eyes stared wildly from their sockets, the hair struggled in maniac disorder,⁵ the forehead was wrung with torture, the cheeks sunken, the throat fearsomely wasted, and from the wide lips there seemed to be issuing a horrible cry. Above this hideous effigy was carved the legend: 'MIDDLESEX HOUSE OF DETENTION.' (p. 2)

The description of the graveyard and the prison serves at the same time to introduce the main *leitmotifs* which constitute Gissing's urban landscape in all its inexorable misery: imprisonment, death, and damnation. The adjectives, as Adrian Poole points out in one of the few works to consider the urban context of the novel in a more detailed way, are nerve-wracking ("rank," "wan," "darkened," "damp," "black," "unsavoury," "shapeless," "murky," "monotonous," "hoarse") and create a central image in the negation of life.

The graveyard, "little restful to the eye," the streets with their "light refuse," the "rumble of traffic" and the "voiceful evidence of toil and poverty," and last but not least the "shapeless houses" make up this man-made world, in which the only remaining connection to nature seems to be that of decay. In this world, nature has become an alien element, a potential threat, even, without any sign of its reviving powers: "The small trees [...] shivered in their leaflessness; the rank grass was wan under the failing day." Sterility, lack of energy and chaos determine this world, which is furthermore tormented by the east wind acting as a prophet of doom. Nothing

is reminiscent here of the association of wind, as originating in the Christian tradition, with the immaterial and spiritual, the spirit of God. Here, the wind is seen rather prosaically as a bringer of refuse and dust, and as a threat to the poorest of the poor, who are constantly struggling to keep themselves warm.

Unsurprisingly in this context, the sky over Clerkenwell (“if sky it could be called”) never bears any positive connotations (like light, the sun, fertile rain or the purity of snow), able merely to produce “sleet,” just as “night was signalling a murky approach.”

The only evidence of human life in this kind of limbo is perceived acoustically rather than visually: the shouts of the hawkers, the clanging of the street-organ, the “monotonous” and “hoarse rhythmic wail” of the crumpet-man’s bell. The image evoked here on an audio-sensual level is that of an undifferentiated, depersonalized urban crowd, whose existence and destiny seem to amount to no more than shouting and wailing. At this point, the initial atmosphere of the “troubled twilight” has been developed to the full.

As the traveller reaches the end of the graveyard, he finds himself facing a gate strongly suggestive of the entrance to hell in Dante’s third canto of the *Inferno*. Adrian Poole interprets the emblematic meaning of the “hideous effigy” carved in stone of a human face distorted by pain and desperation as follows:

Death and suffering, the grave and the sculpture: these are the two ultimate states of reification towards which man is driven by ‘Fate’ and ‘Society.’ They represent the permanent and the temporary aspects of death against which all the energy within and without the narrative will be directed.⁶

“Suffering” and “dying” as temporary, the “grave” and the “stone effigy” as permanent aspects of death—these constitute for Poole the framework within which human existence in the “nether world” defines itself. In connection with the previously mentioned *leitmotifs* of “imprisonment” and “damnation,” the specific atmosphere established at this early point in the narrative can be seen as a reference to a wider and central aspect which equally seems to determine the plot-structure and meaning of the whole novel.

Apart from the richly symbolic introduction of the setting, the beginning of the first chapter also contains the first description of one of the novel’s central characters. It is that of the old traveller, Michael Snowdon, whose name is only mentioned in the fifth chapter and whose bearing straight away suggests an association with the figure of a *homo viator*. This aspect,

as well as the following detailed description of his outward appearance, not only serve to stress his distinctive features, but also explicitly dissociate him from the setting mentioned above. Even though he is almost seventy and his shoulders are bent, his steady stride suggests strength of character rather than infirmity. His clothing—"neither that of a man of leisure, nor of the kind usually worn by English mechanics" (p. 1)—definitely seems out of place: his outer clothing reminiscent of a fisherman's, the trousers made of moleskin, the knee-high boots and the striking felt hat in the form of a "petasos" give him something of a dignified air, at other times sought in vain among the infernal regions of Clerkenwell. In this context, the extraordinary choice of the old man's headgear deserves closer scrutiny, too. The "petasos," a popular hat in ancient Greece with a wide brim and a flat top was—equipped with a pair of wings—traditionally seen as an attribute of Hermes. This messenger of the gods was also known as a bringer of wealth to human beings. He was, in addition, distinguished by a magic wand, winged shoes and a mostly bearded face. The old man, for his part, possesses a "stout stick," an extravagant hat and unusual footwear. He, too, wears a beard which, together with his "long thin white hair," gives him the appearance of a prophet. Besides these outward features, Hermes' capacity as a bringer of wealth is also bestowed upon Michael Snowdon. He brings a considerable fortune back to his native place, with the prospect of investing it for philanthropic purposes in the poor quarters of Clerkenwell.

Finally, it is interesting to take a look at the description of the old man's facial expression:

To say that his aspect was venerable would serve to present him in a measure, yet would not be wholly accurate, for there was too much of past struggle and present anxiety in his countenance to permit full expression of the natural dignity of his features. It was a fine face and might have been distinctly noble, but circumstances had marred the purpose of Nature; you perceived that his cares had too often been of the kind which are created by ignoble necessities, such as leave to most men of his standing a bare humanity of visage. (p. 1)

Beauty and the natural dignity of his features, it is said here, are overshadowed by past and present worries and the sheer necessities of existence; all that remains in this countenance, therefore, is the expression of "naked humanity."

This fact also serves to foreshadow some other aspect that will be of great importance to the structure of the plot as a whole, and the narrative as it unfolds from this point on. Alongside the already mentioned images of "imprisonment," "death" and "damnation," the destruction of good natural predisposition and talent is another central factor in the harsh living con-

ditions of the “nether world,” as is further demonstrated in the tragic life-story of the main characters, Jane Snowdon and Sidney Kirkwood.

The former character, Jane, at the beginning of the novel seemingly orphaned, is significantly being introduced by the title of the first chapter as “A Thrall of Thralls.” Very clearly, the grammatical form of the partitive genitive in its superlative function underlines the character’s complete degradation. As a “domestic slave” (p. 5) under the tyrannical authority of Mrs. Peckover and her sadistically-minded daughter Clem, Jane’s living conditions once again take up the associations of imprisonment and death: not only is Jane’s home in Clerkenwell Close described as “black and cavernous within” (p. 4), but her confrontation with the “permanent” aspect of death is also introduced by the fact that the body of Mrs. Peckover’s recently deceased mother-in-law has been laid out in the house, an opportunity which is at once used by the sadistic Clem to demonstrate her authority over the child Jane:

Jane hastened from the kitchen. Clem yelled to her to close the door, and she had no choice but to obey. In the dark passage outside there was darkness that might be felt. The child all but fainted with the sickness of horror as she turned the handle of the other door and began to grope her way. She knew exactly where the coffin was; she knew that to avoid touching it in the diminutive room was all but impossible. And touch it she did. Her anguish uttered itself, not in a mere sound of terror, but in a broken word or two of a prayer she knew by heart, including a name which sounded like a charm against evil. She had reached the mantel-piece; oh, she could not, could not find the matches! Yes, at last her hand closed on them. A blind rush, and she was out again in the passage. (p. 7)

In this passage, the otherwise often intrusive and omniscient narrator opts for a technique of “showing” rather than “telling” for describing Jane’s state of mind, and thus reveals the central feature of the girl’s existence: “she had no choice but to obey.” On the one hand, this obsequious kind of obedience stems from the girl’s fear of the workhouse, on the other hand from her personality, which defies rebellion as much as insensitivity. In the course of the narrative, it soon becomes clear, though, that her main character trait—her rich sensitivity—is not only strange and out of place in the surroundings of the “nether world,”⁷ but also contributes immensely to the intensity of her suffering. She appears in every way different from her “co-sufferers,” a fact that serves to make the identification of Jane’s character with her native milieu doubtful, if not impossible. At the same time, though, she shares some of the unmistakably deterministic aspects of her native “nether world”: signs of physical weakness as well as poverty and starvation. This is the framework within which the Darwinian principle of

the survival of the fittest manifests itself, leaving seemingly no space at all for moral, ethical or spiritual values. Thus, the further development of Jane's character could also be called a timid attempt at emancipation of mind and spirit, an attempt to free herself from the corrupt and "putrid soil of that nether world" (p. 8), as represented, for instance, by the character of Clem Peckover or as later depicted in the description of the proletarian masses.

Notwithstanding her moral integrity and even moral superiority within her milieu, Jane's attempt at freedom is due less to her own initiative than to two events which offer her a chance to change: her acquaintance with Sidney Kirkwood and the reunion with her grandfather Michael Snowdon, a man of property. Whereas Sidney is described as "one of the very few persons who had ever treated her with human kindness [...] and [who] had by degrees grown to represent all that she understood by the word 'friend'" (p. 12), Snowdon acts like a fanatic missionary in that he forces Jane's moral integrity more and more severely in the direction of a paradoxically inhumane "virtue of compassion."⁸ In his attack on the social-Darwinist principles of slum society, Snowdon represents a conscious synthesis of the two philosophical creeds which had played a major role in Gissing's own development: the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte and the pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer.

As a member of the London Positivist Society, Gissing was—mainly between the years 1878 and 1882—committed to Comte's idea of a general religion for all mankind that would, he hoped, through the cultivation of altruistic instincts, eventually lead to a reordering and reorganization of human society. Even though Gissing's interest in and high regard for Comte "was nothing more than a stage on the way to the rejection of all creeds, whether religious or political-social,"⁹ he still developed an interest in one other philosophic theory, namely the so-called "pessimism" of the German thinker Arthur Schopenhauer. The focus of Gissing's reception of Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* during the years 1880-1882 was mainly the philosopher's hypothesis of the "will to live" (*der "Wille zum Leben"*), in Schopenhauer's view a kind of active principle which manifests itself in each individual as longing, yearning, desire and a strong life force. In this basic constellation, the will to live was seen by Schopenhauer as a negative force, since striving and aspiration seemed to be its main characteristic features, and suffering its definite and sole result, because incessant striving would never lead to eventual satisfaction and happiness. Only the opposite, namely the deliberate negation of the will to live, could

lead to a state of happiness, justice and compassion—for Schopenhauer the ideal basis of any individual's moral code.

Michael Snowdon, after having subordinated himself for many years to a “life-controlling purpose” (p. 177) reminiscent of Schopenhauer's asceticism, takes up his granddaughter's education by focussing on the same duality between the idealism of compassion and the act of deliberate selflessness and self-sacrifice. If, as a result of these educational measures, Jane's degree of suffering is not diminished, her way of perceiving her surroundings, nevertheless, is definitely being modified. One example of her new sense of perception is the description of the Clerkenwell street in which her friend Pennyloaf Candy lives.

The visit she wished to pay took her into a disagreeable quarter, a street of squalid houses, swarming with yet more squalid children. On all the doorsteps sat little girls, themselves only just out of infancy, nursing or neglecting bald, red-eyed, doughy-limbed abortions in every stage of babyhood, hapless spawn of diseased humanity, born to embitter and brutalise yet further the lot of those who unwillingly gave them life. With wide, pitiful eyes Jane looked at each group she passed. Three years ago she would have seen nothing but the ordinary and the inevitable in such spectacles, but since then her moral and intellectual being had grown on rare nourishment; there was indignation as well as heartache in the feeling with which she had learnt to regard the world of her familiarity. (pp. 129f.)

Jane's sensitivity has, it seems, been directed to an awareness of the prevailing social inequality, which in turn leads her to react towards her familiar environment with a mixture of indignation and physical and mental anguish. In this way, her view of her immediate surroundings has come very close to Gissing's own feelings of indignation and antipathy towards the vulgarized proletarian masses. He at times diagnosed the latter as the visible symptoms of a society gone wrong, and they are also more than once verbalized in the novel by the author's spokesman, the personal and omniscient narrator.

Jane Snowdon, however, does not solely suffer anguish and indignation. For a short while she experiences an almost aesthetic kind of sensitivity, associated with her first encounter with love.

“[...] What should I have been now if—”

Something caused her to leave the speech unfinished, and for a few moments there was silence. From the ground exhaled a sweet fresh odour, soothing to the senses, and at times a breath of air brought subtler perfume from the alleys of the garden. In the branches above them rustled a bird's wing. At a distance on the country road sounded the trotting of a horse. (p. 167)

What is significant about this passage is the fact that Jane's first encounter with love does not take place in Clerkenwell, but at a “safe distance” in the

country. Symbolically speaking, this could be taken for the author's conviction that some aspects of life (like beauty, art, culture and love) are simply not compatible with a place like Clerkenwell, where most human relations are shown to exist merely for pragmatic and economic reasons. Furthermore, it is not surprising that Jane Snowdon and Sidney Kirkwood—the two characters with the greatest amount of moral integrity—are the only characters in the novel who seem to experience true love. With Sidney's love and the money Jane is going to inherit from her grandfather, their story fulfils all the prerequisites of a happy ending in the manner of many Victorian plots. By counteracting Gissing's maxim of "artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life,"¹⁰ though, such an idealised happy ending within the geographic and metaphoric "nether world" could only be denied. Hence, the traditional plot element of the fortunate inheritance is used in *The Nether World* only for the sake of irony: Michael Snowdon's fanatic idealism will require of his granddaughter that she should renounce her love for Sidney as well as all her personal needs for the sake of an abstract concept—public good. Her desperate desire to affirm her will to live ("I can't! Grandfather, don't ask it of me! Give it all to some one else—to some one else! I'm not strong enough to make such a sacrifice. Let me be as I was before!", p. 308) is not approved of, and culminates in Jane's final conflict of having to choose between personal emancipation and fulfilling her duty towards her "saviour," her grandfather Snowdon. In accordance with her altruistic inclinations, Jane finally makes an unsurprising choice: complete renunciation as the only hope—such is Gissing's depressing answer to the original question of the predicament of life in the "nether world," as well as the possibilities of personal development within this kind of milieu. Gissing's voice is very clear—Jane is pictured in no uncertain terms as a victim, as "one of the nether world's most complete victims. [...] a totally passive victim."¹¹ At the same time, and rather surprisingly, Michael Snowdon is also granted the role of victim. By having given the necessary amount of information about Snowdon's own Clerkenwell origin and tragic life history, the author seems to justify and to some extent even excuse this character's behaviour and actions. Thus the identity of the main "culprit" is within the course of the novel deliberately shifted in the direction of a more abstract but no less cruel evil—the evil of a merciless social order.

The development of the second protagonist, the autobiographically modelled Sidney Kirkwood, presents itself in a very similar way. His story is one of threefold renunciation: emotional, intellectual and artistic. Even more so than Jane, Sidney belongs to that category of Gissing characters

who have been termed “displaced intellectuals” or “proletarian intellectuals,” namely “men and women exiled from their proper sphere, the sphere to which they naturally belong by their aspirations or their talents.”¹² Of all the characters in *The Nether World* Sidney Kirkwood is the most explicit mouthpiece of the author’s own moral concept. Like Gissing himself, Sidney starts off as an idealistic social reformer and, like Gissing again, his “aspiring radicalism” and his belief in the perfectibility of man are short-lived. The reasons for his disillusionment, however, are more of a private nature than those which led to Gissing’s rather abstract, waning belief in the usefulness of any political commitment in the face of a vulgarized urban proletariat. For Sidney, the renunciation of his intellectual and artistic ambition is directly linked to the painful realization that these talents are not sought after in the “nether world”: “It was the end of his illusions. [...] ‘We are the lower orders; we are the working classes,’ he said bitterly [...], and that seemed the final answer to all his aspirations.” (p. 58)

Throughout his life, education and art were for Gissing the most irrefutable signs of any society’s inherent culture and civilization and, in his opinion, the only means of accelerating the process of a nation’s democratization, as well as removing once and for all the causes of poverty and squalor. This is why some of his characters try to flee from their society’s appalling conditions by committing themselves in some measure to their “out-of-place” artistic interests or aspirations. Even though most of these characters are doomed to failure, the author makes it quite clear that the potential existence of these talents is far more important than their successful realization.

If, as mentioned before, Sidney Kirkwood’s intellectual and moral aloofness with respect to his urban proletarian background is already established early on in the story, these talents are nevertheless unable to spare him disillusionment and failure. In contrast to so many of the utterly dehumanized inhabitants of the “nether world,” he is offered a possible refuge in a world of aestheticism, art and nature. As a result of the education he has received, Sidney is also granted a higher form of aesthetic sensitivity than, for example, Jane. The text reveals this in the way Sidney perceives sunshine or natural surroundings. Interestingly, in the narration of these moments of revelation of and confrontation with a beautiful and unknown world, the omniscient narrator is mostly silent. The narrative technique used is that of the internal point of view, or associative stream of thought, as in the example given below:

The triumphant sunshine, refusing to be excluded even from London workshops, gleamed upon his tools and on the scraps of jewellery before him; he looked up to the blue sky, and thought with heavy heart of many a lane in Surrey and in Essex where he might be wandering but for this ceaseless necessity of earning the week's wage. A fly buzzed loudly against the grimy windows, and by one of those associations which time and change cannot affect, he mused himself back into boyhood. (p. 90)

Equipped with such a degree of sensitivity to the life-giving forces of nature, Sidney is truly one of the fortunate inhabitants of the "nether world," as a comparison with the narrator's observation at the beginning of the novel shows:

At noon to-day there was sunlight on the Surrey hills; the fields and lanes were fragrant with the first breath of spring [...]. But of these things Clerkenwell takes no count; here it had been a day like any other, consisting of so many hours, each representing a fraction of the weekly wage. (p. 10)

In this context, the aforementioned circumstances of Sidney's revelation of love for Jane Snowdon are also set outside the stultifying atmosphere of the city. It is in the natural idyll of Danbury that a perception of the diverse and synaesthetic charms of the natural surroundings¹³ coincides with a revelation of Sidney's emotions. His love for Jane is communicated to the reader mainly in the form of an interior monologue that equates his feelings for her with the wish or the prospect of gaining self-knowledge:

I am a man in love, and in proportion as my love has strengthened, so has my old artist-self revived in me, until now I can imagine no bliss so perfect as to marry Jane Snowdon and go off to live with her amid fields and trees, where no echo of the suffering world should ever reach us. (p. 233)

Unfortunately, however, Sidney's modest wish for a simple and peaceful life in beautiful surroundings, "[t]he dream of 'pure' relationship, of soul speaking to soul, remains a nostalgic, impossible idyll."¹⁴ Determination by their social milieu, as well as their own personalities, finally turn Sidney and Jane into personifications of the Gissing type of idealistic hero, a figure who, by an act of almost superhuman strength, renounces his own deepest wishes in order stoically to follow a life of moral and ethical principles. With the aim of saving both his own and Jane's moral integrity, Sidney resists the temptation of a life with the Snowdon heiress mainly because her large inheritance is to be invested solely for philanthropic purposes. His ensuing marriage to Clara Hewett, a girl from a poor proletarian background, whom he never loved, can be seen as an act of compassion, an act accomplished out of a sense of duty as well as an attempt to reidentify publicly with his social class :

‘Mustn’t all of us who are poor stand together and help one another? We have to fight against the rich world that’s always crushing us down, down—whether it means to or not. Those people enjoy their lives. Well, I shall find *my* enjoyment in defying them to make me despair!’ (pp. 378f.)

This prospect is confirmed by the narrator at the end of the novel: “[...] but at least their lives would remain a protest against those brute forces of society which fill with wreck the abysses of the nether world” (p. 392). In reality, such a confirmation does not seem very convincing, taking into account the detailed description of Sidney’s new life in Crouch End a few pages before. As stated in C.F.G. Masterman’s *From the Abyss* (1902),¹⁵ Crouch End was one of the countless residential suburbs on the northern edge of London which had been designed for a lower-middle-class clientele about the end of the 19th century, and whose initial decay almost coincided with the arrival of its first inhabitants. Gissing describes this process of decay accurately when he portrays Crouch End in chapter 39 as a place where “poverty tries to hide itself with Venetian blinds, until the time when an advanced guard of houses shall justify the existence of the slum” (p. 364). The existence of the individual in this newly designed world of pretence seems to have lost nothing of the harshness and hopelessness of life in the “nether world,” seeming almost to exceed it in terms of misery, as a final assessment by Sidney confirms:

[...] reading was as much a thing of the past as drawing. [...] the circle of his interests had shrivelled, until it included nothing but the cares of his family, the cost of house and food and firing. [...] he had believed that he knew what was meant by the struggle for existence in the nether world; it seemed to him now as if such knowledge had been only theoretical. (p. 374)

The third central character in the novel, with whom Sidney shares his suburban fate of make-believe, is Clara Hewett, who, according to Walter Allen, is the only figure who comes closest of all to being a tragic heroine. In her, the conflict between free will, the urge to assert herself and the deterministic fate induced by her origins take on the most tragic proportions. Her final fall is therefore inevitable and predetermined, since she seems not to have either Jane’s or Sidney’s moral strength of renunciation at her disposal. Gissing pictures her more clearly than either of them as a true child of that brutalized and coarsened urban environment he holds responsible for the corruption of her character. Nevertheless, she can also be counted among the “displaced intellectuals,” because “this girl of the people, with her unfortunate endowment of brains” (p. 79) has artistic talents as well as an intellectual ability that seem to make an identification with her environment impossible.

In contrast to Jane and Sidney, however, she is unable to find inner peace either in renunciation or in an altruistic concept of life. Her hereditary predisposition (her father's "impulse of furious revolt" coupled with her mother's ambition) rather suggests a clear and uncompromising affirmation of the Schopenhauerian "will to live," of egotistic tendencies that can never result in happiness. Portrayed as "cold, subtle, original [...] conveying an idea of force of character" as well as a "defect of tenderness," and "merciless in egotism,"¹⁶ Clara Hewett seems capable of only one emotion: self-pity with regard to her suffering, which the narrator diagnoses as "the social disease" (p. 94):

The disease inherent in her being, that deadly outcome of social tyranny which perverts the generous elements of youth into mere seeds of destruction, developed day by day, blighting her heart, corrupting her moral sense, even setting marks of evil upon the beauty of her countenance. A passionate desire of self-assertion familiarised her with projects, with ideas, which formerly she had glanced at only to dismiss as ignoble. (p. 86)

Without consideration for herself or others, Clara commits herself to the social-darwinistic principles of survival in the "nether world," until her philosophy of life ("We have to fight, to fight for everything, and the weak get beaten") offers her what temporarily looks like a final escape from the London slums into the illusory world of the theatre. In Gissing's "nether world," however, there is hardly any scope for beauty and art. When, in a melodramatic scene, a female rival flings acid in her face, Clara Hewett is definitely beaten, a victim of her own weapons, unscrupulousness and egotism, which seem to exclude any hope for future social progress.

John Goode hints at the fact that Clara's fate can again be seen as reflecting the structure of the whole novel, since both seem to be dominated by the aspect of "attempted escape and final defeat,"¹⁷ a question of a troubled relationship between so-called "displaced" individuals and their environment, a denial of an identification with their surroundings. Chapter 31 gives us a very clear impression of Clara's plain, realistic and distanced relationship to the urban district where she grew up. The long paragraph quoted here is also of some interest in terms of narrative technique:

Presently she was standing at her window, the blind partly raised. On a clear day the view from this room was of wide extent, embracing a great part of the city; seen under a low, blurred, dripping sky, through the ragged patches of smoke from chimneys innumerable, it had a gloomy impressiveness well in keeping with the mind of her who brooded over it. Directly in front, rising mist-detached from the lower masses of building, stood in black majesty the dome of St. Paul's; its vastness suffered no diminution from this high outlook, rather was exaggerated by the flying scraps of mirky vapour which softened its outline and at times gave it the appear-

ance of floating on a vague troubled sea. Somewhat nearer, [...] lay the surly bulk of Newgate [...]. Nearer again, the markets of Smithfield, Bartholomew's Hospital, the tract of modern deformity, cleft by a gulf of railway [...]. Down in Farringdon Street the carts, waggons, vans, cabs, omnibuses, crossed and intermingled in a steaming splash-bath of mud; human beings, reduced to their due paltriness, seemed to toil in exasperation along the strips of pavement, bound on errands, which were a mockery, driven automaton-like by forces they neither understood nor could resist. (p. 280)

Similar to Clara's mental distance and dissociation from the inner urban environment, the geographic location from which she takes in the city's panorama is an elevated one, the fifth storey of the Farringdon Road Buildings, which were introduced in all their dreary monotony a few pages before.¹⁸ Alongside Sidney, Jane and Michael Snowdon, who, at the start of their journey into the country, are also enabled to get a panoramic view "[o]ver the pest-stricken regions of East London [...]; across miles of a city of the damned [...]; above streets swarming with a nameless populace" (p. 164), Clara is offered a unique insight into and panoramic experience of the metropolis that is denied the average inhabitant of the "nether world." Narratologically, it is interesting that the narrator's observation that "Clara hated the place from her first hour in it" leads up to the passage quoted above, from which a definite demarcation between an authorial "telling" and a more scenic "showing" is omitted. Instead, the voices of a more and more distanced narrator and the perceiving character seem to merge, and turn the urban panorama in its symbolic, "gloomy impressiveness," into a kind of mirror image of Clara's own interior reality. Whereas in Dickens's novels an urban window often affords "a comforting and purifying glimpse of the 'face of heaven,'"¹⁹ the sky over Clerkenwell as seen by Clara remains gloomy and blurred, and life below it appears to melt into a mass of "modern deformity." The ever moving, but indistinguishable grey monotony of streets, people and buildings is seen to reflect the character's own agitated state of mind by assuming the aspect of a "vague troubled sea." This is explained by Clara Hewett's present situation: she has come back to Clerkenwell after the rather abrupt end to her short career as an actress, and the panoramic view of the city from her elevated vantage point initiates a process of self-knowledge that, for the first time, makes her true and inevitable destiny evident to her. While up to this point her highest aim in life had been "to be no longer an unregarded atom in the mass of those who are born only to labour for others" (p. 86), the sudden awareness of the fact that she is nothing but a part of that impersonal, human machinery, now completely shatters all her hopes.²⁰

To sum up, in *The Nether World* as an urban novel, one could probably define the relationship of the three main characters to the urban setting as critical and distanced. According to their respective temperaments, their attitudes vary immensely. They range from pity, horror and a selfless, philanthropic engagement in Jane Snowdon, to flight into an inner world of beauty and aestheticism in Sidney Kirkwood, and to a form of disgust and attempted flight in Clara Hewett.

Apart from these three characters, who undoubtedly get the largest share of the author's liking and sympathy, most of the other characters belong to the rather amorphous mass of the urban working class. It was the vulgar part of this "urban crowd" in particular with which Gissing himself found it increasingly difficult to empathize, and his growing "personal confusion"²¹ is apparent in *The Nether World*, too. Already in his third novel, *Demos*, Gissing's anti-democratic tendencies, as well as his occasionally hostile attitude towards the uncouth members of the working class, are clearly perceptible. As previously mentioned, his philanthropic and social idealism had come to an end by the year 1888.²² Henceforth, what he criticized most about the members of the uncultivated, poor and, more often than not, criminal and morally corrupt lower classes was usually their lack of enthusiasm for change.

Accordingly, the presentation of some of the slum dwellers reflects the author's own fluctuating feeling which range from pity to loathing. Characters like Clem Peckover, her husband Joseph Snowdon, Pennyloaf Candy and Bob Hewett are pictured not only as different, but also as extreme types of this lowest social stratum of the metropolis. A symbolic significance attaches to the names of the two girls. The almost oxymoronic "Clementina Peckover," for instance, "who was affectionately known to her intimates as 'Clem'" (p. 6), shows the author's unmistakable, subtle irony: the adjective "clement" is defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as "mild and humane in the exercise of power and authority; merciful, lenient, kindly," whereas her surname reminds one of the term "pecking order," which again implies the merciless principle of the survival of the fittest in the "nether world." Pennyloaf Candy, on the other hand, is really "Penelope," "which, being pronounced as a trisyllable, transformed itself by further corruption into a sound at all events conveying some meaning" (p. 72). Her name, as a symbol of unbroken conjugal fidelity, already anticipates her most important traits: tolerance and loyalty against all odds. The character types represented by Clem and Pennyloaf imply a form of identity with the social stratum of Clerkenwell that is sought for in vain in the three main

characters. Sadly, however, each of them at the same time incorporates animal attributes, or attributes of the beastly and brutish, that seem to be inseparably connected to an identification with the “nether world.” There is no doubt, for instance, about Clem’s fascinating and erotic outward appearance “of the coarsely magnificent order” and her “ferocious” beauty. The “splendid savagery” of her features accords with her instinctive and brutal character, and almost evokes the image of Rousseau’s “noble savage”: “Civilisation could bring no charge against this young woman; it and she had no common criterion” (p. 6). Lack of culture, therefore, can be seen as the most distinctive aspect of Clem’s character. Her hunger for power and control over her fellow creatures in the manner of a “wild-beast tiger” (p. 63) is depicted as just as insatiable as her literal greedy consumption of fried sausages under the eyes of the virtually starving Jane Snowdon at the beginning of the novel. Well equipped for survival in the slums, the question of flight or mobility²³ occurs to Clem just as little as a critical reflection on her squalid urban environment. Her absolute identification with her world derives from the fact that the “putrid soil of that nether world yields other forms besides the obviously blighted and sapless” (p. 8), and the breakdown of all her moral-ethical principles likewise proves this very fact.

Pennyloaf offers a stark contrast to Clem’s animal vitality and energy. She is a “meagre, hollow-eyed, bloodless girl,” more suggestive of a skeleton than a human being, whose charm—“that dolorous kind of prettiness” (p. 72)—nonetheless shows in her grief-stricken countenance. In a very different way from Clem, she is also depicted as a direct product of her surroundings and her genetic inheritance. Her mother, Mrs. Candy, is an inveterate alcoholic and can be read as a symbol of absolute human degeneration, “an animated object, indescribable” (p. 339). With such antecedents, Pennyloaf functions less as an individual, and more as a social type representing her fellow human sufferers. A view confirmed by Sidney Kirkwood’s attempt to defend Pennyloaf and her kind in chapter 16:

‘What chance had Pennyloaf of ever learning how to keep a decent home, and bring up her children properly? How was *she* brought up? [...] I feel the same wonder about people every day. Suppose Pennyloaf behaved as badly as her mother does, who on earth would have the right to blame her?’ (p. 140)

Here again we can hear the voice of the sympathetic author, in search of tolerance and understanding for the ways of the vulgarized people. At the same time, however, we can hear his disillusionment at the prospect of “[t]he values of the nether world perpetuat[ing] themselves,”²⁵ leaving little hope for change. One of the central problems of the “nether world”, there-

fore, is that “the breakdown of moral judgement”²⁵ is inherent in almost any form of action, and that the human beings trying to make the best of life in this world are victims and prisoners of a vicious social circle, in which the inner breakdown of moral values, and the poverty and decay of exterior circumstances are mutually dependent and self-perpetuating.

Shooter’s Gardens, the home of the Candys, can be seen as emblematic of this kind of deterioration of the physical world that at the same time stands for a whole social phenomenon:

[...] the slum was like any other slum; filth, rottenness, evil odours, possessed these dens of superfluous mankind and made them gruesome to the peering imagination. [...] the walls stood in a perpetual black sweat; a mouldy reek came from the open doorways; the beings that passed in and out seemed soaked with grimy moisture, puffed into distortions, hung about with rotting garments. (pp. 74; 248)

According to Adrian Poole, this is the core of Gissing’s picture of hell, the choice of words pointing to a state already well beyond death: bodies covered with rotting garments and inhabitants described as superfluous and forgotten bring to mind the naked damned of Dante’s *Inferno*, of whom it is said: “Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa.”²⁶ In accordance with some of the traditional Christian attributes of Hell, the atmosphere in Shooter’s Gardens, on two occasions defined as “black horror” and “fearful in the night’s gloom,” is continuously associated with darkness, fire and smoke. The term “Gardens” is therefore applied ironically to this squalid neighbourhood with all its obvious shortcomings. As previously mentioned, however, it is (with the exception of the “displaced intellectuals”) only the narrator who perceives its sordid conditions:

The inhabitants of course felt nothing of the sort; a room in Shooter’s Gardens was the only kind of home that most of them knew or desired. The majority preferred it, on all grounds, to that offered them in a block of model lodgings not very far away; here was independence, that is to say, the liberty to be as vile as they pleased. (p. 74).

The narrator adds by way of explanation: “How they came to love vileness, well, that is quite another matter, and shall not for the present concern us.” This, once again, takes us back to the dichotomic core of Gissing’s pre-occupation with the conditions of the lowest social stratum of a thriving metropolis. This class seems to have accustomed itself to the harsh life of the slums by unscrupulously imposing its own autonomous laws of violence and moral corruption on its surroundings. If the matter is from time to time treated with utmost empathy and understanding by the narrator (as in the case of Pennyloaf Candy), the predominant tendency is nonetheless merely to diagnose the symptoms of a society gone wrong, and to see the

human beings as victims of both the social order and their own weakness and reprehensibility.

This latter tendency of “indignant or repelled observation of men in general”²⁷ is further strongly manifest in Gissing’s depiction of the urban masses in *The Nether World*, notably in chapter 12, “Io Saturnalia!”, a title with Roman connotations:

So at length came Monday, the first Monday in August, a day gravely set apart for the repose and recreation of multitudes who neither know how to rest nor how to refresh themselves with pastime. To-day will the slaves of industrialism don the *pileus*. It is high summertime. With joy does the awaking publican look forth upon the blue-misty heavens, and address his adorations to the Sun-god, inspirer of thirst. Throw wide the doors of the temple of Alcohol! Behold, we come in our thousands, jingling the coins that shall purchase us this one day of tragical mirth. Before us is the dark and dreary autumn; it is a far cry to the foggy joys of Christmas. Io Saturnalia! (p. 104)

Gissing had already attempted to use his artistic abilities to depict the urban masses on several occasions, but he was never truly successful in either refraining from too much idealism or, on the contrary, in curbing his personal feelings of contempt and his very Victorian moralising didacticism. The diary entry for 13 June 1888 tells us something about the difficulties and self-criticism the author was facing while rewriting the chapter: “Terribly wearisome this chap. XII; it is poor stuff, all this idealism; I’ll never go in for it again.”²⁸ In an early passage of the novel he had depicted the masses mainly from the quite “modern” perspective of their allegedly “undifferentiat[ed] character”²⁹ and of the individual’s economic exploitation, which reduces him to a mere atom in the workforce of the profit-oriented age of industrialism. Gissing’s reworking of chapter 12 was an attempt better to control an overly emotional and idealistic view of the people and their social conditions through the intervention of an increasingly distanced omniscient narrator. Sympathetic comments by the narrator like:

“A strange enough region wherein to wander and muse. Inextinguishable laughter were perchance the fittest result of such musing; yet somehow the heart grows heavy, somehow the blood is troubled in its course, and the pulses begin to throb hotly.” (p. 11)

are now repressed and replaced by critically distanced, ironic and even sharply cynical remarks. In the passage on Bank Holiday Monday quoted above, the inhabitants of the slums are clearly censured for their unintelligent behaviour, for worshipping alcohol almost as a deity, by the intellectually superior story-teller. As we read on, this need for distancing himself also manifests itself in the physical realm: in a manner similar to that of the

autobiographical observer of Bartholomew Fair in Wordsworth's 7th Book of *The Prelude*, the narrator in *The Nether World* chooses a distanced vantage point from which to "watch the throng passing and repassing" (p. 109) and comment on the scene:

What a joy to observe the tendency of all these diversions! How characteristic of a high-spirited people that nowhere could be found any amusement appealing to the mere mind, or calculated to effeminate by encouraging a love of beauty. [...] It is a great review of the People. On the whole how respectable they are, how sober, how deadly dull! See how worn-out the poor girls are becoming [...]; vulgarity and worse glares in all but every costume. Observe the middle-aged women [...] whence comes it they are animal, repulsive, absolutely vicious in ugliness? [...] Away to the west yonder the heavens are afire with sunset, but at that we do not care to look; never in our lives did we regard it. We know not what is meant by beauty or grandeur. [...] we care as little for the glory of art as for that of nature. [...] A great review of the People. Since man came into being did the world ever exhibit a sadder spectacle? (pp. 107-10)

Gissing's sarcasm here is more than evident, albeit he carries on in a far graver tone that does not completely negate his social criticism, and points to the essence of the novel's message: the vulgarity of the masses and the degradation of the individual to an animal-like state, the negation of beauty and the destruction of natural talents. Finally, echoing Wordsworth, who thought he recognized in the "blank confusion" of Bartholomew Fair an emblem of man-made urban civilization as such, "that lays,/ If any spectacle on earth can do,/ The whole creative powers of man asleep,"³⁰ Gissing's narrator also laments the lack of a merely rudimentary aesthetic sensitivity in the common people. This stress on the supreme worth of a highly developed aesthetic sense³¹ explicitly shows the point Gissing had reached, by the time he wrote *The Nether World*, in his dichotomic estimation of the mentality and way of life of a certain social class. Passages like the following express only too vividly his utter disillusion:

Well, as every one must needs have his panacea for the ills of society, let me inform you of mine. To humanise the multitude two things are necessary—two things of the simplest kind conceivable. In the first place, you must effect an entire change of economic conditions: a preliminary step of which every tyro will recognise the easiness; then you must bring to bear on the new order of things the constant influence of music. Does not the prescription recommend itself? It is jesting in earnest. For, work as you will, there is no chance of a new and better world until the old be utterly destroyed. Destroy, sweep away, prepare the ground; then shall music the holy, music the civiliser, breathe over the renewed earth, and with Orphean magic raise in perfected beauty the towers of the City of Man. (p. 109)

Disillusion, on the one hand, and the undeniable fact that change will never be possible in the existing social order, on the other, are coupled here with

a utopian social vision of the humanising of the masses with the beneficent influence of music which adds a definite ironic touch to any hope for the better. The image of an idealistic state in a world shaped by orphean magic and beauty can only be read as the author's ironic reaction against his earlier idealistic beliefs that the values of the Victorian educated classes could be imprinted on, and work as a panacea for, the intellectually deprived lower classes.

In the end, Gissing's sombre insight is rather that the "nether world" is indeed a world without a future and beyond all hope. This is reflected not only in the novel's plot structure and the development of the characters, but principally in the specific atmosphere established throughout the narrative.

In this light, a minor character is worth some attention. Even though Mad Jack only appears sporadically and has no influence whatsoever on the plot, his psalm singing and his soliloquizing speeches are reminiscent of the choir in ancient Greek tragedies, which functions mainly as the author's mouthpiece. Similarly, Mad Jack can be seen as Gissing's mouthpiece. As a madman and outcast of society, he is paradoxically granted a degree of prophetic insight and knowledge that is denied the other characters. Mad Jack's existence on the edge of society suggests a parallel with Gissing's own life as a social outcast. This strongly supports the interpretation that Mad Jack's dream at the end of the novel can be understood as giving voice to the author's own personal disappointment in, and dissatisfaction with, the political and social conditions not only in London, the capital, but also in a highly developed world on the threshold of the 20th century:

'Then the angel said: "You are passing through a state of punishment. You, and all the poor among whom you live; all those who are in suffering of body and darkness of mind, were once rich people, with every blessing the world can bestow, with every opportunity of happiness in yourselves and of making others happy. Because you made an ill use of your wealth, because you were selfish and hard-hearted and oppressive and sinful in every kind of indulgence—therefore after death you received the reward of wickedness. This life you are now leading is that of the damned; this place to which you are confined is Hell! There is no escape for you. From poor you shall become poorer; the older you grow the lower shall you sink in want and misery; at the end there is waiting for you, one and all, a death in abandonment and despair. This is Hell—Hell—Hell!"' (p. 345)

John Goode has drawn attention to the fact that the novel hinges on the question whether the "nether world" is Clerkenwell or Hell, and poverty a historical phenomenon or a metaphysical condition. If *The Nether World* has rightly been regarded as "one of the most powerful urban novels written in the nineteenth century,"³² one could now add that it takes on an even larger significance. The book does give a topographically and sociolo-

gically realistic picture of life in Clerkenwell in the 1880s, and its metaphoric title readily applies to an image of the lower classes' daily struggle for existence in a particular part of the English metropolis at the end of the 19th century. This city, as Goode has further pointed out, is no longer a "meeting-place of the classes," but has rather deteriorated to the "structured space of a separation and an abstraction,"³³ an aspect in keeping with what urban sociologists of the 20th century have been diagnosing as symptomatic of the development of London at the turn of the last century. However, the title could also be interpreted as pointing to a metaphysical state in which no hope for improvement can be entertained. Read thus, Gissing's allegorical hell comes to stand for a stage in the historical and evolutionary development of mankind, which has condemned the individual to bondage without any realistic chance of a better future. This kind of hell—as Gissing often underlines—is a man-made hell on earth to which modern man and his unintelligible destiny are inescapably bound.

¹Pierre Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England, The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 23.

²Werner Urlaub, *Der spätviktorianische Sozialroman von 1880 bis 1890. Walter Besant, George Gissing, Margaret Harkness and Constance Howell* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977), p. 193.

³*The Nether World* (London: Dent, repr. 1973), p. 51. All page references are given after each individual quotation. Interestingly the historical value of the passage just quoted is confirmed by a modern historian's description of Clerkenwell. Mary Cosh writes in her *Historical Walk Through Clerkenwell* (Islington Archaeological & Historical Society, 1987): "This [St. John's Lane] was the main approach from the city to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem [...]. The Priory was the headquarters in England of the Order of the Knights of St. John, or Knights Hospitallers, whose function it was to aid and succour pilgrims to the Holy Places in Jerusalem" (p. 6). The *London Encyclopaedia* gives the following description for St. John's Arch (St. John's Gate): "Main gateway to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem [...]. From 1731-81 it was the printing works of Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* which numbered Johnson, Garrick and Goldsmith among its contributors" (Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, eds., repr. 1992), p. 724. As for the anecdote about Dr. Johnson, it can be verified in James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (repr. 1904), p. 112: "Soon after [Johnson's *Life of Mr. Richard Savage*, 1744] was published, Mr. Harte dined with Edward Cave, and occasionally praised it. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, 'You made a man very happy t'other day.' – 'How could that be,' says Harte; 'nobody was there but ourselves.' Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily, that he did not choose to appear; but on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book."

⁴Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 30.

⁵As Richard J. Allen explains in his article "Documentary Realism and Artistic Licence: A Note on an Emblematic Prison Gate in *The Nether World* and *Peter Ibbetson*" (*Gissing*

Newsletter, April 1981, pp. 24f.), it should be noted that the verb originally used by Gissing in the manuscript as well as in the first three-volume edition of *The Nether World* was “straggled,” and he was never given a chance to correct the misprint in the 1890 reprint, which had changed the verb to “struggled.” As a consequence, some critics have commented widely on the ensuing ambiguity in meaning, without taking into account the publication history of the book. John Goode, for example, reads the accompanying preposition “in” in the sense of “with”: i.e. to struggle *against* as well as *in a state of* maniac disorder. Adrian Poole, in turn, calls Goode’s use of the verb an “instructive misreading,” since “the original ‘in’ conveys even more blatantly than ‘with’ the absence of a genuine object for the verb ‘struggle.’” And, according to Poole, the “grammatical absence of an object [...] echoes the central problem of all the energy at large in the nether world—its absence of ‘objects.’” Cf. J. Goode, “George Gissing’s *The Nether World*,” in: David Howard, John Lucas and John Goode, eds., *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 211 and A. Poole, *Gissing in Context* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 89f.

⁶“The Nether World,” in *Gissing in Context*, p. 89.

⁷“She did not, indeed, look like one of those children who are born in disease and starvation, and put to nurse upon the pavement; her limbs were shapely enough, her back was straight, she had features that were not merely human, but girl-like, and her look had in it the light of an intelligence generally sought for in vain among the children of the street. The blush and the way in which she hung her head were likewise tokens of a nature endowed with ample sensitiveness.” (p. 4)

⁸Cf. pp. 99f.: “His theme was the virtue of Compassion; he appeared to rate it above all other forms of moral goodness, to regard it as the saving principle of human life. ‘If only we had pity on one another, all the worst things we suffer from in this world would be at an end. [...] We act as if we were all each other’s enemies; we can’t be merciful, because we expect no mercy; we struggle to get as much as we can for ourselves and care nothing for others.’”

⁹Pierre Coustillas, ed., *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 82.

¹⁰George Gissing, “The Place of Realism in Fiction,” *Humanitarian*, July 1895, pp. 14-16. Repr. in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 18: Victorian Novelists After 1885*, Ira B. Nadel and William E. Fredemann, eds. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983), pp. 357-58.

¹¹John Goode, “George Gissing’s *The Nether World*,” *op. cit.*, p. 217.

¹²Walter Allen, *The English Novel: A Short Critical History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 290.

¹³Cf. pp. 166ff.: “a view of wooded hillside against the late glow of the heavens,” “a sweet fresh odour, soothing to the senses,” “In the branches above them rustled a bird’s wing. At a distance [...] sounded the trotting of a horse.”

¹⁴Adrian Poole, “The Nether World,” in *Gissing in Context*, p. 95.

¹⁵*From the Abyss. Of Its Inhabitants. By One of Them* (London: R.B. Johnson, 1902), p. 45ff.

¹⁶Pp. 25f., 79, 28.

¹⁷John Goode, “George Gissing’s *The Nether World*,” *op. cit.*, p. 230.

¹⁸Cf. p. 274: “Vast, sheer walls, unbroken by even an attempt at ornament; row above row of windows in the mud-coloured surface, upwards, upwards, lifeless eyes, murky openings that tell of bareness, disorder, comfortlessness within.”

¹⁹Jean-Paul Hulin, “‘Rus in Urbe’: A Key to Victorian Anti-Urbanism?” in J.-P. Hulin and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *Victorian Writers and the City* (Publications de l’Université de Lille III, 1979), p. 29.

²⁰See also p. 281: “The world was her enemy, and had proved too strong; [...] fate flung her to the ground pitilessly, and bade her live out the rest of her time in wretchedness.”

²¹Peter Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 55.

²²See diary entry for 19 October 1888: “I experience at present a profound dislike for everything that concerns the life of the people. [...] All my interest in such things I have left behind in London.” *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

²³Cf. pp. 259f.: “In the way of social advancement she appreciated nothing but an increased power of spending money, and consequently of asserting herself over others. She had no desire whatever to enter a higher class than that in which she was born; to be of importance in her familiar circle was the most she aimed at.”

²⁴John Goode, “George Gissing’s *The Nether World*,” *op. cit.*, p. 222.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁶*La Divina Commedia, Inferno*, III, 49 (“No fame of them the world permits to be”).

²⁷Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p. 222.

²⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 32.

²⁹Raymond Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 222. The passage in *The Nether World* referred to is the opening one from Chap. 2, p. 10: “It was the hour of the unyoking of men. [...]”

³⁰William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, Or: Growth of a Poet’s Mind. 1805*, ed. J. Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill (New York/London: Norton, 1979), VII, ll. 653-55.

³¹Peter Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³²Michael Collie, *The Alien Art: A Critical Study of George Gissing’s Novels* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979), p. 102.

³³“The Evolution of the Gissing Novel,” in *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction* (London: Vision Press, p. 107).

The *Thyrza* Contract and Two Unpublished Letters

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The publication of *Thyrza*, one of Gissing’s favourite novels, was a source of much anguish and disappointment for him and, until recently, lacked important documentation for Gissing scholars. Gissing’s newly discovered correspondence with Smith, Elder and an examination of their ledgers show that Gissing was ill-served by his publishers, who seemed too ready to take advantage of his naïveté and his lack of both emotional and financial resources. Smith, Elder offered Gissing a choice of either £100 for the purchase of the entire copyright, or £50 and a royalty on the sale of

future copies. He had sold *Demos* outright and he knew that reprints of his novels were selling not only in England but in Germany and America as well. While Gissing was in the middle of writing volume one of *Thyrza* he wrote to his sister Margaret on 13 June 1886 complaining, “Ah, if I had some of the money they have made out of ‘Demos.’ I sold them the rights both for at home and abroad. I expect it is already pub^d in America.”¹ He resolved to have some of that money on *Thyrza* and wrote to James Payn, his editor at Smith, Elder, on 16 January 1887, that he would bring them the completed manuscript of *Thyrza* the next day and that he wanted to “arrange for the publication of ‘Thyrza’ on terms such as I have made in the case of certain other of my books. I wish to sell the first Edⁿ for a stipulated sum, & to receive a Royalty on each copy sold after the first Edition is exhausted. I shall be glad to receive a proposal on this basis.”² George Gissing sometimes drew on his brother’s training as a solicitor when he desired legal advice and he turned to him after Smith, Elder made their offer for *Thyrza*. On 5 February 1887, he sent Algernon a letter he had drafted in reply to their offer, complaining that “The terms are Hebraic, for 10 p.c. means 4 ½ on the 6/- edⁿ (taking selling price to be 4/-). Still, there may be a second 3 Vol. edⁿ, in which case I suppose I should get about 1/6 a copy. And then the future is to be remembered.”³ Algernon must have urged his brother to reconsider whatever was in the original letter, but we do not know what Algernon advised: perhaps he merely asked George to revise the language of the letter, as Gissing seems to have turned down the original £100 offer in the 5 February letter, saying, “Well, well, perhaps I should have done better to get £100 & have done with it. The present terms mean that I shall live in deadly fear of poverty through the rest of the year...” On 7 February Gissing sent another letter to Algernon for review and forwarding to Smith, Elder, asking that he take care to substitute it for the original letter, and apparently resigning himself to *Thyrza*’s failure to be a popular book.

Until now there has been some ambiguity in what Smith, Elder actually offered Gissing for *Thyrza*, although the evidence from many sources shows that Gissing did accept £50 and a 10% royalty. It is clear from Gissing’s “Account of Books” (reproduced in George Matthew Adams “Why I Collect George Gissing”), in which he records receiving a total of £60 for *Thyrza*, including the £10 he received when he agreed to accept Smith’s offer to purchase the remaining rights.⁴ The Smith, Elder ledger entry for 26 April 1887 also shows the £50 payment.⁵ Gissing’s letter to his sister Ellen of 5 March clarifies the offer, as he says that “For the 1st edⁿ of

‘Thyrza’ (500 copies) I have only got £50, & am to receive 10 per cent on selling price of all subsequent copies.”⁶ Despite this evidence, the 1975 edition of Collie’s bibliography stated that Gissing was offered a royalty of 15% on each copy sold or an outright sale for £100, with Gissing choosing to sell the novel outright for £100. Michel Ballard’s review of Collie’s book corrected Collie, noting that Gissing was offered £50 and ten per cent of the sales.⁷ The second edition of Collie corrected the option but still had Gissing receiving a 15% royalty payment.⁸ What has been missing up to now is the letter to Smith, Elder that Gissing enclosed in his letter to Algernon on 7 February 1887 and copies of the actual contract and receipts. That letter, along with the original contract and two receipts have now been located in the Smith, Elder papers in the Archives at John Murray, the successor to Smith, Elder, and I must give warm thanks to the diligence of Virginia Murray, Archivist at John Murray, who searched the Archives and located the letters and contracts.

The items relating to Gissing in the Murray Archive consist of Smith, Elder’s publication ledger books; a “Translation” book listing rights for translations (sold to Adele Berger and Gabrielle Fleury for *New Grub Street*, D. Steinhoff and Eve Paul-Margueritte for *Thyrza*); records of reprints (*The Nether World* by Harper, *A Life’s Morning* by Lippincott, and the serialization of *Demos* in the *Manchester Weekly Times*); copies of Gissing’s receipts for *New Grub Street*, *Demos*, *The Nether World*; records of the *Cornhill* publication of “Emily,” later re-titled *A Life’s Morning*; a receipt for the volume publication of *A Life’s Morning*; and both receipts for *Thyrza*. There are also Tauchnitz contracts for reprintings of *Demos* and *New Grub Street* on the Continent. Besides all this, the Murray Archives hold a letter from Gissing to John Murray, thanking him for providing him with a copy of the map of Gaul that Murray published.⁹ None of this material has been published before.

Although we may never know if there was another offer to Gissing for *Thyrza* or what was in Gissing’s original letter to Smith, Elder, the material in the Murray Archives now makes it clear that Gissing was offered £50 for *Thyrza*, with a 10% royalty on the selling price of any copies sold beyond 500. Gissing, as he told Algernon in his 5 February letter, was hoping that a second edition of 250 copies of the three-volume edition would be printed, the total of 750 copies being then equivalent to the print run of the first edition of *Demos*. The term “selling price” is not defined: it could mean either the list price or the discounted price to the trade. Since Gissing expected to receive 1s 6d, he must have understood the selling price to

mean the discounted trade price, as 1s 6d would be 10% of 15s, the trade price of a 31s 6d novel, while 4½d would be 10% of a 6s novel sold separately at 3s 9d, although the usual sale price was 4s 2d, which would have netted Gissing 5d. He would be disappointed in this, and, in fact, thwarted by Smith, Elder in any further gain beyond the nominal offer they would later make for the entire copyright.

The Gissing letter was enclosed within a short wrapper that was imprinted with lines for an identification number (“16/7657”), the date of Gissing’s letter, and the date on which it was answered. The “Answered” line shows two dates, “9/2/87” crossed out and “15/2/87” inserted. The names of Gissing’s editor Mr. Payn, and Mr. Aitchison, Smith, Elder’s manager, are written below, probably for routing.

7.K. Cornwall Residences
Regents Park NW

Feb. 8th 1887

Gentlemen,

I must not say that this offer is wholly satisfactory to me; after “Demos,” I had thought you would be able to offer me £100 for a first edition of “Thyrza.” However, you have doubtless made calculations in accordance with your judgment of the new story, & I am aware that there may be a doubt as to how the public will receive “Thyrza.” – It must be my care to make the 10 per cent arrangement as profitable to you – & to myself – as may be, by subsequent productions. Whatever be the book’s immediate reception, it will not disappoint us hereafter.

I am ready to sign an agreement on the terms you suggest. It may be needless to mention it, but I should like to receive your assurance that the book will be speedily published.

Something I would add. It is my belief that “Thyrza” would be benefited by having my name attached to it. I could in that case address both the public already familiar with my name, & that which knows me only as “Author of Demos.” The review of my book “Isabel Clarendon” in the *Spectator* a short time ago [23 October 1886, p. 1420] sufficiently proved (if I did not know it in other ways,) that my signed work has got for itself a certain recognition, which should certainly increase the market value of what I now write.

Will you let me have your opinion on this point?

I am, Gentlemen,
Yours faithfully,
George Gissing

Mess^{rs} Smith, Elder & C^o

The original contract follows:

Memorandum of an Agreement made the fifteenth day of February 1887 between George Gissing Esq of 7K Cornwall Residences, Regents Park, London, N.W. and Messrs Smith, Elder & C^o of 15 Waterloo Place, London, S.W.

Mr George Gissing having written a novel entitled “Thyrza” hereby agrees to sell to Messrs Smith Elder & C^o the right to print and publish the work on the following conditions.

- I Messrs Smith Elder & C^o are to pay to Mr Gissing the sum of fifty pounds (£50.0.0) on the publication of the work.
- II In the event of the first edition of five hundred copies being exhausted, Messrs Smith, Elder & C^o are to pay Mr Gissing a Royalty of ten per cent on the selling price of all copies sold beyond that number.

George Gissing

Also in the Archives were the following stamped receipts, one in Gissing’s handwriting and the other a printed form signed by Gissing:

Ap. 27th 1887

Received of Messrs Smith, Elder & C^o the sum of Fifty pounds, being payment complete for the First Edition (of five hundred copies) of my novel “Thyrza.”

George Gissing
27-4-87

London, January 9th 1891

Received of Mess^{rs} Smith, Elder & C^o the sum of ten pounds in payment for the entire copyright at home and abroad of “Thyrza” which is hereby assigned to them.

£10.0.0

George Gissing

The Smith, Elder ledgers record that 500 copies of the three-volume edition of *Thyrza* were printed for publication on 26 April 1887. Forty-three were sent to “editors & friends” for review, six given to Gissing, and five sent to “public libraries,” i.e., for copyright deposit. A total of 444 were disposed of: sixty were sold to subscribers at 15s, Mudie took 175 copies discounted as 168 at 15s, 166 were sold as 160 to “London Libraries” at 15s, and six were sold to the book trade, one at 18s and five at the standard 22s 6d. At the end of December 1888 only 1 copy remained. Thirty copies had been remaindered to T. Miles & Co. for £3 7s 6d (or 2s 3d per copy), two were sold to “London Libraries” for the standard 15s, five were sold to the trade at 22s 6d; and one was given “to friends.” The remaining copy was given to Gissing in 1889. There were no attempts to print a second three-volume or to print a cheap edition until after Gissing had sold his

entire copyright to them four years later, on 9 January 1891. This was quite contrary to Smith, Elder's normal practice with Gissing's novels, in which a cheap edition was issued within eight or nine months of the three-volume edition, as the following examples show. On 23 March 1886 Smith, Elder printed 750 copies of *Demos*, selling 480 by the end of the year and printing 1,000 copies of the 6s crown octavo edition on 22 November 1886. On 12 November 1888 Smith, Elder printed 500 copies of *A Life's Morning* and had sold only 332 by the end of the year. In August of 1889 they printed 2,000 copies of the one-volume, 2s and 2s 6d edition. They had also sold early sheets and stereos of that edition to Lippincott's in Philadelphia for £60. On 1 April 1889 Smith, Elder printed 500 copies of *The Nether World* and sold 371 by the end of the year. On 3 December 1889 they printed 750 copies of the 6s crown octavo edition. *New Grub Street* had a first printing on 3 April 1891 of 500 copies, followed on 15 May by a second printing of 250 more copies. The first edition sold 447 copies, with further sales of the three-volume edition effectively killed by the printing of 750 copies of the one-volume edition on 30 October 1891, six months after the first edition appeared. None of Gissing's books sold 500 copies in their first edition, but few novels would induce the circulating libraries to take more than 400 or so of most novels, in part because of the quick re-issue of them in 6s formats. The three-volume sales figure of *Thyrza* was not an anomaly, but its delay in being reissued in another edition was.

Three years after the publication of *Thyrza*, and considering its sales a failure, Gissing asked Smith, Elder if they would consider buying the copyright. They made their first offer in August 1890, but Gissing declined to take it, "as the prospect of a cheap edition is so little encouraging" and he preferred to complete *New Grub Street*.¹⁰ Finally, on 7 January 1891 Gissing accepted Smith, Elder's offer of £150 for *New Grub Street* and their offer of £10 for *Thyrza*, asking that "When you think of a cheap edition, kindly let me have notice, for I should wish thoroughly to revise the book, & to shorten it somewhat. It *ought* to have something like a popular sale in a cheap edition, when a few superfluities have been cut away."¹¹

On 9 June 1891, six months after acquiring the entire copyright to *Thyrza*, and with Gissing's revisions, Smith, Elder printed 750 copies of the 6s crown octavo edition and 1,000 copies of a colonial edition, followed a year later by 3,000 copies of the 2s and 2s 6d editions, reprinting 1,000 copies of the latter in 1895. They also sold translation rights in August 1891 for £5 to a "D. Steinhoff, Baden-Baden," but, as far as is known, this translation did not appear.

The one-volume edition of *Thyrza* was printed only two months after the April publication of *New Grub Street* and sold poorly, losing money for Smith, Elder. They would make up for it on the cheap foolscap 2s and 2s 6d edition issued a year later. Had Gissing been entitled to his 10%, his own earnings through 1904 would have brought him £14 18s 6d on the crown octavo and £25 0s 6d on the cheap editions, or almost £40 for the novel, with most of the income coming during the first printings in the cheap format. Smith, Elder made over £82 on *Thyrza*. Had Gissing accepted the £100, or had he been paid a royalty, their bottom line would not have changed substantially. By withholding publication until they could secure the entire copyright, Smith, Elder enjoyed the modest profit that would have gone to Gissing.

Gissing should have taken the £100 offer, but he was willing to take a chance on a royalty, a method of payment that was then less common in British publishing and that he hoped would have provided him with a future income. In a letter to his friend Bertz in 1893 Gissing regretted that he lacked “the courage & the foresight to refuse to sell” his novels “out & out” to Smith & Elder.¹² His future contracts, negotiated by professional agents, would secure better returns. Who at Smith, Elder made the decision to withhold printing more copies of *Thyrza* we shall never know. In the end, the financial loss to Gissing was probably not as great as the feeling he had that Smith, Elder treated him badly. In 1895 Gissing wrote to William Morris Colles, his literary agent, that “Of *going back* to S & E., there is no question; I should merely sell a volume to them for a special cheap series. I should never dream of letting them become, again, my regular publishers.”¹³ Surprisingly, it was not so much their dishonesty in handling *Thyrza* that angered Gissing as their deprecating offer for *Born in Exile* after the success of *New Grub Street*. In March 1891, after returning the revision of *Thyrza* to Smith, Elder and reading the proofs of *New Grub Street*, Gissing told Bertz that he “was right to go back to Smith [after trying Bentley as he had done with *The Emancipated* in 1890]. He has a solid commercial interest in my books, & he advertises them well. I shall never again willingly leave him.”¹⁴ Gissing would later (in November 1899) tell his new agent, J. B. Pinker, that he would have remained with Smith, Elder if they had paid him enough to live on because they did advertise his books, though to their financial benefit, and not his.¹⁵ Still, *Thyrza* rankled him; reading the obituaries on George Smith’s death in 1901 that praised Smith’s generosity, Gissing would wryly recall *Thyrza* and his shameful treatment by Smith, Elder.¹⁶

Biographical note: Frederick Nesta is a postgraduate student in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Director of the Libraries, Saint Peter's College, New Jersey. The topic of his PhD thesis is *The Commerce of Literature: George Gissing and Victorian Publishing, 1880-1903*. He may be contacted at fnn01@aber.ac.uk

¹*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, edited by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997, vol. 3, p. 40. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

²*Letters*, vol. 3, pp. 77-78.

³*Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴George Matthew Adams, "Why I Collect George Gissing," *Colophon*, 18 (1934), unpagged.

⁵The Smith, Elder ledgers are in the John Murray collection, now in London. This entry is in volume 24, folio page 302. Future users should be warned that at some time the ledgers were renumbered, with volume references in the ledgers no longer accurate.

⁶*Letters*, vol. 8, p. 88.

⁷Michel Ballard, "George Gissing: A Bibliography," *English Studies*, April 1978, vol. 79, no. 2, p. 171. The first edition of the Collie book was *George Gissing: A Bibliography*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975. The first edition of Collie is also cited in the discussion of this issue in *Letters*, vol. 3, p. 85, footnote 3.

⁸Michael Collie, *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study*, Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1986, p. 31.

⁹*Letters*, vol. 8, pp. 61, 70.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 229.

¹¹*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 253.

¹²*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 148.

¹³*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 285-86.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 275-76.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 401-02.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 304.

Notes and News

Since the foundation of the old *Gissing Newsletter*, the name of Professor Shigeru Koike has been on the masthead of the present quarterly publication, but Professor Koike feels that, largely for health reasons, the time has come for him to retire. For nearly four decades he has been the main link between East and West in Gissing studies. His successful efforts to sustain the vitality of Gissing's name in Japan were at their height in the late 1980s when, in his capacity as general editor, he published in collaboration with a few friends translations of a selection of Gissing's titles under the imprint of Shubun International. All the information he relayed from his

home in suburban Tokyo filled gaps in Western knowledge of Gissing's reputation in Japan almost from the year of the writer's death. Warm thanks are due to him for his disinterested and efficient collaboration. His successor Professor Mitsuharu Matsuoka is not a new figure in Gissing studies—for one thing he has been known for quite a few years to all users of the resources offered by the Internet who have attempted research on the novelist. (Peter Morton recently gave an idea to our readers of the extent of the work done on the net by Mitsuharu Matsuoka). The new impressive book on Gissing described on another page is one of his latest offerings. His competence extends far beyond Gissing and computer science and practice. The Victorian world, as his website shows, is his *terrain d'élection*. His collaboration will be a precious asset.

News from Italy continue to reach us, but we must postpone the publication of a review of the books on Giuseppe Benassai and on the picturesque town of Squillace. *Calabria Sconosciuta* for April-June 2003 contained two articles on Garibaldi and one on “Il brigante Musolino,” a figure known to Gissing through Ouida. Domenico Marino, the great-grandson of Giulio Marino, the custodian and gardener of the Crotone cemetery, tells us that a conference on Pythagoras was held in Crotone last November, a piece of news which Gissing would probably have found arresting. Francesco Badoiato reports that the Albergo Italia has resumed its former name and is therefore called again Albergo Concordia. Maria Teresa Chialant, of the University of Salerno, is preparing for the Neapolitan firm Liguori a translation of *Eve's Ransom*, with an introduction and notes.

From Switzerland Wulfhard Stahl sends us two German articles in which, perhaps unexpectedly, *New Grub Street* is mentioned (in its 1986 translation, *Zeilengeld*). On 22 July 2002 the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* began a review of Wolfgang Bittner's *Beruf: Schriftsteller* by saying that Gissing's novel told practically all about professional writing. The other allusion to Gissing occurred in the *Zeit* literary supplement, which reviewed Charles Simmons's *Belles Lettres* in November 2003. *New Grub Street* was called “depressing” but nevertheless worth reading along with Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (the phrasing is characteristic of a Victorian low-brow approach unworthy of a self-respecting modern literary critic).

The Chinese scholar of Hangzhou Teachers College, Ms Ying Ying, has sent us the following abstract of her thesis on “George Gissing's Attitude toward the Poor”:

It has been a common belief that Gissing's novels reveal that his attitude toward the poor partakes of ignorance and hatred. My thesis seeks to prove that it would be too dogmatic to define his attitude to the poor as "hatred." My thesis first studies some characteristic poor people in his novels, such as Arthur Golding and his wife Carrie in *Workers in the Dawn*, Ida Starr and her mother in *The Unclassed*, Richard Mutimer, his mother and Emma Vine in *Demos*, Thyrsa Trent in *Thyrza*, Sidney Kirkwood in *The Nether World*, Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen in *New Grub Street*; then argues that Gissing's attitude to the poor is an ambivalent one: he sympathizes with the miserable life of the poor, respects their fine qualities, but is sharply critical of their vices. Gissing even wishes for the improvement of their frequently disgraceful conduct. It is Gissing's firm belief that it is poverty that corrupts the poor, that it is society which perpetuates poverty and enslaves the poor. What Gissing hates is in fact social injustice. My thesis also examines Gissing's unique life experience and argues that his unhappy childhood after the loss of his father, his disastrous marriage, his unsuccessful writing career, and his lifelong friendship with Eduard Bertz (a German socialist) had a significant influence on the development of his ambivalent attitude, and make it impossible to define his attitude to the poor as a mere combination of ignorance and hatred.

UCL Lunch Hour Lecture, Tuesday, 2 March 2004, 1.15-1.55 pm.

Dr. Richard Dennis, the geographer, will give a free public lecture in the Darwin Theatre (entrance on Gower Street), University College London, on:

George Gissing (1857-1903): London's Restless Analyst

Simon James's critical study, *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (Anthem Press) is described as follows by the publishers:

"Perhaps no theme dominates the Victorian novel more than that of money; no other Victorian novelist was more preoccupied with this subject than George Gissing (1857-1903). In the first full-length study of money in the work of this perplexing, compelling writer [...] Simon J. James examines how Gissing's work dramatizes the hold of capital on every facet of everyday life, including love, art, virtue and morality. *Unsettled Accounts* [...] shows that money's power was both ever-increasing, and a malevolent influence. [...] The book [...] demonstrates why Gissing's dissident but accurate representations of the emergent modernity of late nineteenth-century urban culture deserve a unique place in English literary history."

Two papers on Gissing were read in recent months by Professor Lewis Moore, of the University of the District of Columbia. At a conference organized by the Popular Culture Association in the South and the American Culture Association in the South in Atlantic Beach, Florida on 4 Oc-

tober, he discussed “George Gissing’s Fiction: Nationalism, Imperialism, and the Idea of England.” He dealt with “George Gissing and the Late-Victorian Private Detective” at the Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association Conference which took place at Wilmington, Delaware on 7-9 November. These papers are likely to become chapters in the critical study of Gissing’s works Professor Moore is preparing.

Whether e-books are popular or not we don’t know, as a majority of readers surely prefer to read novels in volume or even in serial form than on a computer screen, but the availability of a number of Gissing titles as e-books must be recorded. A list which may well be incomplete has reached us recently. It included: *Demos*, *The Nether World*, *The Emancipated*, *New Grub Street*, *Denzil Quarrier*, *Born in Exile*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *The Paying Guest*, *The Crown of Life*, and *By the Ionian Sea*. The seller is

O’Brien’s Book Cellar, Mission Viejo, California

mailto: patty@ideaweb.com

The first volume of the *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, edited by Pierre Coustillas (Grayswood Press) will be available from the publishers in early February. It will contain a 44-page introduction, Gissing’s articles, introductions and reviews, and five appendices together with a few illustrations.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (Lost and Found Series: Classic Travel Writing), Oxford: Signal Books, 2004. Illustrated critical edition by Pierre Coustillas. Pp. xxviii + 159. Contents: Introduction, the Manuscript, Acknowledgements, Map of Southern Italy in Gissing’s time, the Text, Notes (pp. 133-51), Further Reading divided into five parts: Gissing’s works; *By the Ionian Sea*; Biographies, Correspondence and Critical Studies; *By the Ionian Sea* and the Critics; Books about Calabria: historical, literary and topographical aspects. ISBN 1-902669-66-5 cloth, £24.95; ISBN 1-902669-67-3 paper, £12.99. The American edition is published by Interlink Books, an imprint of Interlink Publishing Group, Inc., 46 Crosby Street, Northampton MA 01060-1804. ISBN 1-56656-494-8 (paperback), \$15.00 (in Canada, \$23.95).

Simon J. James, *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (Anthem Nineteenth Century Studies), London: Anthem Press, 2003. Pp. 192. Contents: Money and Fiction. Revising Dickens: Gissing's Critical Writings and Early Novels. The Price of Culture: Gissing's 'Major Phase.' Hardback ISBN 1-84331-107-0 £45.00, US\$75.00. Paperback ISBN 1-84331-108-9 £14.95, US \$22.50.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka (ed.), *The World of Gissing: In the Year of the Centenary*, Tokyo: Eihosha, 2003. Contents: see the leading article above. Hardback. ISBN 4-269-71039-X. 4,200 Yen.

Deborah McDonald, *Clara Collet 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman*, London: Woburn Press, 2003. Pp. 256. Contents: List of illustrations, Foreword, Acknowledgments, Introduction. Part I Childhood 1860-78. Part II Life in Leicester 1878-85. Part III The East End, Poverty and Investigation 1885-93. Part IV A New Way of Life 1893-1910. Part V An Educated Working Woman and Beyond 1903-48. Appendix 1 Genealogy of the Collet Family. Appendix 2 Chronology of Clara's Life and Historical Events. Select Bibliography and Index. Hardback ISBN 0-7130-0241-7 £35. Paperback ISBN 0-7130-4060-2 £17.50. The author informs us that Woburn Press has been taken over by Taylor and Francis and that the new ordering telephone number is 01264 343071. The e-mail address is salesorder.tandf@thomsonpublishingservices.co.uk The website of the firm is www.routledgefalmer.com

Articles, reviews, etc.

Paul Legasse, ed., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, New York : Columbia University Press, sixth edition, c. 2000. Contains a biography of Gissing.

[Alan S. Watts], "Later Opinions," *Dickens Magazine*, [July 2001], Series 1, Issue 6, p. 22. The series was devoted to assessments of *Great Expectations*. As Gissing wrote no introduction to this novel, the editor reprinted a substantial passage from "Dickens in Memory."

George Orwell, *Orwell and the Dispossessed*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books, 2001. Contains on pp. 333-35 Orwell's first essay on Gissing, "Not Enough Money," originally published in *Tribune*, 2 April 1943, p. 15.

Hans Georg Bauner, *Literarischer Führer Frankreich*, Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig : Insel Verlag, 2002. This German literary guide to France, with its many illustrations and maps, a bibliography and indices to surnames and place names is likely to prove useful to students of English literature. Witness the case of Gissing whom we see with Gabrielle at the Château de Tazières; at the Villa des Roses, Saint-Honoré-les-Bains; at the Villa Souvenir, Arcachon; at the Villa Lannes, Ciboure, then, in the last six months of 1903, at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, actually Ispoure, where Gissing's death is reported after Wells's visit to his friend's deathbed. Naturally the portraits of writers are almost exclusively portraits of French writers. Among many other British and American names are to be found those of Matthew Arnold, Joseph Conrad, Dickens, Scott Fitzgerald, Ruskin, Edith Wharton and Virginia Woolf. The book is a paperback of over 620 pages.

Marilyn B. Saveson, "Comptes Rendus," *Etudes Anglaises*, January-March 2003, pp. 98-100. Review of *A Garland for Gissing*.

Francesco Badolato, "Riccardo Sculco, medico chirurgico (1855-1931)," *Calabria Sconosciuta*, July-September 2003, pp. 71-72. On Gissing's doctor at Cotrone/Crotone in 1897, with photographs of Sculco and of the plaque unveiled in June 2002.

Giuseppe Masi, "Pregiudizi, cliché e fascino di un'identità difficile," *Calabria* [the Journal of the Regional Council], September-October 2003, pp. 50-53. An article with passages on Gissing about the prejudices and clichés generated by a fascinating province. Mainly comments on Carlo Carlino's book, *La Calabria, le Calabrie, i calabresi* (Cosenza : Editore Progetto 2000, 2003), in which Gissing also appears several times.

J. C., "NB," *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 December 2003, p. 16. Four paragraphs on the centenary of Gissing's death and a mention of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* as imaginary first Book of the Year, 1903, followed by *The Ambassadors, Typhoon and Other Stories*, of which Conrad presented Gissing with a copy, and *Man and Superman*.

Pierre Coustillas, "Letters to the Editor," *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 December 2003, p. 21. Corrects a mistake in the previous item and adds some comments: if Gissing's works are associated with poverty and women, they are also inseparable from his cultural commitment. His novels should be kept in print permanently. In the same number, "Mr. Bailey, Grocer," could be seen in a headline for the Christmas quiz.

Olivier Feyt, "La fin d'un écrivain," *Sud Ouest*, 29 December 2003, Section 2, p. 8. With a photograph showing Jane Gissing near her grandfather's grave, and the plaque placed on it on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his death. Also a photograph of the editor of this journal above the article.

Elmar Schenkel, "Eine Welt fern von Büchern," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 December 2003, p. 32. Review of Karina Of's translation of *By the Ionian Sea*, with Mrs. Clarence Rook's sketch of Gissing, dated 8 June 1901, signed by him and by H. G. Wells.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka, "Homage to Gissing: In the Year of the Centenary," *Eigo Seinen* (The Rising Generation), December 2003, pp. 546-49.

Simon Gatrell, "Book Reviews: Essays on Gissing," *English Literature in Transition*, Volume 46 (2003), no. 4, pp. 448-51. Review of *A Garland for Gissing*.

Norman Douglas, "Gissing at Cotrone: A Footnote," The Tragara Press, 2003. In 1992 when Alan Anderson published his handset edition of *By the Ionian Sea*, a bibliographical jewel of which it is now practically impossible to procure a copy, he did not find time to quote from Norman Douglas's engaging account of his successive journeys to Calabria from 1907 to 1911, *Old Calabria*, either in footnotes or in an appendix. In this opuscle, which is designed to accompany the Tragara Press edition of Gissing's book, passages from chapter 36 ("Memories of Gissing") are reproduced. The booklet testifies to Alan Anderson's attachment to the memory of Gissing and Douglas. Only 30 copies handset in Perpetua type have been printed on paper made by Amatruda of Amalfi.

Jane Miller, *Relations*, London : Jonathan Cape, 2003. The author is Clara Collet's great-niece and the book has a long chapter about Gissing's friend. Hitherto unknown photographs of Clara and members of her family are reproduced. Naturally not all chapters will be found of compelling interest; some factual errors will have to be corrected, especially that which concerns the date of the first meeting of Gissing and Gabrielle Fleury, but the chapter on Miss Collet is undoubtedly worth reading in conjunction with the other writings about her that have been published in the last few decades.

Vincent Martin, "Saint-Jean-de-Luz honore la mémoire de George Gissing," *La Semaine du Pays basque*, 1-7 January 2004, p. 17. With photograph.

