

The Gissing Journal

Volume XLI, Number 4, October 2005

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

George Gissing and America

[The following is an unpublished paper which was read at the Gissing Symposium in Wakefield in September 1981.]

JACOB KORG

I have often wondered how Gissing would have fared if he had stayed in America instead of returning to England, and had become an American novelist instead of an English one. He would have been a compatriot of Henry James, William Dean Howells and Mark Twain instead of a countryman of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. Would he have written *New Wall Street* instead of *New Grub Street*? Would he have exposed slum conditions in New York's East Side and Hell's Kitchen instead of those in London's Clerkenwell and Lambeth? Could *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* have been written about a farmhouse on the banks of the Hudson rather than a cottage in Devon ?

There was of course little possibility of Gissing's life following that channel. What we know about his feelings when he lived in France and Italy tells us that he was deeply attached to England. He needed English settings and characters, and would have remained an essentially English writer no matter where he might have lived. His reactions to America are significant, not because he liked it, or because he observed it carefully and understood it, but because he used it in his novels in ways that illuminate certain aspects of his thought and character.

Gissing enjoyed being in America at first, when he came there at the age of nineteen, in flight from some very grim experiences in England. He succeeded in publishing his short stories in America, not once, but many times, and this could not fail to encourage, even to intoxicate, a young writer. But he also suffered hardship and poverty, and ultimately felt a desperate need to get back to England.

In her novel, *The Youngest*, Gillian Tindall describes a thought that occurs to her heroine during a conversation with an American in this way : “There is an America of the mind more casually and subtly complex, I think, than any Paris or London of the mind.” It is easy to see why this

should be so. The fantastic and contradictory things one hears about America arouse exceptional imaginative responses. We know little about the young Gissing's conception of America, except that he idealized it. When he was 14 he wrote a poem called "On Leaving England" which declares that the "low island," "Choked with smoke and swamped with rain" is "not worth another look," and continues:

Look upon the glorious ocean,
Forward to the glorious West,
Far away from smoke and trouble,
There is pleasure, *there* is rest.

We will climb the lofty mountains,
Far above the valleys fair,
Up beyond the clouds around them,
Till we stop for want of air.

Then when we can see around us,
Sun above and clouds below,
When we cool our burning foreheads
In the everlasting snow,

Then we'll think of one low island
In the smoke and vapour roll'd
And think of struggling, toil-worn creatures
And we'll grudge them not their gold.

Thus, Gissing was ready at an early age to think of America as a cradle of unspoiled nature and unpolluted air, free of crass materialism, and opening unlimited vistas. Five years later, when he arrived in Boston in October of 1876 as a displaced youth of 19, he was still possessed by this vision, and seemed ready to become assimilated, and to transform himself into an American. He liked the comfortable railroad trains, the public libraries, the democracy of personal relations that allowed workers to be intimate with their employers, the abundant food at his lodging-house, and his fellow-lodgers there. In his letters to his brother he identifies himself with his new countrymen by speaking as "we," and boasts of "our democratic notions."

These are legitimate enthusiasms, but in other respects he was perhaps too uncritical. In a letter dated 13 November 1876, he dwells on the big and the new, reporting that the great Philadelphia Centennial Exposition had over 150,000 visitors a day, that information was transmitted through a wonderful new invention called the Telephone, and that the *Boston Herald*

had published 232,000 copies in ten editions weighing fourteen tons on election day. We catch an American intonation in his comment, “Pretty fair that. I guess an English paper doesn’t often run so.” In later years he would have considered himself a fool for writing in this way. He satirised his former state of mind through the character of Samuel Barmby in *In the Year of Jubilee*, who regards the proliferation of new periodicals as a sign of progress, and reports that the cabs of London, put end to end, would stretch for forty miles.

During his three months in Boston, Gissing’s intellectual life did not suffer. He wrote glowingly in his letters of the accessible public library, reported that “here everybody reads,” and that he himself was reading Heine, Goethe and George Eliot. He reported that there was reading aloud in “our family” at his boarding house every day, and that he had read some passages from *Vanity Fair* to them. He also joined a circle of people who read their poems to each other. Gissing had written very competent poetry when he was at school, and produced some poems during his first few months in the United States.

His chief friend in Boston was William Lloyd Garrison, the old abolitionist and crusading editor, then in his seventies and infirm (though he was to visit England in the following year), who promised to find Gissing employment with the *Atlantic Monthly*. Gissing continued to come to Boston to visit Garrison after he had moved to Waltham, and Morley Roberts tells an anecdote about Garrison bringing Gissing home with him to read a sonnet he had composed, which suggests that the old and the young writers had arrived at a certain intimacy. On the whole, it seems that during his three months in Boston, Gissing knew many people of literary tastes, and was open, cheerful, and gregarious—a style of life that contrasted sharply with his life in England before and after the American visit.

In January 1877, Gissing secured employment as a teacher at the high school in Waltham, a town about ten miles from Boston. One of his pupils who has left a memoir of him describes him as serious, reserved, and in possession of a beard; this beard could not have lasted long. It is never mentioned again or seen in any of the photographs. Gissing was an excellent teacher, seemed pleased with his position, and must have been in a happy and relaxed state of mind in Waltham, for while he was there he wrote a delightful comic poem called “The Candy Store.” It is unlike anything else he ever wrote except the verses about Coleridge’s patron, Gillman, that appear in *Maitland*, and reveals an aspect of his talent that rarely appears elsewhere:

Thickly lay the snow and frost on
Those long winding streets of Boston
Where I wander'd all engross'd on
 Some enigma, little worth,
When there suddenly ascended
To my nostrils undefended
An aroma, sweetly blended
 Of all savours upon earth.

Stopping short and upward gazing
I beheld a sight amazing,
Past description, blinding, dazing,
 I shall ne'er forget it more;
For there all close at hand I
Saw a beauteous figure stand, I
Saw a someone putting candy
 In the window of a store!

O that dear, that hateful *someone*,
O that obstinately dumb one,
O there ne'er again will come one,
 Half so cruel, half so sweet;—
'Twas a maiden — nay a goddess,
In a tightly fitting bodice,
Sweetly smiling on the noddies
 That were watching from the street.

As I stood in admiration,
In a sort of fascination
With a look of invitation
 She turned round to me and smiled,
And so pleasantly she bent her
Eyes on me, as if she meant a
Special hint for me to enter,
 That, alas, I was beguiled.

In I went, and she attended.
This and that she recommended
And I'm sure that I expended
 Three whole dollars at the least;
What I did I've no idea,
I could neither see nor hear,
And I'm sure that she thought me a
 Very curious sort of beast.

From that day began my sorrow,—
I was there upon the morrow,
Every day that I could borrow
 Beg or steal a little cash;
There I sat from hour to hour
In a sort of spicy bower,
Munching on with all my power,
 O how could I be so rash!

For I thought not of expenses,
Had no heed to consequences.
She had mastered all my senses
 With the magic of her eye;
And I thought I should ensure her
If I could but kneel before her,
And declare I did adore her,
 But I never dared to try!

Very many weeks passed, and I
Every day sat munching candy,—
Till in body, foot and hand I
 Seemed to feel a curious change.
I seemed altered in dimension,
Altered past my comprehension,
And I felt a sort of tension
 Most uncomfortably strange.

I consulted on the matter
Both my tailor and my hatter;
Said: “I fear I’m growing fatter”;
 Said the hatter: “Guess that’s so;
For your hat, you see sir, pinches
And your head too closely clinches,
'Tis too small by three good inches,
 Here’s another, that’ll do.”

And the tailor said: “You’re right, sir,
All your clothes are much too tight, sir,
But you used to be so slight, sir,
 When we made them, don’t you see;
Round the middle you’ve increased, sir,
Twenty inches at the least, sir,
And your pantaloons have ceased, sir
 To hang loosely round your knee.”

So I left them in a hurry,
In a most confounded flurry,
And as fast as I could scurry
 Made my way along the street;
After terror and confusion
Came the sudden resolution,
I would seek for a conclusion
 Of my pain at Mary's feet.

Gasping, panting, puffing, blowing,
On I hurried, little knowing
That I never more should go in
 That infernal candy-store, –
For I found the windows shut up,
All the decorations cut up,
And a piece of paper put up:
 “Left the town, apply next door.”

In a terrible excitement,
Wondering what on earth the flight meant,
I inquired what the sight meant
 Of that paper on the door;
And they told me that the late man
Was so bothered by a *fat man*
That 'twas on account of that man
 He had flitted from the store.

O, how could you be so cruel,
Mary, if you only knew all,
How I'm now reduced to gruel
 You would not have left me so,
Through all your shameful tricks I
'm in a fearful, fearful fix, I
Hope for nought but apoplexy,
 And it's all through you, you know.

Waltham, Jan. 1877.

His sudden disappearance from Waltham on 1 March 1877 has always been puzzling, but it is perhaps explained by Pierre Coustillas' speculation that he had fallen in love with a Waltham girl named Martha Barnes, and fled the scene in order to remain faithful to Nell Harrison, whom he had left behind in England. What is certain is that he had left friendship and secu-

rity in the Boston area for loneliness and hardship in Chicago. But it was in Chicago that the first glimmerings of his career as a writer appeared.

While he was in Boston, and barely a month after he arrived, Gissing for the first time saw something he had written in print in a general publication. This was an anonymous notice about two paintings which appeared in the *Boston Commonwealth*, and it may well have been placed on the recommendation of Garrison. But this effort is too slight and uncharacteristic to matter very much. Not until Chicago did Gissing actually write, sell, and see in print a piece of original fiction, the short story "The Sins of the Fathers." It was probably written in circumstances resembling those described by Whelpdale in Chapter 28 of *New Grub Street*. Whelpdale says that after arriving in Chicago with just enough money to secure a room at a boarding house, he approached the editor of the largest newspaper for employment, and when he was rejected, suggested a story. Since the editor seemed receptive, Whelpdale went back to his boarding house, and, sitting in the only heated place, a common room which he shared with a dozen men gathered about the fire in various stages of argument and conversation, wrote in three days a story which the editor accepted and promptly paid 18 dollars for. There is no reason to doubt that this is the genesis of "The Sins of the Fathers," which appeared in the Saturday Supplement of the *Chicago Tribune* on 10 March 1877.

Driven by immediate need, Gissing wrote and published at least fifteen stories between March and July while he was in Chicago. Some of these have only recently been discovered by Pierre Coustillas and Robert L. Selig. Let us recall that Gissing was only 19 when he displayed the energy and professionalism necessary, not only to write these, but to place them in various journals. But let us also give some credit to the willingness of American publications to give an untried writer a chance. Gissing knew that nothing of that kind could have happened in England. In fact, when he submitted a story to a periodical soon after he settled in London, he heard nothing whatever about it until he inquired, and then his manuscript was returned without any comment, and in three separate instalments. He has Whelpdale say: "I have never come across an English editor who treated me with anything like that consideration and general kindness ... Imagine anyone trying the same at the office of a London newspaper! To begin with, one couldn't see the editor at all." And, in fact, when Gissing returned to England and continued writing short stories, he failed to place a single one, and ultimately had to publish his first novel at his own expense.

Whelpdale says that after a time he was unable to produce any more stories, wanted to return to England, and so left for New York. Whether these were Gissing's reasons for leaving Chicago is unknown, but he did go to New York in July, and while he was there came across a newspaper from the Hudson valley city of Troy which had re-published "The Sins of the Fathers." Thinking that the newspaper might offer him work, he travelled up the Hudson to Troy by steamer and presented himself at the newspaper office, but met with no success. There ensued the famous interlude in which, if Whelpdale's story follows his own, Gissing lived for a week on peanuts.

He was saved from starvation only when he met an old man who directed him to a travelling photographer who needed an assistant. Noel Ainslie, a friend who heard the story of the American adventure from Gissing himself, reported that the man was a seller of gas-fittings, and that Gissing's duty consisted of displaying the merchandise he sold. In any event, he accompanied his employer on extensive travels through New England which were, we may imagine, thoroughly unpleasant. When he came back to Boston again in September, Gissing was ready to go back to England. He left his employer, borrowed money for his passage home, apparently from a number of lenders, and arrived at Liverpool on October 3rd. He had become thoroughly disillusioned about "the glorious West" of his youthful poem. Noel Ainslie believed that his American experiences were the source of his horror of poverty, and reported that he always spoke of them with pain.

It seems likely that Gissing's distrust of the press was also formed, or, at least, confirmed, in America. His letters to his brothers are full of newspaper information about the Philadelphia Centennial, the great Brooklyn Theatre fire, and the corrupt Presidential election of 1876. But he must soon have found American journalism distasteful. Egremont in *Thyrza* reports that he was distracted from more serious reading in America by the newspapers, and there are indications that Gissing's view of American journalism corresponded pretty well with the one expressed by Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

The little notebook Gissing kept during his American travels, which is now in the Yale University Library, and the stories he wrote during his Chicago interlude tell us that his mind was far from his immediate surroundings. There are some local addresses in the notebook, but most of it is occupied with plots for stories, lists of names to be used in them, comments and quotations connected with his reading, and even a list of books on London streets, apparently for use in stories. The stories themselves have

settings that are either English or neutral, with the one exception of “The Sins of the Fathers,” which follows Gissing’s own travels, and takes place, in part, in New England. They clearly show that Gissing was living in his past. One of them is a sketch of the Farne Islands. Of the three *Alliance* stories recently discovered by Coustillas and Selig, one takes place in “a retired part of London,” another in a village on “the Yorkshire coast.”

Some of these early stories have serious connections with Gissing’s state of mind, for they involve crimes, such as the one he had committed in Manchester, questions of fidelity in love, and other themes relevant to his own situation. John Halperin’s biography of Gissing points out that his fiction often anticipated episodes of his life, and the pattern appears even in these early stories. In one of them, “A Test of Honor,” a mother conceals from her daughter the fact that her father has been imprisoned for committing a crime. But the father reappears, and the mother is forced to admit that “There was no nobility in the wish to deceive others with regard to our position,” the precise issue Gissing himself would have to face a few years later when Frederic Harrison discovered the facts of his past.

When he returned to England, Gissing went to London, began to write seriously, and was ultimately to be identified as a London author; he himself coined the adjective “Londonesque” for the quality peculiar to his novels and stories of the city streets. When some possessions he had left behind him in Boston arrived in May of 1881, he wrote that he felt satisfaction “in completing a long and miserable phase” of his life—the American adventure. Yet he also said that the books that had appeared would save him the need for replacing them at great expense; a suggestion that his life in the United States had not been quite as straitened as is usually thought.

In June of 1885, at a moment when his struggles had become too much for him, he was ready to follow the counsel of despair and return to America, where he might work at literature, or “in a healthy way on a farm.” The idea obviously bordered on madness in his mind, and in the mind of the sister to whom he was writing. He tried to comfort her by saying, “there is nothing so dreadful in going again to America”; but he added “Don’t alarm the people at home.” In fact, of course, he never returned, and there is no evidence that he ever gave the possibility any serious thought again.

It is worth remembering that Gissing had two other sources of information and opinion about America besides his own travels, Morley Roberts and Eduard Bertz. Roberts was a perpetual wanderer in his youth, and spent three years in the United States, where he penetrated to a West that was still wild. There are characters like Roberts in many of Gissing’s novels, men

who start out for distant points of the globe at a moment's notice, usually for discreditable reasons.

As for Bertz, he went to join a pioneering community founded by Thomas Hughes in the mountains of Tennessee in 1881, but it may be an exaggeration to say that he was in America. Hughes' colonists were public school boys out of employment who tried to re-create England and its comforts in the wilderness. One of the motives of the colony was to bring a fresh infusion of English people and English culture to the American heartland. The colonists gave their streets English names, calling the colony itself "Rugby." There was a plum-pudding at Christmas-time, a tavern, called the "Tabard," a tennis club, a brass band and football games, and copies of *Punch* were readily available. Even more impressive were the 7,000-volume library for a community that never numbered more than a hundred, a newspaper, called "The Rugbeian," and the plans for a college. However, little actual work was done, there were disputes about land claims, the prices of land fell, the various agricultural and manufacturing schemes failed, and the colony was finally dissolved by drought and typhoid fever. Poor Bertz, who apparently did not suffer much, had to return to England, and must have had some interesting stories to tell Gissing about life on the frontiers of the New World.

Let us now turn to the place of America in Gissing's novels. He rarely used American settings, but America turns up from time to time in his pages as a recognizable theme, and his use of it reflects some of his characteristic views, and even suggests that America was the source of some of his attitudes and ideas.

America is, for example, the place to which seedy minor characters betake themselves to undergo the squalid experiences that expose their inferior natures. It is, very often, a code word for rascality, or, at the very least, incompetence. In *The Emancipated*, Mr. Denyer, a character whom few readers can have noticed, supports his family of three girls and a wife from abroad; he pursues success in dubious businesses and fails consistently, and the scenes of these enterprises are Ireland, Mexico, Egypt, and, predictably, America. In *Demos*, the opportunist Willis Rodman, who married Alice Mutimer, encounters a barmaid who turns out to be a previous wife. We learn from her dialogue with him that he deserted her, and that she and her child were turned out on "the streets of New York" because he could not pay the rent. Gissing's low opinion of America is so clear that when Thomas Gale, the geology professor of *Born in Exile*, returns from America with "a charming New England girl" as a wife, our suspicions are

immediately aroused, and Gissing has to assure us that she is “a type of all that is most attractive in American womanhood.” And, as it turns out, the worst thing she does is to introduce the novel’s heroine to a circle of liberal acquaintances.

America makes only four substantial appearances in Gissing’s work; none of them is more than minor, yet each assigns some specific value to America that could not have been brought into the novel by other means. The first is, of course, the conclusion of *Workers in the Dawn*, where the hero puts an end to his life by leaping into Niagara Falls, after having lived in America for a while. Arthur Golding’s experiences in America resemble Gissing’s, but his motive for going there was very different. Having done his duty by giving up the girl he really loves and returning to his coarse and drunken wife, he finds that he cannot continue, and goes to America with some capital in hand and the intention of buying land and hiring workers to farm it. The account of his sea voyage seems to make use of feelings Gissing himself had on his Atlantic journey. He feels exultation during a storm; “the thought of his security in the midst of such terrors gave him a loftier and truer conception of human powers than he had yet attained”—an intimation of Gissing’s agnosticism that was to take the form, for a time, of Positivism.

The narrative of *Workers in the Dawn* skips the years of Golding’s wanderings in America, during which he has never settled down to an occupation, and has lost his interest in art, to rejoin him sitting in the dead of winter in a room made comfortable by America’s famous central heating. He has not found any congenial Americans. “He had nothing in common with them; their taste seemed to him hopelessly vulgar;” so Americans impressed him much as the poor of London impressed Gissing himself. Golding is free, but in his loneliness his freedom is only a burden to him. He lives near Niagara Falls, and the sound of the rushing water seems to him to be “a ceaseless assertion that man is for ever dependent upon his fellows...” America is no more than an emptiness that echoes Arthur’s remorseful thoughts.

The post brings him news both of his wife’s imminent death and of the actual death of the girl he loves. At midnight he goes out to the Falls; the description which follows must be based on a first-hand experience. It is notable because it is free of threatening elements. The falling water, reflected moonlight and various icy shapes carved by the frost are called “glorious” and “marvellous,” and the whole passage is exceptional in Gissing’s work because it is poetic, concentrating on beauty of shape, color

and motion without assigning a narrative function to them. In fact, the beauty of the falls is, if anything, opposed to the function they perform in the story. Golding, overwhelmed by the sense that his life has been useless, descends to get under the rushing water, and ultimately leaps into it with the name of his beloved on his lips.

His motivation, oddly, has a positive aspect. He perceives in the curtain of water and spray a mystery he feels called upon to penetrate, and looks forward to joining the cataract's violence with "a delicious joy." We are reminded of Arnold's hero in *Empedocles on Etna*, who throws himself into the crater of the volcano, not only because he wants to end his life, but also because he wants to rejoin the elements of nature before sterile rational thought alienates him from them and makes him a stranger—a permanent stranger, as the title of a well-known article about Gissing himself put it. His character, like Arnold's, finds death, with its promise of a physical union with nature, less inhospitable than the life he has to lead.

The image of Niagara appears many years later in *The Whirlpool*, where the metaphor applies, not to nature, but to the destructive currents of the world of finance. The Falls provided Gissing with an image of nature that transcended ordinary life, both in its destructive power and in its undeniable reality—what Gissing calls "the immutable power of destiny." But within the context of *Workers in the Dawn*, the Falls, like America itself, project a clear symbolism; both offer release, but only at the price of destruction.

In *Thyrza*, the next novel in which America appears, the experiences of one of the characters, Egremont, suggest that much of Gissing's pessimism was generated, or at least, confirmed by his own adventures there. Egremont goes to America to escape the impossible situation that has developed in London: the mutual attraction between himself and the working-class Thyrza. He begins as an idealist who loves the classics and believes that working-people can be uplifted if they are taught to love literature, but he learns pragmatism in America. He finds that he reads only the newspapers and Walt Whitman, and that the atmosphere of the New World prevents him from thinking about himself or reading Greek. He reports that he had to come to America to learn the truth about the contemporary world. What he has learned is the uselessness of theories. He has experienced the benefits of working hard and enjoying good health and humor—even American humor. Roberts comments that Gissing's talk had little humor in it, and that what little there was consisted of the American variety—gross exaggeration. Egremont grows coarse, and finds himself responding to the vulgar

overstatement of political oratory, but also feels that America has taken the humbug out of him, and has shown him that his idealism involved much personal conceit.

In the letters Egremont writes to England he often mentions Walt Whitman. Morley Roberts maintained that he had to force "Maitland" to read Whitman, and Gissing records his "struggle" with Whitman in Egremont's letters. Egremont is made to report that Whitman has led him to feel the truth and joy of life, has offered a broad, healthy outlook that transcends his own provincialism, and has helped him to mature. This could not have happened if his American experiences had not swept aside his prejudices and enabled him to see the world as it was.

But the most important contribution America makes to the saner, healthier, if less discriminating view of life Egremont comes to adopt comes from its public life. Egremont, after trying to educate uncultured workingmen in England, witnesses the enormous success of an American who, without any culture or education whatever, makes many great contributions to society. This was Cornelius Vanderbilt. Egremont describes him as an ignorant, ruthless barbarian whose transportation empire provided employment for thousands of families which might otherwise have starved. Vanderbilt was, in fact, a self-made man, the son of a farmer, who began life as a boatman in New York harbour, saved his earnings to buy an early steam ferry, which he piloted himself, and eventually, through numerous shrewd strokes of business, came to command much of the country's land and water transportation. He accomplished all this with almost no schooling, and remained a poor speller throughout his life. He had almost no connection with the university that bears his name; it received a very small part of his fortune as an endowment shortly before his death.

The moral Egremont draws from the story of Cornelius Vanderbilt is an odd one. "What is the state of a world," he asks, "in which such a man can do good by such means?" He does not answer. But it is clear that a world where vice and ignorance have the power to do good while virtue and learning are useless must be unjust. It is a world where men like Egremont—and, for that matter, like Gissing—are out of place. And that modern, chaotic, unintelligible state of affairs is most fully illustrated by America.

Gissing made the most direct use of his American experiences in the few pages devoted to Whelpdale's story in *New Grub Street*. The significance of these events within the novel is determined by the fact that Whelpdale, as his name suggests, is an inferior specimen of a writer whose

ultimate ambition is to found a journal devoted to trivia which is to be called *Chit-Chat*. Thus, the minor success he achieved in America represents no more than the scrambling of a small-minded fellow bent on using his literacy to stay alive. This may have been Gissing's retrospective view of his own American interlude; if so, it is clearly an unfair assessment.

In *In the Year of Jubilee*, as in *Workers in the Dawn*, a man goes to America with business ambitions, but here the action takes place offstage, and is narrated as a flashback. Lionel Tarrant, the conceited, undependable fellow who marries Nancy Lord but refuses to live with her, goes to the Bahamas to make his fortune, but is caught up in the sort of shady dealings one expects to encounter across the Atlantic in a Gissing novel. He goes to New York, falls on hard times, and, like Gissing, tries to earn a living by writing. Ultimately, he returns to England by steerage, and has nothing but hard words for America. "If I were condemned for life to the United States," he says, "I should go mad and perish in an attempt to swim the Atlantic." He says that he only stayed as long as he did in order to study "the most hateful form of society yet developed," and is alarmed to learn that his speech has acquired an American intonation. One learns a taste for refinement, he observes, after living in a New York boarding house.

We can feel sure that Gissing did not fully agree with these views. After all, Tarrant is something of a scoundrel who has left his wife behind to bear her child in secret and alone, so that his opinions need not be taken seriously. Further, we are told that in his case, as in *Egremont's*, America encouraged growth of character. He himself admits that he could not have survived without the free lunch customarily offered in the American bars. When a friend reads a savage attack on the United States written by Tarrant which he calls "A Reverie in Wall Street," he asks, "Did you write that after a free lunch?" The question of course undermines Tarrant's criticism, and shows us that Gissing's views did not lack ambivalence.

Gissing's American visit did not seem to stimulate an interest in any American writer except Whitman, or lead him to distinguish the Americans from his English contemporaries. The influence of Poe is apparent in the Gothic stories he wrote in America, and he later read a life of Poe and noted in his diary that he and Gabrielle Fleury read Poe together when she visited him. The two American authors whose names appear most frequently in his life records are Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James. He read a number of Hawthorne's novels and his American note-books, and wrote to his sister that he admired his "exquisite style" and independence of thought and found him a valuable resource. He also read some of James' works and

in 1901 went with H. G. Wells to spend the night in James' house at Rye. But he seems to have ignored William Dean Howells, who was editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* at the time Gissing hoped to connect himself with it, and who was, in addition, one of the leading novelists of the time, a realist whose subject matter and manner matches Gissing's fairly well. Gissing later read some of Howells' work and pronounced it "Trivial." He thought that Mark Twain, a favourite of American readers, had led "a life of buffoonery." In later years he met two American authors in England, Harold Frederic and Stephen Crane, but there is no record of his opinion about their work.

There is an odd moment in his relations with Crane that leads us to an opportunity to recover an uncollected fragment of Gissing's composition. In 1899 Crane, who was living at Brede Place near Hastings, staged an elaborate Christmas celebration lasting several days, the main event being the production of an original comedy, "The Ghost." This play was written for the occasion by Crane, but he wanted to develop the notion that it was a collaboration of well-known writers, and invited contributions, however slight, from a number of novelists, including Wells, James, Conrad and Gissing, so that their names might appear on the program as co-authors. Gissing's contribution was the single sentence: "He died of an indignity caught in running after his hat down Piccadilly." Although all the collaborating authors were invited to the performance, Wells was the only one in the audience, estimated at between thirty and sixty people.

This is not the place to trace the American response to Gissing's work, which began fairly early, and, until recently, was more active and more generous than that of English readers. But there is one exceptional American figure who qualifies, I believe, as the first Gissing enthusiast, the first to adopt the unquestioning and somewhat unreasoning acceptance of Gissing and his work that has made him a cult with a small number of readers. This was Christopher Morley, the novelist and essayist who was well known to the American reading public from the twenties to the fifties. Morley was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford about 1910, and when he returned to America, entered upon a career as a booklover and general man of letters. He wrote some novels, but was most conspicuous as a defender of the familiar essay, a taste which owes something to his enthusiasm for *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, and as a magazine writer who treated books and bookmen with great affection.

Morley says that he first learned about Gissing from a bookdealer's catalogue, and, like many since, was unable to resist acquiring as many of

his books as possible. On the day that he received a longed-for copy of *By the Ionian Sea*, he reports, the furnace man brought him a terrier puppy, so he named his second acquisition after his first, and called the dog "Gissing." On one occasion the dog mistook a local Long Island pond for the ocean; it was promptly dubbed "Gissing Pond," and one of Morley's reminiscences about books is titled "Pebbles from Gissing Pond." The dog became the protagonist of some stories Morley wrote for his children which ultimately emerged as a full-length children's novel, *Where the Blue Begins*. Morley's Gissing, the dog-hero, has little in common with his namesake. He is a wealthy dog with a big house who adopts three puppies, and undertakes various professions in the course of the story, including that of clergyman, a department store manager, and a ship's captain. In retrospect, Morley came to feel that he should not have appropriated Gissing's name in this way, but his canine character refused to be called anything else.

Morley called *Ryecroft* "Gissing's enchanting and enchanted book," and there is some reason to believe that it influenced his own intimate and relaxed essay style. He reported that one day, when he was in a crowded Italian restaurant in the vicinity of Washington Square in the early thirties, a lady spoke to the crowd in general about a book that had strongly influenced her, name and author forgotten. Morley and another man recognized the book, from her description, as *Ryecroft*. When the author was identified, the woman exclaimed, "How I could have loved that man!" As Morley himself observes, he often alludes to Gissing and his works casually in his own writing. For example, in a passage from an essay called "The Sunny Side of Grub Street," he laments the fact that modern writers fail to keep diaries, and says, "The world of bookmen is in great need of a new crop of intimists, or whatever you like to call them ... Henry Ryecrofts." We can appreciate how remarkable this familiarity with Gissing was only if we remember that he was known, if at all, as an obscure figure who was fast fading from memory. Morley reports that he once proposed to the editorial board of a publishing house that some of Gissing's books be put back into print, and that they responded with "a look of dismay." He plants a hint for the enterprising American Gissing enthusiast. Morley Roberts, he notes, left his books in the United States, and they included a signed copy of *Ryecroft* that Gissing had given Roberts at St. Jean-de-Luz [actually this copy is now in the Brotherton Library with other Roberts material].

Noting that his grandfather, James Bird, had been a director of Chapman and Hall and an intimate of George Meredith, who once wrote him a letter

recommending an unknown young novelist named Hardy, Morley dwells lovingly on the possibility that his grandfather might, through Meredith, have seen some of Gissing's novels in manuscript.

The evidence is scanty, but it is fair to say that Gissing was, on the whole, alarmed by America, and that his feelings about it entered into many of his social opinions. As previously mentioned, Noel Ainslie suggested that his life in America was the source of his intense fear of poverty, and the suggestion is reasonable, because he was never again so desperately poor as he had been in America. The detestation of the popular press which emerges so strongly in *In the Year of Jubilee*, a familiar theme in all of Gissing's work, may well have had its origins in America. Egremont complained that one only read newspapers in America, at the expense of more worthwhile reading. This objection seems to be linked to another, to the contempt for commonness and vulgarity that is perhaps one of Gissing's least attractive traits. He drops only vague hints about the manners he observed in America, but if we can extrapolate from Dickens' complaint about spitting and the chewing of tobacco during his American travels a generation earlier, it is easy to imagine what Gissing might have encountered during his wanderings through the least exclusive segments of American society. Perhaps his suspicion of democracy and the odd mixture of affection and abhorrence he felt toward the poor has its ultimate roots in America rather than in the slums of London.

There is little doubt, I think, that the populism, egalitarianism, and tolerance of vulgarity and mediocrity he saw in America struck him as an anticipation of what was coming to England. In America he saw a culture produced by mass education in an industrial society without traditional standards, and he seems to have embodied certain aspects of it in such figures as Richard Mutimer, the union leader of *Demos*, Jasper Milvain, the hack writer of *New Grub Street*, and Luckworth Crewe, the publicist of *In the Year of Jubilee*. America, as he looked back at it, had the appearance of a democratic nightmare that was all the more frightening because it represented what England was bound to become.

Yet he hoped not. In the *Ryecroft Papers*, which are the finest expression of Gissing's love of England, a patriotism based, not on political power or wealth, but on the beauty and serenity of the land and the qualities of its people, Gissing speaks of "a new race, a scion of England" beyond the seas which is, in spite of surface resemblances, not English. He will not agree that it is entirely evil, but he cannot see that it has done any good. What it shows, he says, is what becomes of English tendencies when they

are no longer guided by a traditional regard for aristocracy. America, according to his analysis, stands as a warning that democracy is alien to English traditions and inconsistent with the best possibilities of the English character. In this passage, written toward the end of his life, we can trace some of the effects his American travels had on Gissing's deepest convictions.

Many years after Gissing left Massachusetts, Sigmund Freud came there to give a series of lectures at Clark University in 1909. He did some travelling and sightseeing, gained some sense of the country, and met many of its citizens. Later, looking back at this experience, he said to his biographer, Ernest Jones: "America is a mistake; a gigantic mistake, it is true, but none the less a mistake." Gissing, I am afraid, would have concurred completely with this view.

Three Lancashire Advocates of Gissing

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

In his ground-breaking though error-ridden article on Gissing published in the September 1906 number of *Nineteenth Century*, Austin Harrison wrote in placatory terms of his former tutor as though he feared the latter's family might take him to court if he made some objectionable revelations: "It is no purpose of mine to lift the veil of mystery overhanging Gissing's life, to disturb what Michelet called *le désintéressement des morts*." Nor is it my intention to disclose any incongruous fact in the lives of the northern admirers of Gissing with whom the present article is concerned. Research about them was begun some time ago because, as many biographers must have felt, it is frustrating when articles of exceptional value have been exhumed from old newspapers or journals to know very little or nothing about their authors. Arthur Bowes, T. T. Sykes and J. B. Oldham were Gissing's contemporaries. Bowes and Sykes wrote down their recollections of him with gusto almost immediately after his death; they saw to it that their articles should be read by a large number of readers and became available to biographers in quest of original material. Oldham did not write about Gissing; he lectured on his works after seeking his assistance and collected his writings.

Who were these three men? Their names are likely to have become known through three articles which were reprinted in *George Gissing at*

Alderley Edge (Enitharmon Press, 1969) and Volume 7 of his *Collected Letters*, but as they were obviously genial men who treasured their memories and read his works with some fascination, one naturally would like to have some information about them and to have portraits of them. They were good propagandists and certainly lost no opportunity to sustain his fame. Tracing their descendants would be a worthy enterprise but if ever such a thing is attempted the starting-point will obviously have to be the obituaries published in that wonderful quarry of minor records, the provincial press. Only Bowes seems to have corresponded with Gissing after he ceased to be a student at Lindow Grove School, and posterity is grateful to him for having carefully preserved a batch of eighteen letters covering the period April 1873-June 1874, that with which Bowes's article, first published in *T.P.'s Weekly* on 22 January 1904, is concerned. Part of it was reprinted without comment in the *Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser* on the same day, and the whole in *Cheshire Notes and Queries*, New Series, Volume 6, no. 4, which was undated but can be confidently said to have appeared shortly after Gissing's death, as well as in James Wood's school magazine, the *Dinglewood Magazine* (April 1904), to the third number of which Gissing had contributed his little known essay "The Old School" (December 1897). Bowes kept an eye on the development of his friend's career and, as a contributor to the periodical press, he may have published articles on him that still await identification. At all events, a short piece by him appeared in *Notes and Queries* on 26 November 1921, p. 435, when he replied to a query by one A. Egerton about the extent to which *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* were an autobiographical story. If Gissing and Ryecroft were the same person, Egerton asked, how could he foretell his own death? "Where and how did he die and how long after receiving his legacy?" The question was hardly less naïve than that of the Devon clergyman who, after reading *Henry Ryecroft*, wrote to Gissing, offering to take on Ryecroft's housekeeper if she needed an employer. Bowes truthfully replied: "The 'Private Papers' are not to be taken as strictly autobiographical, but they contain references to certain passages in the writer's life. I have not the book at hand, but I recollect that some of the incidents of early school life were drawn from Gissing's experience at Lindow Grove, Alderley Edge, where I was a fellow-pupil."

The earliest appearance of Thomas Tatton Sykes in Gissing's company (actually in that of George, William and Algernon) occurs in the 1871 census returns for Lindow Grove School, when he is listed together with his eleven-year-old brother Joseph. He was about one year George's junior.

Arthur Bowes
(1858-1925)

T. T. Sykes
(1858-1921)

His 1904 essay, with its various amusing anecdotes, shows what good friends they were. Whether they corresponded after Gissing had left for Owens College is doubtful, but there is in William's letter to George of 30 October 1877 a mention of a "letter from Sykes" which probably refers to him rather than to his brother Joseph, to whom Gissing once set a translation of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" "into elegant Latin verse." While all the boys were still boarders at Lindow Grove, Tom recollected that George was invited one summer to his parents' home at Heaton Moor, where he made the acquaintance of 'an old fellow-townsmen, Mr. Ives, late second master of the Stockport Grammar School.' This Mr. Lister Ives, who is mentioned in passing in Benjamin Varley's *History of Stockport Grammar School* (Manchester University Press, 1957) has now been identified by articles in the *Stockport Advertiser* and the *Stockport Echo*. Nowhere does Gissing mention him, although full knowledge of the letters he wrote, notably to his mother, at the time would doubtless confirm the pleasure young Gissing derived from his conversations with a Grammar School teacher whose interests, according to Tom Sykes, partly coincided with his own. Lister Ives was a native of Cumberworth, Yorkshire, and his wife, three years his junior, was born in Wakefield.

T. T. Sykes's recollections of Gissing, which since 1969 have been made relatively accessible, like Bowes's, in *George Gissing at Alderley Edge*, were simultaneously published, under the title "The Early School Life of George Gissing," in three newspapers: the *Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser* (p. 3), the *Cheshire Daily Echo* (p. 4) and the *Stockport Advertiser* (p. 3) on 29 January 1904. Like Arthur Bowes's piece they were reprinted by James Wood in his *Dinglewood Magazine* for April 1904, as well as in Volume 6, no. 4 of *Cheshire Notes and Queries*.

When he heard in early 1898 that James Bertram Oldham, who like him lived in Stockport, was to give a lecture on Gissing's works at the local Literary Club, Tom Sykes did not overlook the opportunity he was offered to entertain the audience at question time with his reminiscences of Gissing at Alderley Edge. He was the nameless but easily recognizable gentleman to whom the *Advertiser* journalist so pleasantly alluded in his short piece published on 1 April 1898. "A gentleman present treated the club to a valuable sketch of the novelist's school life, a subject he was most capable of handling, having been a fellow scholar and a chum. The speaker referred to Gissing's eccentricities, and gave some delightful reminiscences." Gissing's reply of 12 March 1898 to Oldham's enquiry about his career can be found in Vol. 7 of the *Collected Letters*, where it is followed by a reprint of

the piece in the *Advertiser*. The original of Gissing's letter, together with a few copies of his novels signed by J. B. Oldham, were sold some twenty years ago. Three of them, *Demos* (Smith, Elder, 1892, red cloth), *Sleeping Fires* (Fisher Unwin, 1896, second edition) and *The Whirlpool* (Lawrence & Bullen, 1897, second edition) are on this writer's shelves.

And now let the obituaries speak for themselves.

Death of Mr. Arthur Bowes
A Former Surveyor to the Newton Council
(*Newton and Earlestown Guardian*, 27 March 1925)

We regret to report the death of Mr. Arthur Bowes, A.M.I.C.E. [Associate Member of Institute of Civil Engineers], M.I.M.E. [Member of Institute of Mining Engineers], late surveyor to the Urban District Council of Newton-in-Makerfield [Lancashire], who died very suddenly on Saturday, the 21 March, at his home, "The Cottage," Wargrave.

Mr. Bowes was a civil engineer, and for the greater part of his career was engaged in municipal engineering. For sixteen years he was engaged under the Salford Corporation, on all the undertakings of a large borough. He entered the service of Newton Urban District Service in 1897, from which he resigned, for reasons of health, in November, 1920.

Although not in the best of health, he was able to spend his later years happily with his hobbies, which all through his life, were books and writing. Amongst many other papers, he was a contributor to *Chambers's Journal*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Discovery*, and the *Manchester Guardian*, and he wrote for *Work* and *Building World* since their commencement.

Mr. Bowes, who survived his wife by twelve years, was born at Pendleton, in 1858. He will be greatly missed by his family and many friends.

[There follows an account of the funeral ceremony which took place in Wargrave Church prior to the interment at the Newton-in-Makerfield Cemetery. The principal mourners were the three sons, two sons-in-law and a nephew of Arthur Bowes. The Newton-in-Makerfield Lodge of Freemasons was represented by some sixteen of its members.]

Tragic Death of Ald. T. T. Sykes, J. P.
Sad Discovery at his Residence
(*Stockport Advertiser*, 4 March 1921)

It is with great regret that we announce the death, which has taken place under tragic circumstances, of Alderman T. T. Sykes at his residence, the "Moorlands," Furness Vale, near Whaley Bridge.

On Sunday night, about eight o'clock, he was found in one of the rooms of the ground floor shot through the head; a service rifle was at his side. During the day he had been on the golf links at Whaley Bridge, and when he returned home he appeared in good spirits. On Saturday he attended the football match between Stockport County and Coventry City at Edgeley Park, and he was greatly delighted at the success of the home team. As the Chairman of the Stockport County Football Club, he was very keenly interested in its fortunes, and the recent successes of the second division team, after a long spell of bad luck, was a source of great satisfaction to him.

Alderman Sykes was the son of the late Mr. Ellis Sykes, and belonged to an old Yorkshire family. Mr. Ellis Sykes established the well-known business afterwards carried on in the name of Ellis Sykes and Son, wholesale ironmongers, Prince's Street, and since the death of Mr. Ellis Sykes, Alderman Sykes has conducted the establishment.

Political and Municipal Interests

For many years Alderman Sykes took a leading part in the political, municipal and social life of the town. A Liberal in politics, he joined the Town Council in 1904 as a representative of Heaton Lane Ward, and he continued to represent this ward until 1915, when he was made an Alderman in the place of the late Alderman F. Rawlings. He was the recognised leader of the Liberal party in the Council and in any party negotiations or discussions he ably represented his party. He was vice-chairman of the Parks Committee, and member of the Electricity, Borough Extension, Town Hall and Finance Committees. Last year he also served on the Watch Committee. He took a keen interest in his municipal work and was greatly respected by all the members of the Council irrespective of party. For many years he had been honorary treasurer of the Stockport Liberal Association, and he took part in the negotiations which led to the adoption of two Coalition candidates in the recent parliamentary by-election. In 1913 he acted as one of the honorary secretaries of the Liberal bazaar, and carried out his duties most pleasantly and successfully. He was a prominent member of the Reform Club, of which he had held several offices, including that of president. Interested in educational work, he was a Governor of the Stockport Grammar School, being appointed by the Town

Council, and he was also on the Stockport War Pensions Committee, and on the Committee of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He was also connected with other institutions in the town.

Alderman Sykes was appointed a magistrate in 1912, and he regularly attended to his duties on the bench, his last appearance being on Thursday morning at a special court over which he presided.

A Good Sportsman

His keen interest in healthy sport was generally recognised and appreciated. For many years he gave attention to lacrosse, and was a past president of the Offerton Lacrosse Club and former president of the Cheshire Lacrosse Association. Since 1908 he had been a director of the Stockport County Football Club, and he succeeded Mr. S. O. Flint as chairman. He was a member of the Disley and Whaley Bridge Golf Clubs, and delighted to be on the links in genial company.

Alderman Sykes was of a happy disposition, generous and warm-hearted, and popular wherever he went. He had a large fund of good stories, and he was frequently called upon to retail them by his friends at the social gatherings which he attended. For some years he resided in Dialstone Lane, and afterwards removed to Disley and more recently to Furness Vale. He had been in declining health for some time. He was 64 years of age, and leaves a widow and two daughters, with whom the deepest sympathy is felt.

[This was followed by several paragraphs dealing with "Reference at Police Court" and "The Inquest." The latter read in part:]

Mrs. Sykes, the widow, stated that her husband was in his 65th year. He had had very indifferent health from six to eight years, gradually going worse and losing vitality. He was last medically attended in October last by Dr. Heathcote. His state of health caused depression, more especially marked during the last few weeks. Mr. Sykes was extremely reserved about his business affairs, but three months ago witness was aware that he had financial difficulties in consequence of not being able to get money in and having to pay for goods. She had helped him in the difficulty which she regarded as only temporary, but there had been a great strain on his mind and he had looked very ill during the last three weeks. [...] Frank B. Norris, of 135, Manchester Old Road, Heaton Norris, manager for Ellis Sykes and Son, of which Mr. Sykes was the principal, said that about six weeks ago the deceased was ill and was away from business for a week, and when he

returned he appeared to be unusually worried and run down. More than once he had said he did not know what he was doing, and his state of depression became more marked as time went on. On Friday and Saturday last he was particularly depressed. On Saturday afternoons he usually attended the football matches at Edgeley, and generally said whether he would be back or not, but last Saturday he left the warehouse without saying anything about it, and witness did not see him again.

[The Coroner's conclusion was that the deceased "had taken his own life and committed suicide whilst of unsound mind." A lengthy account of the funeral followed; besides family, friends, and employees, the ceremony was attended by numerous representatives of the Stockport Town Council, Liberal associations, local Reform Club, golf and football clubs, and other local bodies and associations. An account of the funeral also appeared in the *Stockport Express* for 10 March 1921.]

Sudden Death of Mr. Lister Ives
(*Stockport Advertiser*, 8 January 1886)

Many of our Stockport readers will learn with regret that Mr. Lister Ives, of the Grammar School Cottage, Wellington-road South, died suddenly at Southport early on Tuesday morning last. Mr. Ives, who was the first assistant-master at the Stockport Grammar School, proceeded to Southport the day after Christmas Day for the purpose of spending the Christmas vacation. He had been ailing for some time, but no serious results were feared, and Mr. Ives was not under medical treatment. On Monday he was in his usual state of health, and in the afternoon walked on the pier. He was suddenly seized, however, with acute pains, and on reaching his apartments a doctor was at once called in; but despite every effort he died early on Tuesday morning. The deceased gentleman, who was highly respected in Stockport, was a native of Penistone [Cumberworth according to the 1881 census returns] and was a member of an old York-shire family. He was 66 years of age. He was educated at the Scarborough Grammar School, and afterwards became a teacher there. Later he was a teacher for three years at the Christleton Grammar School, near Chester. After that he was teacher at Mr. Littlewood's School, Rochdale, for some time. At the expiration of his engagement there Mr. Ives established a private school in Dukinfield, leaving there ultimately on account of Mrs. Ives's health. He came to the Stockport Grammar School about 23 years ago, in succession to the Rev.

Jeremiah Coombes, and has been connected with that institution ever since. Mr. Ives leaves a widow and one daughter, with whom the sincerest sympathy will be felt in their bereavement. It will be remembered that some years ago the only son of Mr. Ives—a youth of considerable promise—was killed by falling down a precipice on Great Orme's Head, Llandudno.

[An account of the funeral appeared in the *Stockport Echo* for 9 January 1886.]

Mr. J. B. Oldham
Former Stockport Solicitor
(*Stockport Advertiser*, 17 December 1937)

We regret to announce the death, which occurred at York on Tuesday night, of Mr. James Bertram Oldham, B. A., the former well known Stockport solicitor.

Mr. Oldham, who was in his 76th year, was taken suddenly ill on Sunday afternoon, and was removed to a nursing home, where he underwent an operation and collapsed. He leaves a widow, who was a Miss Anderson, the daughter of a Heaton Norris Wesleyan minister, and one son.

Mr. Oldham was the eldest son of the late Mr. Thomas Oldham, of Wheatfield House, Heaton Norris, the founder of the business of Messrs. Thomas Oldham, engineers and boiler makers, of Stockport. He was educated at Stockport Grammar School and Cambridge University, where he helped to found the university's lacrosse club. He was also a member of the Heaton Mersey Lacrosse and Cricket Club, playing both games, and occasionally assisting Cheshire county at cricket.

Mr. Oldham was articled to the late Mr. Russell Coppock, a son of Stockport's first Town Clerk, and qualified as a solicitor in 1887. He continued for a time in Mr. Coppock's office, and later began on his own account with offices in St. Petersgate. There he remained for many years, and later, on his retirement from practice, went to live at Wilmslow. When his son, Mr. Maurice Anderson Oldham, who held an important appointment with the N.E. Railway Co., went to reside at York, Mr. Oldham and his wife made their home there. He was for many years clerk to the Land Tax Commissioners for the Stockport Division, and this post he continued to hold after his retirement from his other legal work.

Mr. Oldham was a man of considerable scholarship, and one of his chief hobbies was historical research, especially in connection with early Stock-

port and the Stockport Grammar School. He had been engaged for many years—and, indeed, up to the time of his death—in compiling a history of three neighbouring Grammar Schools, those at Stockport, Macclesfield, and Manchester. He was an acknowledged authority on the history of the various branches of the Oldham family, and had traced with great care the connection of Bishop Hugh Oldham, who was the founder of the Manchester Grammar School.

He was for some years secretary of the old Stockport Literary Club, to which he rendered great service. He also belonged to the Manchester Literary Society.

Mr. Oldham was a Mason, being a Past Master of the Egerton Lodge.

A keen Liberal, a member of the Stockport Reform Club for many years, Mr. Oldham had not latterly taken any active part in politics, but as a young man he took much interest in Parliamentary and municipal elections. On two occasions he stood as a Liberal candidate for Vernon Ward in municipal contests, but was not successful.

The remains will be cremated at Leeds at 11.30 on Saturday morning.

For supplying the editor with photocopies of the obituaries quoted in this article, warm thanks are due to Mrs. Margaret Wilde, Local Heritage Library, Community Services, Town Hall, Stockport SK1 3XE, and to Mr. Peter Sargeant, Community Library Officer (Heritage), Newton-le-Willows Library, Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9TU. Their willingness to help has been greatly appreciated.

A New Italian Translation in Context

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

Few if any professional writers in Gissing's time are known to have derived a substantial portion of their income from translations of their works. Accounting for this would lead one into domains ranging from the haphazard diffusion of culture at international level to linguistic difficulties in the original language, from the artistic curiosity or otherwise of publishers to the ever unpredictable role played by chance in human affairs, also perhaps in the writers' will to make their works known abroad and in the translators' capacities, which are notoriously unequal.

Gissing was a good, imaginative linguist. His knowledge of Latin and Greek has been praised repeatedly; his understanding and practice of French, German and Italian as well as Spanish late in life were creditable and he could read literary works in any of these four languages quite comfortably, if not with great gusto. But he never hoped that his earnings could be palpably increased by translations of his novels, partly because he was aware that international copyright laws, which were deplorably unfair to foreign nationals, were still in their infancy. Occasionally he passed judgment on this or that rendering of his novels into French—we have in mind his disenchanted remarks about Fanny Lebreton's version of *Demos*, his far too generous appreciation of Georges Art's talent, which he could only judge through *La Raçon d'Eve* (we venture to suggest that *Le Rachat d'Eve* would have been more accurate and better French), and a few translations of short stories published in *La Revue bleue*. But in an age when the art of translation was as a rule still rudimentary and practised by people whose command of English left much to be desired, the foreign versions of his works only struck him as pleasant curiosities. And it is only fair to add that he never claimed to know much about the publication of his novels outside England, the United States and the English-speaking countries in which Colonial editions could be purchased.

Another aspect of the question worth emphasizing is that, sadly enough, the projected translations of his writings were more often a source of disappointment than of satisfaction. Many examples could be given of intentions which proved to be mere illusions. Over a dozen are on record and, although Gissing said little enough about the various failures and their causes, we often know or guess how disappointed he was. Some translators he privately viewed as persons of doubtful ability or, even worse, as individuals not to be trusted.

Let us take a few instances. Henry-D. Davray, whose fluency in English was excellent, not only failed to keep his promise to translate *Born in Exile*, but he never returned the copy of the book which Gissing had lent him, saying it was the only one in his possession. Indeed the article on Gissing he contributed to *La Semaine littéraire*, the Geneva weekly, in 1906, somehow smacks of remorse. Bad luck persisted when Marie Canavaggia took over the project (Editions du Siècle, 1933), for her publisher, Gérard de Catalogne, only agreed to bring out the book if its length was reduced. Less well known is the case of the French translation of *The Town Traveller*, which Georges Art duly completed, but finding a publisher or a newspaper editor proved too much for him. Or again, when it became clear that the un-

reliable Wanda von Sacher Masoch would not honour her engagement to translate *The Odd Women* into German and Gissing granted permission to Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski, an apparently more dependable candidate, the latter's promise also proved an idle one. About the same time a friend of Gabrielle Fleury with a scarcely shorter name, Amélie Chevalier de la Petite Rivière, contracted to translate and publish *The Whirlpool* serially in her weekly *Journal des Demoiselles*, and Gissing was again inveigled into what the French ironically call *un marché de dupes*.

Now, after such disappointments and others some traces of which survive in publishers' papers, it is extremely gratifying to report the publication of an Italian translation of *New Grub Street*, which is not the less welcome because it comes after translations into nine other foreign languages of the same title. It is an attractive pictorial paperback the front cover of which features the well-known portrait of "A Young Man: Robin John," by Augustus Edwin John, the original of which is held by the Royal Academy of Arts. The book is no. 88 in one of Fazi Editore's various series, entitled "Le Porte." The names of the translator, Chiara Vatteroni, and of the author of the introduction, Benedetta Bini, are new in Gissing studies, but it is obvious (*vide* internet entries for the two names) that they are scholars of considerable experience, familiar with Victorian history and literature. The list of books, mainly translations numbered 37 to 88, bound in after the text, includes eight English titles translated by Chiara Vatteroni, two of which are minor Hardy stories (*Desperate Remedies* and *Two on a Tower*) as well as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's best selling novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*, which John Sutherland in his useful *Companion to Victorian Fiction*, called "the most sensationally successful of all sensational novels." Wilkie Collins, Maria Edgeworth and Thackeray are also represented in the collection, which a quick look reveals to be fairly strong on the romantic side. As for Benedetta Bini, she is a professor in one of the Roman universities and was in the 1990s cultural attaché at the Italian Embassy in London. She is regarded in her country as a major scholar in the field of English studies and her publications would seem to have been mainly, if not exclusively, in her native language.

Quite appropriately the original division of the novel into three volumes has been preserved while in dialogues a reasonable distinction between the Italian third and second persons singular has been introduced. As English readers familiar with Italian and French use (the two are not absolutely identical) will naturally guess, difficulties may occur in the translation when the relationship between any two characters, for example Jasper Mil-

vain and Marian Yule and again, near the end of the novel, between Jasper and Reardon's widow, changes altogether at some point in the unfolding of the narrative. The translator must choose carefully the most plausible moment for the introduction of the new mode of address. But Gissing, it would seem, unconsciously facilitated the translator's task. And of course there are also decisions that must be made right from the start, that is from the first meeting of two characters, for instance Milvain and Reardon, who are known to have been acquainted before they are speaking to each other. Going through the translation quickly, we notice for instance on p. 271 that Reardon and Carter use the second person singular when addressing each other throughout the novel—"Ti consiglio di andare a nord," Carter suggests to Reardon ["I advise you to go north"].

The critical apparatus of the edition includes an introduction divided into three parts: the virtual street called Grub Street; hack writers of both sexes; the great blue dome. It offers, as the subtitles indicate, a historical and cultural picture of the background of the novel which shows the *fin de siècle* as Gissing saw it, an image of the Nineties which is not particularly "yellowish" and reflects the novelist's specific vision of literary life at the time of composition. The explanatory notes are of special interest in that they throw light on 34 difficulties which the compiler—Chiara Vatteroni, we suppose—rightly thinks might be obstacles in the way of her compatriots. A fair proportion of the notes correspond to literary or historical allusions which the vast majority of readers, whether Italian or not, are likely to find obscure, but some classical authors, Latin quotations or illuminating episodes in Gissing's life reflected in the novel are left undocumented. Are we to understand that the average educated Italian reader is so familiar with Diogenes Laertius that no transalpine annotator need analyse the contents of the *Lives of the Philosophers*? As could be expected by readers who are aware of the picturesque Italian art of onomatopoeia, *Chat* and *Chit-Chat*, and *Tatler* and *Tittle-Tattle* are amusingly rendered. In the train of this, foreign readers will be curious to know what title for the book was chosen by the translator, all the more curious as all translators, French or German, Swedish or Romanian, Greek or Russian, Japanese or Chinese or Korean have been confronted with the same difficult problem. Well, the problem has been solved in the least expected manner—the English title has been quite simply preserved.

The bio-bibliographical note is remarkably up to date since it announces this writer's recently published primary bibliography of Gissing's works and mentions most of the Italian translations of his books, in particular the

first ever published, *L'amore di Thyrsa* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1939), but regrettably not *Sulla riva dello Ionio* (Cappelli, 1957), reissued by Edizioni di Torino in 1993.

In her ultraquick survey of Gissing's reputation in the last hundred years, Benedetta Bini is concerned with its apparent decline in the interwar period, quoting Dorothy Parker's dated quatrain praising Samuel Butler at Gissing's expense. Like so many rhyming *obiter dicta* it is mildly amusing, but besides the fact that the respective achievements of the two writers cannot bear comparison, it is historically inaccurate to say that Gissing's books were at any time forgotten by critics for years. Their interest never flagged in the eyes of readers who liked to be invited to think—and thought has no age. So if Fazi Editore want Italian readers to think more, not less, they could add to their distinguished list of publications at least another Gissing title, perhaps *The Odd Women* or *The Whirlpool*.

The greatest surprise awaiting non-Italian readers is probably to be found on the back cover. Who in Britain or the States was aware that Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (1896-1957), the wealthy Sicilian prince and famous author of *Il gattopardo* (*The Leopard*), posthumously published in 1958, had written on Gissing? Fazi Editore quote a few well-chosen, intriguing sentences from a chapter of *Letteratura inglese* (Vol. II, L'Ottocento e il Novecento, 1991). After an impressionistic evocation of Gissing's pictures of lower-class life Lampedusa wrote: "Queste e molte altre immagini disperate hanno trovato in Gissing il loro straziante poeta. [...] Scrisse molto, e non ho letto tutto, ed ho avuto torto" [These and many other atrocious images have found in Gissing their heart-rending poet. [...] He wrote much, and I have not read everything; and there I was wrong.] By his own account it seems that he read at least *The Unclassed*, *Isabel Clarendon*, *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. He saw Gissing as the novelist of failure and was impressed by the number of frustrated great expectations we find in his books. Unfortunately Lampedusa wrote at a time when Morley Roberts's fictionalized biography of his friend seemed to be the only biography available.

Book Reviews

Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, eds., *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Writing a book on the idea of music in Victorian Fiction is a rather tall order, but after reading the presentation of this volume on the front flap of the dust jacket and the preface signed by the two editors, all possible ambiguities are dispelled. The book, the publishers tell us, aims at addressing fundamental questions about the function, meaning and understanding of music in nineteenth-century culture and society, as mediated through works of fiction. The volume is co-edited by two musicologists, Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, who are lecturers in music at the Universities of Reading and York respectively. It consists of conference papers which have been converted into essays on Jane Austen, E. F. Benson, Carlyle, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, Gissing, George Eliot, Hardy, du Maurier and Oscar Wilde as well as a few minor figures. The successive essays explore different strategies for interpreting the idea and function of music in the Victorian novel. Some focus on the degree to which scenes involving music illuminate what music meant to the writer, to contemporary performers and listeners. The reception of particular composers is implicitly or explicitly reflected. In other essays aspects of gender, race and class are brought out by the thematic introduction of music into the narrative.

Gissing's appearance in the book is limited in scope and expounded in a comparative context. The title of chapter 1 enables one to understand how Nicky Losseff approached Gissing. It reads, "The voice, the breath and the soul: Song and poverty in *Thyrza*, *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke* and *A Child of the Jago*." The juxtaposition of the four titles is doubtless justified, though it is safe to say that Gissing would not have relished it unreservedly. There is evidence that he did not greatly care, despite his friend Clara Collet's efforts to make him read more of Mrs. Gaskell's works, for the fiction of the Unitarian lady of Manchester. *Mary Barton* doubtless reminded him of a clearly circumscribed phase in his own ideological and artistic development about which he came to have second thoughts. His attitude towards Kingsley was equally critical. He was made a little impatient by some reviewers' comparisons with or at least allusions to *Alton Locke* when they passed judgment on his third published novel, *Demos, A Story of English Socialism*. When, later in life, he reread *Hypatia*, a novel he had first read in childhood, his appreciation had waned considerably. As for *A Child of the Jago*, he pronounced it rather severely in his diary to be "poor

stuff.” But this does not invalidate thematic comparisons or *rapprochements* between *Thyrza* and the three other novels.

It is at the level of generalities that one finds it easy to agree with Nicky Losseff, for instance when she observes that in the four novels she discusses the power of “song” opens the soul into a higher sphere or when she reminds us of Phyllis Weliver’s basic consideration on the role of music in Victorian society: “for women, performance in the home was an ornament [the last few lines of *New Grub Street* is one of many examples in Gissing’s works]; for upper-class men, a debasing activity; for the lower classes, a refining element or a panacea for the ravages of brutal existence; for foreigners, a valid means of earning a living.” Or again when the ability to sing in a character like Thyrza Trent or Margaret Jennings in *Mary Barton* is associated with the notion of exile—social and cultural exile, a theme which Gissing turned to remarkable account in his works right from his first novel and which could have been discussed in depth profitably in connection with *Alton Locke*, though not with *A Child of the Jago*.

As the title of the book under review naturally leads one to expect music is present in all the works concerned, but it is only a subject among others. The sub-chapter on “Environment and the breath” reads like a digression—quite an interesting one—on smells in *Thyrza* and *Mary Barton*, music and singing being temporarily forgotten. Also Gissing’s works and opinions are referred to in a way that reveals a rather wobbly command of the subject. We are surprised to read that he *may* have done extensive research to make sure his Lambeth setting was absolutely accurate. Unreliable information is borrowed in two places from a book on Gissing published in 1974. The comparison between Mallard and his creator partakes of invention and it simply cannot be said that Gissing at any time felt the need of religion. As for *The Commonplace Book* being unpublished in 1974 or even now, it is a statement based on sheer ignorance. Jacob Korg published it as long ago as 1962, in the early days of serious Gissing studies. Nicky Losseff is on safer ground when she writes with Gissing in mind on p. 22 that “Religious music as well as religion itself can symbolize hypocrisy. Spirituality is unconnected with specifically religious songs.”

Scholars who wish to break new ground on the important subject of Gissing and music should convince themselves in the wake of Allan Atlas and his *two* articles on this major cultural area that a wealth of relevant material is to be found in such books as *The Nether World*, *The Whirlpool* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* among others as well as in short stories like “A Song of Sixpence” and “The Muse of the Halls.” His *Col-*

lected Letters contain many illuminating allusions to musical matters in practically all volumes, and mentions of composers ranging from Beethoven to Cherubini, from Handel to Mendelssohn, from Chopin to Dvořák. Like Daudet (see a letter dated 3 April 1888) he liked *all* kinds of music, from the classical masterpieces to that produced by barrel organs in Naples or in London. With typical and largely misunderstood modesty he accused himself on 9 October 1885 of being “brutally ignorant” of music. Indeed he was not! To him music was something absolutely essential. Let doubters, if there are any, turn to all the primary material he has left us, then to Gabrielle Fleury’s recollections of him which were printed as an appendix to Volume IX of his *Collected Letters*. They will find an *embarras de richesses* which will help them to put Nicky Losseff’s chapter in the right place in Gissing studies.— Pierre Coustillas

Francesco Bevilacqua, ed., *Calabria sublime: I paesaggi naturali della Calabria attraverso gli occhi di viaggiatori e descrittori*, prefazione di Mauro F. Minervino, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 2005.

Books on Calabria rarely fail to mention Gissing, and the present one, with its poetic title, *Calabria sublime*, which should be pronounced with the Italian accent, is no exception. It keeps its promise, which is fully expounded in the subtitle: The natural landscapes of Calabria as seen through the eyes of travellers and describers (with 48 photographs in colour). Signor Bevilacqua, the editor, is a barrister by profession, but he is probably better known to Calabrians as a journalist and occasional contributor to the *Gazzetta del Sud*, also as author of a dozen books which deal with various aspects of his native province, not so much its woe-ridden history as its breath-taking picturesqueness. After relying on such publishers as Abramo and Il Coscile, he now seems to be published almost exclusively by Rubbettino, surely the best-known publisher for books concerned with southern Italy. More than once have we drawn the attention of this journal’s readers to the firm’s nicely produced volumes, and this one, with its beautiful illustrations suggestive of the extraordinary variety of Calabrian landscapes certainly ranks among the best of the publisher’s efforts to help readers imagine the splendours of the deep South in all seasons. Not only is Signor Bevilacqua a talented describer of the attractions of what used to be Magna Græcia, he is also a first-class photographer whose illustrations would have enchanted Gissing and his successor Norman Douglas. If a

selection had to be made from the forty-eight views reproduced in his *Appendice fotografica*, picking nos. 10 (the mouth of the Crati), 28 (Capo Colonna), 36 (fields of French honeysuckle in the valley of the Corace) and 37 (the Staletti promontory, in the Cassiodorus country) might be the best choice of some readers besides the present one.

The list of travellers represented in this anthology of course includes names commonly found in studies of Calabria, for instance Paul Bourget, Duret de Tavel, François Lenormant among the French, Richard Keppel Craven, Edward Lear, Craufurd Tait Ramage, Henry Swinburne among the English, but of the thirty-six authors whom Francesco Bevilacqua claims to have mentioned as witnesses and describers of the beauties of Calabria, not a few are new to us, which testifies to the extent of his research. His introduction is mainly concerned with the aesthetics of landscapes, while writers like Ramage and Norman Douglas concentrate on their movements and encounters with the natives. The travellers' rapturous response to the environment is one of the common denominators. The aristocratic German diplomat Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg wrote in 1794 that he left "with emotion the most beautiful province of beautiful Italy. This region is closer than the others to the marvellous sun," an enthusiastic statement which anticipates that of Gissing about Catanzaro by a hundred years. In 1881 the French historian François Lenormant proclaimed his admiration for Calabria in terms which reflected his optimistic nature: "The moment has come for tourists to discover the natural beauties of this admirable region which the Italians themselves do not know." And he imagined that, once the province had been made safer by the national government, visitors would flock over to this, one of the most attractive regions of southern Europe. Nor were all Italians indifferent to the charms of their southernmost province. In 1953 the Italian enthusiast Giuseppe Isnardi applied a remarkable phrase to Calabrian landscapes, saying they are "a true and genuine masterpiece of natural architecture," a statement supported by Signor Bevilacqua's superb photographs. Isnardi's unstinted admiration proves communicative, and the subtitles of the introduction are often pleasantly poetical. Among the last we find "sacra magia," "fascino tenebroso," "delizioso incanto," and "grandiose maestà."

The book begins with a 22-page preface by Mauro F. Minervino, whose work on Gissing in the last two decades has been duly reported in the *Journal*. Its author proposes a new way of exploring the most authentic aspects of Calabria and of classifying landscapes. The two bibliographies and the list of travellers will be useful to readers wishing to enquire further

into a subject which has been expanding considerably in recent years.—
Pierre Coustillas

Notes and News

Last July we received from the Hon. Sec. of the Gissing Trust in Wakefield some interesting material concerning the creation of a post as assistant archivist (George Gissing Collection) at the John Rylands University Library, Manchester. The creation of this post is of course a consequence of the acquisition by the library of an important Gissing Collection which had hitherto been in private hands. The overall purpose of the job is stated to be “to catalogue the George Gissing Collection and to carry out other tasks associated with it, such as the selection of items for exhibition and digitization and to assist in publicising the Collection.” Among the key responsibilities the archivist will have to undertake are appropriate research on the life and work of Gissing and assisting in the organisation of a public lecture about Gissing to be given by a visiting academic lecturer. It should be noted that the Deansgate building of the John Rylands Library is closed until summer 2006 for refurbishment.

Dr. Paul Giles, a Reader in American Literature in the University of Oxford, is currently completing a book entitled *Atlantic Republic: The American Tradition in English Literature*, to be published next year by Oxford University Press. The theme of the book is English writers who have been influenced by America, from Susanna Rowson to Salman Rushdie, and one chapter will be on Gissing.

Dr. John Sloan has corrected the proofs of his entries on Gissing and Grub Street in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of English Literature* (Oxford University Press, New York).

Michael Stewart reports the recent broadcasting of a play, “A Home of their Own,” by Martyn Wade on BBC Radio 4. The protagonist, Kenneth, has just retired and he has decided to read certain books to improve his mind; the first is *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, a volume which, regrettably, is no longer in print.

Call for Papers

Third Annual Arnold Bennett Conference
“Provincial Arnold, Cosmopolitan Bennett:
Bennett and his Contemporaries Write the Town and the City”
Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, Saturday 10th June 2006
Conference organised with the Arnold Bennett Society

Proposals for papers on Bennett, Gissing, Wells, Woolf, Galsworthy, Lawrence *et al* in the context of: London and World War I, texts in specific locations (e.g. The Potteries, Clerkenwell), representations of industrial landscapes and knowable communities, responses to the growth of suburbs, sense of place in social and built environments, film and T.V. interpretations of town/city texts, or provincial representations after Bennett (e.g. Sillitoe/Storey). Interdisciplinary papers welcome.

200 word abstracts for 20-minute papers to John Shapcott:

ab.conference@btinternet.com.

Other enquiries to Prof. Ray Johnson, erj1@staffs.ac.uk.

Dr. Emma Liggins, who until recently lectured in Victorian literature at Edge Hill College of Higher Education, tells us that her book *George Gissing, the Working Woman and Urban Culture* (Ashgate) will be published early next year; so will be *Women's Work Cultures, 1850-1950*, ed. Louise Jackson and Krista Cowman (Ashgate), which contains a chapter by her on Gissing and social investigation.

In a long article about the Heritage week-end in the *Dorking Advertiser* (8 September, p. 9) C. C. Kohler who, for over twenty-five years, was the leading supplier of Gissing books to the world, has found a paragraph in which George Meredith is commemorated. In his capacity as reader for Chapman & Hall, we are reminded, he encouraged Hardy, Stevenson and Gissing. He climbed Box Hill every morning before paraplegia set in.

Maria Teresa Chialant's critical edition of *Eve's Ransom, Il riscatto di Eva* (translation, editing and introduction), Naples: Liguori, is scheduled for publication this autumn. The Gissing number of *RSV (Rivista di Studi Vittoriani)*, which will include seven articles, all in English, by David Grylls, Bouwe Postmus, Arlene Young, Pierre Coustillas, Francesco Marconi, Emanuela Ettore and Maria Teresa Chialant, will also be available this autumn.

Penguin Classics were due to publish last month the new impressions of *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* in newly designed covers. The titling will henceforth appear below the illustration and a white decorative band.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Rome : Fazi Editore (Via Isonzo 42, Roma), 2005. Pp. 620 + publisher's catalogue. Introduction by Benedetta Bini, translation by Chiara Vatteroni. Stiff pictorial card covers. ISBN 88-8112-617-6. €22.00.

Martin Ryle and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds.), *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed* (The Nineteenth Century Series), Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. x + 163. Dark blue cloth with dust jacket. ISBN 0 7546 3675 5. £40.00. Ten new essays preceded by an introduction. Besides the editors the authors are Diana Maltz, Emma Liggins, Scott McCracken, David Glover, Simon J. James, Deborah Parsons, Christina Lupton and Tilman Reitz, Patrick Parrinder.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Zarena Aslami, "The Space of Optimism: State Fantasy and the Case of *The Odd Women*," *Victorian Studies*, Autumn 2004, pp. 55-85.

D. J. Taylor, *Orwell: The Life*, London: Vintage, 2004. A number of references to Gissing will be found in this paperback edition of the biography of Orwell published a few years back.

John Sloan, "Reviews," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, March 2005, pp. 547-50. Review of Simon J. James's *Unsettled Accounts*.

Sandra Petrigani, "Cultura : Vite degli scrittori come in una soap," *Panorama*, 7 April 2005, page unknown. Review of the Italian translation of *New Grub Street*. The book was also reviewed in *La Repubblica*

("Almanacco dei libri," 9 April, p. 41); in *Avvenire* ("Classico sì, purché sia istantaneo," by Gian Paolo Serino, 27 April, p. 23); in *Il Giornale di Sicilia* ("Novità in libreria," 3 May, p. 35); in *Il Giornale* ("La maledizione di Grub Street," by Giuseppe Bernardi, 22 May, p. 21); in *Italia*, 2 June, page unknown ("Hans Christian Andersen e George Gissing"); and in *Ore 12* ("Storie anomale di pura amicizia, amore e passione: Hans Christian Andersen," 5-6 June, p. 4).

Gaudio Incorpora, "Nella cattedrale di Reggio: quella frase latina ormai non c'è più," *Parallelo 38*, May-June 2005, p. 11. The Latin inscription on the Reggio cathedral, which Gissing mentions in *By the Ionian Sea*, was replaced by one in Greek after the 1908 earthquake.

Salvatore Taverniti, "Il mondo di George Gissing nel 'viaggio' di Cristofaro," *Il Domani* (Catanzaro), 6 July 2005. Review of *Il viaggio desiderato (Calabria, 1897)*. Volume also reviewed by Salvatore Guerrieri in *Il Quotidiano* (Catanzaro), 11 July 2005. Pages unknown.

Anon., "Book Announcements," *Victorian Studies Bulletin*, July 2005, p. 2. Short review of *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography*.

Anon., "City's literary hero overlooked by Arts Council," *Wakefield Express*, 19 August 2005, p. 6. The hero is of course Gissing. See also "Far deeper malaise" by Louis Kasatkin, who criticized this decision (*Express*, 2 September, p. 5).

Rachel Cooke, "Hidden Gems of the Arts: *The Odd Women* by George Gissing," *Observer Review*, 21 August 2005, p. 2. A short piece in praise of the novel, which the author places above *New Grub Street*.

Forster and Gissing, "Dickens in Paris," *Dickens Magazine*, Series 3 (devoted to *A Tale of Two Cities*), issue 4, August 2005, p. 7. A long editorial quotation by George Gorniak from the Grayswood edition of Forster's *Life of Dickens* abridged and revised by Gissing.

Elaine Showalter, "Review: Campus Follies," *Guardian Unlimited* (internet), 10 September 2005, pp. 6-8. An edited introduction to her forthcoming book on novels of academic life, *Faculty Towers*. Gissing is mentioned apropos of Gail Godwin's novel, *The Odd Woman*.

Francesco Bevilacqua (ed.), *Calabria sublime*, Soveria Mannelli : Rubbettino, 2005. An anthology of descriptions of landscapes by travellers in Calabria, with a preface by Mauro F. Minervino. See review in the present number.

Tailpiece

Extracts from Arthur Bowes's and T. T. Sykes's Reminiscences

Bowes: "Turning over a score of letters which I received from Gissing after our ways of life had divided, I find references to many incidents in his early career. He had entered as a competitor in some open scholarship—I forget exactly what it was, but the principal feature was the composition of a poem on the subject of 'Ravenna.' George was enthusiastic on this subject, as on most others, and many a night I remember him waking me up to hear him declaim in the darkness of the bedroom the new stanzas he had just evolved in his study down below. Only half awake I was supposed to exercise a critical judgment on the workmanship. It was agreed between us that if he succeeded in carrying off the prize he would write me out a copy of this wonderful poem as a reward for my patience under tribulation. He did succeed, and before me now lie the two hundred lines in the neat and scholarly writing of George Gissing." [held by the Beinecke Library, Yale]

Sykes: "Humour was rare in him, but long remembered. A master named Ransome, whom he nicknamed 'Whiskers' provided him the material for this conundrum: Why does Whiskers always take the larger classes? Because he's a ransom for many. He was always working, always energetic, and the rapidity with which he committed to memory English, Latin and French, was a mystery to us all. He and I frequently walked to Wilmslow Parish Church together on Sundays. It was optional to which place of worship boys went, and we now and again favoured the Friends Meeting near Lindow Common. One Sunday at the Wilmslow Parish Church the books did not go round. I saw Gissing had one, and thought it strange he did not offer to share it. When it came to the Psalms, I said "George, let's look on." In offering the book he said sh-s-s-s-h. I looked on, and behold it was a Latin Grammar!"

