

# The Gissing Journal

Volume XLV, Number 3, July 2009

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

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## The Sinden Bequest

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In the summer of 2008 Mr. John Sinden of Melksham, Wiltshire presented the Gissing Trust with a collection of Gissing family memorabilia. The gift was given in the name of his late wife Doris Georgina Marjorie Sinden (1914-2007) who was a distant relative of the Gissing family. Her father's sister, Edith Hill, had married Stewart Reginald Stannard (1885-1975), a first cousin of George Gissing. Stewart Stannard was one of the four sons of Ann Gissing (1842-1925), the sister of Thomas Waller Gissing, and William Stannard (1840-1923). Gissing occasionally visited the Stannards during his early days in London; no doubt one of the attractions was the presence of his grandfather, Robert Foulsham Gissing (1805-1892), who was living with his younger daughter after the death of his wife. The eldest of these four sons was William Gissing Stannard (1868-1950), who had exchanged a few letters with George Gissing whilst he was staying in Italy in 1889. These letters, along with a letter George Gissing sent to his grandfather in 1875, were sold by the family many years ago and are now in the library at Yale University. The texts of these letters were published in the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*.

The Stannard brothers accumulated a small library of books by T. W. Gissing and his two sons George and Algernon, and these books along with some family photographs and letters eventually came into the possession of Doris Sinden. None of the books by George and Algernon Gissing are presentation copies but some of them contain the signatures and bookplates of William, Percy and Stewart Stannard. There are three very important books by Thomas Waller Gissing. They are important because two of them have never been seen before in the state the publisher issued them and the third book, “The Recluse,” is a completely new discovery. The nine letters written by various members of the Gissing family disclose some interesting new information.

## **Books by Thomas Waller Gissing**

- 1) *Miscellaneous Poems* by T.W.G. Published by W. D. Freeman, Bookseller, Double Street, Framlingham, 1851. It has the inscription, "Mr. Chas. Gissing with the affectionate regards of the Author." [Charles Gissing (1823-1866) was the uncle of T. W. Gissing and father of Judith Gissing (1861-1946), who married her cousin William Gissing Stannard.]
- 2) *Metrical Compositions* by T.W.G. Published by W. D. Freeman, Bookseller, Double Street, Framlingham, 1853. It has the inscription, "C. Gissing, with the affectionate regards of the Author, March 1853."
- 3) *The Recluse* by T.W.G. Printed by J. Stanley, Sidbury Place and Wyld's Yard, Worcester, 1854.

## **Books by George Gissing**

- 1) *New Grub Street*, Smith, Elder & Co., A new edition, 1891.  
Has the signature of William Gissing Stannard.
- 2) *The Odd Women*, Thomas Nelson.  
Has the signature of William Gissing Stannard.
- 3) *The Odd Women*, Thomas Nelson.  
Has the bookplate of S. R. Stannard.
- 4) *The Nether World*, Smith, Elder & Co. A new edition, 1890.  
Has the signature of William Gissing Stannard, oct./90.
- 5) *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Constable, March 1914.  
Has the bookplate of S. R. Stannard.
- 6) *A Life's Morning*, John Murray, 1919.  
Has the signature of S. R. Stannard, 20-2-24.
- 7) *Born in Exile*, Thomas Nelson.  
Has the initials W.G.S. 19/8/15.
- 8) *Short Stories of To-day and Yesterday*, George Gissing, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1929.

9) *The Unclassed*, Ernest Benn, 1930.

10) *Selections From the Works of George Gissing*, Jonathan Cape, 1929.

On a loosely inserted sheet of paper, To Will, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1929, with best wishes from Percy.

### **Books by Algernon Gissing**

1) *Baliol Garth*, Chatto & Windus, 1905.

Has the signature of Stewart R. Stannard.

2) *The Master of Pinsmead*, John Long, 1906.

Has the signature of S. R. Stannard, 08.

3) *The Dreams of Simon Usher*, Chatto & Windus, 1907.

Has the signature of S. R. Stannard.

4) *Second Selves*, John Long, 1908

Has the signature of S. R. Stannard, Peterborough, 20/7/10.

### **Photographs**

There are 21 photographs, mostly Cartes de visite, only eight of which can definitely be identified.

Two photographs of Thomas Waller Gissing (1829-1870) taken in the studio of G. & J. Hall, 26 Westgate, Wakefield

George Robert Gissing (1857-1903) taken at Brown's Studio, Manchester.

William Whittington Gissing (1859-1880) taken at Brown's Studio, Manchester.

Algernon Fred Gissing (1860-1937) taken at Hall's Studio, Wakefield.

John Foulsham Gissing (1838-1889), brother of T. W. Gissing, taken at Hall's Studio, Wakefield.

Eliza Gissing (1845-1910), wife of John Foulsham Gissing, taken at Hall's Studio, Wakefield.

George Gissing (1835-1886), brother of T. W. Gissing, taken by James Cooper, Northallerton.

George Gissing at Manchester, 1875

### **Letters**

Letter from Judith Gissing (1780-1841) to her son, dated 1837. Judith was the wife of Tobias Gissing, the great-grandfather of George Gissing.

Letter from Mary Ann Gissing (1811-1849) to her brother, John Gissing, dated 1836. Mary Ann was the daughter of Tobias and Judith Gissing.

Letter from Mary Ann Etridge, née Gissing (1811-1849), to her brother, George Gissing, dated 1845.

Five letters from Alfred Charles Gissing to his father's cousin, William Gissing Stannard, dated 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> August 1936.

Letter from Ellen Sophia Gissing (1867-1938) to her cousin, Judith Stannard, née Gissing (1861-1946), dated 4<sup>th</sup> August 1936.

### **William Gissing Stannard's notes about the Gissing family**

This collection of 13 pages of notes about the Gissing family, and especially his recollections of George Gissing, are in the hand of William Gissing Stannard, and are presumably a copy of the notes he sent to Alfred Gissing in the summer of 1936.

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### **Depressive Gissing: Reconsidering Gillian Tindall's Diagnosis**

ROBERT L. SELIG  
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At one point in her 1974 *The Born Exile*, Gillian Tindall explores the complex relationship between Gissing's often melancholy life and his creative fiction. She diagnoses him as "clinically depressive" with "cyclic" moods (*Born* 239-48). She returns to this same psychiatric diagnosis in a 1984 essay ("Haunted" 62-74). Yet even though Paul Delany's 2008 *George Gissing: A Life* takes a medical turn at key points, Delany fails to cite Tindall and her clinical lay analysis.<sup>1</sup> Because Delany instead often emphasizes a neo-Robertsian diagnosis of syphilis—based on less-than-conclusive evidence—an editor might have suggested with some ironic exaggeration that he change his subtitle to "A Syphilitic Life."<sup>2</sup> Still, Delany also provides a mixture of accompanying psychiatric diagnoses: "neurotic," "nervous breakdowns," "writer's depression," "depression," the equivalent of passive-aggressive, "melancholy temperament," "obsessive-compulsive," "nervous temperament," "Sunday neurosis," and "a personality disorder rather than a neurosis" (Delany xii-xiii, 74, 80, 115, 132, 134, 139, 141, 147, 225, 248, 283, 308, 323, 358, 380). Apart from an apparent contradiction between his first and last diagnosis, Delany gives no inter-disciplinary references for any of them. Indeed, he mentions, peripherally, only one psychiatric theorist—Freud—and without documentation (Delany 358). Delany does not even cite the one psychological-medical article about George Gissing published in the *Gissing Journal* itself, by the well-established psychologist Ian J. Deary: "Somatopsychic Distress in the Life and Novels of George Gissing" (1999).

Ironically, Professor Deary himself also fails to cite Tindall, although he does mention John Halperin's off-handedly brief diagnosis: probably "manic-depressive" (Deary 2; Halperin 7).<sup>3</sup> At any event, Deary's "Somatopsychic Distress" article emphasizes "bodily symptoms that accompany anxiety" (Deary 2), with the most space given to analogous symptoms depicted in Gissing's novels, primarily in *Thyrza*. Deary does mention in passing Gissing's own "low moods," "depression," and "anxiety states" and promises "a later article" on them (Deary 2)—one that, regrettably, has not yet appeared.<sup>4</sup> To an informed layperson, Deary's published article serves mainly to add evidence of peripheral symptoms to far-more-explicit ones signaling Gissing's depressions. In any case, I wish to reexamine here Tindall's provocatively insightful diagnosis in the light of recent psychiatric studies as well as offer a different perspective than hers about Gissing's overall literary achievements in spite of his inner troubles.

Following Deary's example, I shall use the American Psychiatric Association's widely accepted if at times dismayingly heterogeneous categories from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV* (1994)—the most recent edition. According to its laid-out criteria, the extreme dark moods that Gissing often fought against would seem to fit those of "Major Depressive Disorder." Gissing's five most recurrent dark symptoms match and more than match *DSM-IV*'s minimum number and duration of "two or more . . . Episodes" lasting at least two weeks. The details of his five episodes also match the official symptoms: "depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day," "insomnia . . . nearly every day," "fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day," "diminished ability to think or concentrate . . . nearly every day," and "recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying)," as well as "recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide" (*DSM-IV* 345, 327). Gissing's *Diary* describes all of these (along with scattered other symptoms listed by the *Manual*) over many extended periods from 27 December 1887 to 8 November 1902, although with missing torn-out pages and most likely missing darkened moods from perhaps three previous years, with entry gaps later, due mainly to physical diseases. Moreover, Gissing's *Collected Letters* confirm some of his depressions and describe some symptoms, if usually without the *Diary*'s utter frankness. The most revealing clusters in the *Diary* occur from 20 January to 8 July 1888, from 8 March to 24 July 1889, and from 15 March 1890 to 20 February 1891. Within these clusters, the *Diary* notes depres-

sion forty-one times (*Diary* 21, 24-25, 28, 30, 32, 36, 142, 148, 150, 152, 154, 157, 211, 219, 221-227, 230-231, 239, 240). Gissing often connects these gloomiest of moods specifically with loneliness—a fairly common link with depression according to late-twentieth-century research (Dill and Anderson 111). During these same periods, the *Diary* also mentions frequent severe insomnia, energy loss, and twenty clear instances of what *DSM-IV* calls a “diminished ability to think or concentrate” (*Diary* 20-21, 27, 31, 148-50, 152, 154, 157, 213, 219, 222, 224, 226-27). In his own desperate language, Gissing described himself three times as on the verge of “madness” (*Diary* 28, 221, 226). In three different other entries he records suicidal thoughts or wishing for death (*Diary* 21, 30, 36).

His intense accounts of dismal nights and days transcend the dry professionalism of *DSM-IV*'s checklist. On 8 May 1888, he described himself as follows: “. . . Paced my rooms in agony of loneliness. . . . I am now and then on the verge of madness. . . . This life I *cannot* live much longer; it is hideous” (*Diary* 28). On 3 June 1888, he declared that “death, if it came now, would rob me of not one hope, for hopes I simply have not” (*Diary* 30). On 11 June 1888, he lamented that “I never enjoy anything now—*never anything*” (*Diary* 31). On 18 June 1889, he recorded his mood as “black, black; another hideous day. Not a line of writing. Too horrible to speak of” (*Diary* 154). On 23 August 1890, he wrote of being “. . . on the very verge of despair and suffering more than ever in my whole life. My brain seems powerless, dried up” (*Diary* 224).

Most dramatically of all, in a period that his torn-out *Diary* pages perhaps would have covered, Gissing in March of 1885 may have come close to attempting suicide. Luckily for him and us, the fourteen-year-old son of Gissing's wealthy friend Mrs. Gaussen, James Gaussen, seems to have saved the tutor-novelist's life as they shared the only bedroom of his London flat. Over seventy-three years later, the by-then-aged James recalled that night of fear and trembling:

Looking back Gissing must have been suffering at that time from melancholia and very nearly did a horribly cruel thing. I used to go to bed after our supper and he used to sit up writing for ages, and as a rule [I] did not wake when he came to bed—I forget if it was gas or tallow candles in the bed-room. One night I woke with a start and with horror saw him standing in front of the mirror in the act of cutting his throat with a razor. I called out “Mr. Gissing! Mr. Gissing!” and he closed the razor and handed it over to me, saying:—“Boy, boy. Keep it safely.” Next morning I slipped the razor quietly onto his table. (Curtis 6)

Delany quotes from this but labels it all in an old-fashioned way as “a full-blown nervous breakdown” (Delany 80)—an out-of-date term among

psychiatrists and psychologists since the 1960s (Barke, Fribush, and Stearns 565-84). *DSM-IV* could have helped Delany here to choose a category more relevant to present-day criteria, as well as one fitting the long-term pattern of Gissing's recurrent depressions.

Gissing later informed his future extra-legal "wife" Gabrielle Fleury that his acute depressions had extended through his life since boyhood:

[1 April 1899:] It is impossible, my own love, to *describe* to you those fits of misery. One cannot describe a nightmare. It is mental illness, resulting from a whole lifetime of wretchedness. Since I was a boy until the day you said you loved me, I had never known a tranquil mind. The reason?—Poverty, frustrate ambition, and above all vain desire of love. Combine these things with the imaginative temper, and *must* not mental suffering—the gravest mental suffering—result?

Such a state of mind exaggerates every evil. (*Letters* VII: 332)

Gissing's self-description of "the gravest" long-term "mental suffering" and "misery" fits *DSM-IV*'s category of "Major Depressive Disorder, Recurrent" (*DSM-IV* 341 and 345).

In spite of Delany's own out-of-date labels, one can, of course, find valid elements in his mixed diagnosis. Indeed, *DSM-IV* itself allows multiple diagnostic categories. It defines mental disorders in a heterogeneous fashion and allows comorbidities to be listed under each—clearly a useful method in medical communication (what's the patient's illness?) but also imprecise. The American Psychiatric Association's own editors of the *Manual* admit its limitations. Their "Introduction" has a subsection, in fact, called "Limitations of the Categorical Approach"—a psychiatric system of classification descended from its great-grandfather, the still-influential Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926) (Kraepelin). Such schematization is termed nosology—from its Greek roots *discourse* (or *word*) and *disease*—and remains essential in medicine for physical illnesses. But the editors of *DSM-IV* mention an alternative to their mixed-bag approach for those elusive disorders of the mind: diagnoses based on symptoms rather than on single-construct labels. The editors even speculate that future advances in research might make such a symptom-pathology method accepted and also reward-ing (*DSM-IV* xxii; cf. van Praag 1).

At the present, though, most clinicians continue to diagnose with *DSM-IV*'s categories on hand: those mixed bags tossed into complex combinations with other mixed bags (van Praag 1). This custom makes Delany's own diagnostic stew of a "neurosis," a "breakdown," lots of "depression," a blend of three different temperaments, and one or two basic "personality" disorders seem rather more relevant than otherwise it might (Delany xii-xiii, 74, 80, 115, 132, 134, 139, 141, 248, 147, 225, 308, 283,



323, 380). I see a different kind of problem, though, in most of his comments about Gissing's psychopathology. All too often, this biographer undercuts his diagnoses with moralistic judgments. "We can blame his innate gloominess or his male chauvinism. . . ." "Much of his suffering was self-inflicted," and "a Freudian might speak of repression and sublimation. . . ." Gissing claimed to be "passive. . . , but he nourished resentment" and "had no ability to strike a compromise between his own needs and the needs of others." "He was profoundly lacking in empathy . . . , a typical obsessive-compulsive. . ."—"one who needed to control everything, from the attic to the kitchen sink." (Delany xii, 29, 147, 283, 323). Paradoxically, in such passages, Delany strikes me as himself "lacking . . . empathy" for his biographical subject and his fellow human being, George Gissing.

As an early twenty-first century Gissing biographer, Delany might have avoided combining the roles of black-robed judge and diagnostic clinician. We do not as yet know all that much about the highly complex relationship between the choices that a depressive such as George Gissing makes and the internal-external cards that life has dealt him. Just a handful of years after science has finally mapped out more than 99 percent of the human genome and has also made significant advances in the use of neuroimaging (Goodwin and Jamison 423, 611-54), gene-neuron-psychiatric research into the convoluted web of disordered minds remains virtually in its beginnings. It has put forward up till now only inconclusive hypotheses about the vast complexity of possible interactions between genetics, neurobiology, psychopathology, environment, personality, and even free will. In view of this discipline's movement, then, from Freudian intuition to a rather more skeptical and empirical psychiatry, Delany might well have rethought his claim that "much of" Gissing's "suffering was self-inflicted" (Delany 29). As all Gissing scholars know, he made some very bad choices, especially in his early adult years. Yet inherited vulnerabilities may perhaps have played a role in leaving him unusually at risk for depressive cycles and for sometimes desperate acts while facing his life's many stresses. George's younger brother Algernon seems also to have suffered from bouts of depression—often quite severely (see, for example, *Letters* II: 192; IV: 230; V: 13, 193; VI: 199n1). George's great-grandfather, Tobias Gissing, may have drowned himself intentionally (*Letters* I: xxxvi). One might connect these dark- mood troubles within the Gissing ancestry and family with some general research into likely genetic link-ups with an individual's tendency towards abnormal gloom. Comparisons of depression in identical twins

(with 100 percent matching DNA) and in fraternal twins (with 50 percent matching DNA) suggest that genetics can play a sensitizing role from “modest” to “substantial”—up to a one-third heritability factor, though less than half as much as in manic-depressives (Goodwin and Jamison 419 & 420, table 13-3). Yet we need to remember again that such studies of genetic elements in mood disorders remain as of now in what we might call their infant-toddler stages.

Twin studies at best can show just a statistical association between genes and depression. Such studies do not explain how the link-up might work, nor do adoption or family studies either—the two other favored statistical approaches (van Os 65-67). They do not and cannot explain the complexity of the human mind’s interaction with the world. One impressive book-length study of possible connections between genes, neurons, outward stress, and depression pungently describes all the as-yet-unanswered questions. Yet this same study tentatively proposes a link between a single hypothesized subgroup (those reacting to stress with anxious and aggressive symptoms that lead to depression) and the serotonin-transporting gene (5HT T) derived from one parent, along with its alternative (called an allele) from the other parent (van Praag 236-44). Even so, these researchers also note a daunting maze of possible explanations that may interwork with other complex mazes. Consider, for example, this: if Gissing did inherit a gene liability for anxiety-aggressiveness-depression, it might have remained dormant without an extremely stressful life. And a person lacking his genetic vulnerability might have endured the same imprisonment and expulsion as Gissing’s but without deep depressions. As another complication, some gene-allele patterns scattered across Gissing’s family might have played a role in how they treated him—behavior by them that might have helped to trigger his own depressive genes and neuronal imbalances. But even the way that human genes and neurons interact remains unclear as yet. Do genes trigger neurons, do neurons trigger genes, or do they work together in some kind of synergy? (van Praag 19-20; van Os 59-90). Might future research advances make the human mind’s spectrum of order and disorder seem less like Freud’s id-ego-superego metaphor and more like the mythic labyrinth of Dædalus? In any case, even an arrived-at explanation of how Gissing’s (or a hypothetical person’s) genes might have interacted with neurons and depression could perhaps leave out still one additional factor. Might those genes themselves have influenced his basic personality, perhaps by means of his cycles of gloom? And could these elaborate interworkings have propelled

Gissing towards those very bad choices that sank him further into depression? Such an inner-outer chain differs from what we call simple bad luck (van Praag 239-44). Yet we might also conclude that bad luck did play a role in Gissing's life and most probably a big one.

Whatever complex explanation one favors, I think that one should feel empathy rather than annoyance towards this important British novelist with an often hard life. However the possible web of inner and outer factors may have contributed to Gissing's troubles, the truly harmful stresses in his life stand out clearly:

1. At thirteen, the premature death of his father, his favorite parent.
2. In spite of brilliance at college, a sexual infatuation for a young prostitute, along with resulting worry over venereal disease or infection.
3. Petty thefts to "save" the prostitute and entrapment by detectives.
4. Imprisonment with hard labor for a month.
5. College expulsion and forced exile to the United States.
6. Return to the prostitute and a later troubled marriage to her.
7. A troubled separation.
8. Difficulties in making a living by fiction and also writing well.
9. The sordid death of his prostitute wife.
10. A troubled second marriage with an unstable wife.
11. A troubled second separation.
12. An extra-legal "marriage" abroad with its own intrinsic difficulties.
13. Emphysema and other comorbidities—fatal all too soon.

These stresses, along with others that I might well have listed, would seem enough to have triggered or sensitized darkness in Gissing's mind.

Finally, I must emphasize my deep appreciation of Gissing's work in spite of all his troubles, whatever their causes. In a life of only forty-six years, he wrote at least half a dozen major novels, four major works of non-fiction, and quite a few short stories among the best of his time. What connection, if any, did his great depressions have with his creativity? Especially in the late twentieth-century, researchers have attempted systematic studies of some relationship between at least some writers and some disordered moods. More than twenty-three hundred years ago, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle asked similar questions but in terms of inspired madness. Now instead we have studies of statistical association. Yet as late as 2008, researchers could not conclusively explain how affective disorders might at times link up with literary creation (Goodwin and Jamison 379-407; Jamison).<sup>5</sup>

In Gissing's own case, he wrote his masterpiece *New Grub Street* (1891) during one of his worst depressions. This outstanding novel does contain much darkness, including Reardon's suicidal thoughts, Biffen's actual suicide, and what Virginia Woolf perceptively calls the tendency of "Gissing's characters" to "suffer . . . in solitude. . ." (*New Grub Street* 181, 458-59; Woolf 78). Yet *New Grub Street's* overall tone differs quite remarkably from the despairing *Diary* entries that Gissing jotted down as he struggled with the book. It tends towards a dryly sardonic wit that often makes us laugh. I will illustrate this by four examples out of many possible ones. Consider this whimsical sentence about Amy Reardon, whose scorn for her novelist-husband's utterly defeated passivity will undercut their marriage: "Yet the face was not of distinctly feminine type; with short hair and appropriate clothing, she would have passed unquestioned as a handsome boy of seventeen, a spirited boy too, and one much in the habit of giving orders to inferiors." Coming directly after a passage about Reardon's own unmanned despair, this droll description of Amy, which reminds one of Shakespeare's boy-actor women, suggests that somehow the sexes in this marriage have gotten a bit confused. In the very next chapter, a brief funny passage evokes Reardon's love of the British Museum Reading Room—a love that embraces and even adores its characteristic smell: ". . . The peculiar odour of its atmosphere—at first a cause of headache—grew dear and delightful to him." This amusingly contrasts with a later striking passage about just how much Marian Yule loathes the same library: ". . . The readers who sat here at these radiating lines of desks, what were they but hapless flies caught in a huge web, its nucleus the great circle of the Catalogue? . . . In a moment the book-lined circumference of the room would be but a featureless prison-limit." And, finally, out of *New Grub Street's* truly witty dialogue, I will quote my favorite one-liner—a self-deprecating yet self-praising comment by Milvain about his journalistic hackwork: "It's rubbish, but rubbish of a very special kind, of fine quality" (*New Grub Street* 43, 54, 98-99, 169). Such effective comic mockery run-ning throughout *New Grub Street* contrasts most sharply with the hellish moods that Gissing struggled against as he wrote it. Less-than-brilliant depressives can of course at times say funny things, but their fleeting cleverness greatly differs from creating a three-volume novel ribbed through with wit. Any attempt to reduce Gissing's fiction to mere symp-toms of depression would miss the point. His most impressive novels and also short stories transform the author's frequent dismal moods into

some-thing that lights up pages. His imaginative triumphs over hardships—both inner and outer ones—deserve our admiration and praise.

<sup>1</sup> Medical journals now require “Conflict of Interest” statements. I will offer here my own nonmedical one. Delany’s failure to mention Tindall connects in my mind with his failure to cite my own work on Gissing—although it does not stress psychology or medicine. In his account of Gissing’s American exile, Delany says that Gissing published “eleven stories . . . in various Chicago papers” (Delany 23). Yet my edition of George Gissing’s *Lost Stories from America* (1992) enumerates a total, going beyond my own collection, of at least twenty stories by Gissing from Chicago (*Lost* 178-80). So does the revised 1995 edition of my Twayne’s *George Gissing* (Selig 7). But Delany’s slighting of Tindall’s *The Born Exile* seems more serious than his passing me over. In one notable passage Delany makes a point that Tindall had already made most insightfully: Gissing’s use of imagined actions in his fiction to test out later behavior in his actual life (Cf. Delany 260, Tindall 81).

<sup>2</sup> “Neo-Robertsian” refers to Morley Roberts’s hint in his barely disguised biography of Gissing about his having syphilis (Roberts 304). If he actually did, it might have complicated Gissing’s depressions but only during a tertiary stage at the very end of his life—not throughout most of his twenty-eight adult years. Yet I accept Delany’s alternate hypothesis that “at the very least” Gissing’s rather ambiguous symptoms after sex with Nell might have left him worried about possible syphilis (Delany 15). As an emotional stress among very many others—not as a physical cause—this could have played a role at times in contributing to his depressions. Delany, to his credit, does cite two medical books on venereal diseases, although rather old ones (McDonagh 1920 and Morhardt 1906), as well as a more recent study of creative famous persons from the past who probably had syphilis (Hayden 2004). He also cites an unnamed present Vancouver clinician who concludes that Gissing probably did not have balanitis (Delany 14-15; 384n31). But these references about possible venereal disease contrast with Delany’s failure to cite any sources from research into depression. My own current knowledge of this body of research derives from an ongoing project of mine—an interdisciplinary-critical work unrelated to Gissing.

<sup>3</sup> Halperin’s manic-depressive diagnosis of 1982 might fit Gissing more closely if amended to a disorder first proposed in 1976 but not officially accepted by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until its 1994 fourth edition as Bipolar-II. In this category split-off, depression plays the chief role on the seesaw of human moods, while the subfactor hypomania never does push the seesaw all the way to mania (Goodwin and Jamison 9-12, 95-96). A bipolar-II hypomania might perhaps explain Gissing’s disastrous actions at rare moments in his life—most notably, his petty thefts at Owens College. Then, too, his *Diary* mentions in just two places racing thoughts during sleepless nights—once “at the rate of a hundred thousand miles an hour” (*Diary* 36, 150)—another symptom that could well fit under Bipolar-II hypomania (Goodwin and Jamison, 95-96). But as if to confound an already complex split-off, a pair of researchers ten years ago proposed a new add-on called bipolar-II½—officially unaccepted as yet (Goodwin and Jamison 19). For simplicity’s sake in this essay, I will emphasize instead Gissing’s severe depressions in themselves. Their symptoms match those of Major Depression as well as those of Bipolar-II.

<sup>4</sup> Deary’s article used to be available on his electronic “homepages,” but its link now seems broken. As of 6 February 2009, it remained available through Google’s recommended click-on: homepages deary papers gissing. Yet the on-line version leaves uncorrected two small errors appearing in the *Gissing Journal* itself: the “Table 1” mislabeling of *DSM-IV*’s

publisher as the “American Psychological Association” instead of the American Psychiatric Association (a name given correctly on page 8), and page 2’s misciting of *New Grub Street* instead of *The Whirlpool* as the novel in which Hugh Carnaby appears.

<sup>5</sup> For recent creativity/mood-disorder researches, see Andreasen; Santosa *et al.*; Strong *et al.*; and Simeonova *et al.*

#### Works Cited

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## The Gissings' Wakefield Circle: VII – Samuel and Lucy Bruce

ANTHONY PETYT  
Wakefield

When Thomas Waller Gissing was buried at Wakefield cemetery on 31 December 1870 one of the pallbearers was his old friend Samuel Bruce. They had been friends ever since Gissing came to Wakefield in 1856 and they subsequently served together on the committees of many public bodies

in the town. Samuel Bruce was to prove a good friend to Gissing's widow and children and they were to hold him in high regard until his own death in 1905.

Samuel Bruce was born in Leeds on 10 July 1829; he was the only child of Thomas Bruce (1793-1874) and his wife Jane Wilson. His father, Thomas, was the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 8 children of Samuel Bruce (1754-1833), the first minister of the Zion Congregational Chapel in Wakefield from 1782 until 1826. Thomas Bruce was a merchant who owned a considerable amount of property in Leeds, which property eventually passed on to Samuel and was to provide, through the rents it brought, a good part of his income for the rest of his life.

Samuel was educated at the Wakefield Proprietary School and London University, then admitted as a barrister at the Middle Temple on 17



November 1855. Samuel did not practise law in the courts but specialised in equity draughtsmanship and conveyancing. In 1874 he was appointed Distributor of Stamps, a government position, for the Wakefield area.<sup>1</sup> The Stamp Office was situated in King Street, Wakefield where he employed two clerks, which is some indication of the amount of work he had to do. In later years he was much troubled because the government was gradually closing down the provincial Stamp Offices but the Wakefield office was allowed to remain in operation. In fact the amount of work at the office increased towards the end of Samuel's life.

He was greatly involved in the public and social life of Wakefield. An early member of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution, he was first elected to the committee in 1863, then as a life member at the A.G.M. in 1882. In that same year he was elected a Vice President of the Institution but refused to allow his name to go forward for re-election to that position in the following year. 1865 saw him on the organising committee of the Wakefield Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition, and for thirty years he held the post of Treasurer of the Wakefield Industrial and Fine Art Institution that arose from the profits of the exhibition. The Wakefield Book Society counted him among its early members, and the great interest he took in the charitable institutions of the town led him to become a governor of the Crowther Charity, a Trustee of the Thomas Clayton Charity and for many years the auditor for the Wakefield Lancasterian School. He was also a long serving member of the governing board of the Wakefield Charities.

Samuel Bruce was at first a staunch Liberal, proving a regular and persuasive speaker at Liberal Party meetings, but on the occasion of the "Home Rule Split" in 1885 he transferred his allegiance to the Unionist Party. From then on he was a supporter of Unionist principles but always declared himself "to be as good a Liberal as ever he was."<sup>2</sup> In 1885 on the formation of the Wakefield Magistrates Court he was appointed a Justice of the Peace. He worshipped at the Zion Congregational Chapel where his grandfather had been minister for 44 years but after his marriage he often attended the Salem Congregational Chapel where the minister, Rev. J. S. Eastmead, was his wife's uncle.<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Bruce and Thomas Waller Gissing enjoyed a very close friendship. In the years before Gissing's death in 1870 the unmarried Bruce and he spent a great deal of time together apart from their duties in connection with various local organisations. Bruce kept a diary and the entry for 20 May 1861 shows him spending the morning with Gissing botanising in the

Lofthouse area between Wakefield and Leeds, and then spending part of the afternoon with his friend sampling Hungarian wine. Many entries show him being entertained for supper at Gissing's house, no doubt a pleasant outing for a bachelor who still lived with his elderly father. There were many other trips out into the countryside searching for the ferns that seemed to hold a fascination for so many Victorians. Thomas Gissing was to publish his book *The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wakefield* in 1862. In November 1864 the diary records that they attended the opera at the Wakefield Corn Exchange together. The following year, 1865, was a very busy year for both Bruce and Gissing. On 13 April, Bruce, Thomas Gissing along with Gissing's brother, George, visited the east coast of Yorkshire. They started their excursion in Middlesborough, went via Bridlington and Hornsea, to Hull. They were back in Wakefield on 17 April. In the summer of 1865 Bruce, Gissing, and many of the leading men in the town were busy with the organisation of the Wakefield Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition. During August Bruce found time to visit Scotland for 15 days. Accompanying him on this trip was his old friend Thomas Gissing, Dr. William Milner and Dr. John Holdsworth.<sup>4</sup> They seemed to have followed a quite strenuous itinerary including climbing to the top of Ben Nevis. On their return to Wakefield there was still much to do in connection with the Wakefield Exhibition, which ran until 19 October. It is clear that these two men were very close and it would have been with great sorrow that Samuel Bruce followed the coffin of his old friend to his grave in Wakefield cemetery.

We do not know when Samuel Bruce first met his future wife Lucy Hall. We do know that by the time of the census held on 2 April 1871 Lucy was living in Wakefield with her uncle, Rev. John Eastmead and his wife Eliza, in Newstead Road, just a few hundred yards from where Samuel lived with his father in Burton Street. Lucy may well have visited Wakefield before this date because her uncle had been the minister at Salem Chapel since 1853. Lucy Ann Adams Hall was born on 28 May 1843 at Clifton near Bristol. She and her sister, Catherine Elizabeth Adams Hall, born on 27 August 1838, were the daughters of William John Hall and Mary Ann Plaister. William was a soap maker and tallow chandler and his wife, Mary Ann, was the daughter of Joseph Plaister, a cheese factor, from Wickwar in Gloucestershire. Both William and Mary Ann died young, he in 1850 and his wife in 1853. Their Plaister grandmother and aunts brought up the two young girls. Lucy lived for some years in London with her maternal aunt,

Maria, who had married James Hawke Harris, tallow chandler and maltster, and after the marriage of her sister, Catherine, to James Bennett Baseley in 1858, she lived for a time with them in South-ampton. At some stage after this she moved to Wakefield to live with her aunt Eliza Plaister who had married John Shepherd Eastmead in 1854.

Samuel and Lucy were married at Salem Chapel on 24 July 1873 and they set up home in rented accommodation at Warren House, in Warren-gate in the centre of the town. They were to remain in this house until 1884 when they bought St. John's House, on Leeds Road at the other side of Wakefield. Sadly the marriage was childless but they led very busy lives, Samuel with his legal work and both of them with their numerous social activities. From the very beginning of her time in Wakefield Lucy had conducted a class at the Salem Chapel and this continued after her marriage. Samuel and Lucy tended to worship at the Zion Chapel each Sunday morning but attended Salem Chapel in the evening. After the retirement of the Rev. Eastmead in 1883 they rarely attended at Salem and in common with many socially mobile non-conformists in Victorian times they drifted towards the Anglican Church and sometimes worshipped at the nearby St. John's Church. Lucy was involved with work at the Wakefield Workhouse, helped and taught cookery at the Wakefield Invalids Kitchen, was on the committee of the Friendless Girls Society and was a Lady Visitor at the Clayton Hospital. Her strong interest in education for girls accounts for her being from 1877 a member of the committee of the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education and from its foundation the following year one of the first lady Governors of the Wakefield Girls High School. We know a great deal about Lucy's day-to-day activities because she kept a diary.

Lucy must have kept a diary for most of her adult life and 30 of those diaries have survived. They run from 1872—those for 1873 and 1874 are missing—until a few days before her death in 1903. Samuel Bruce is first mentioned on 2 January 1872 and he appears in almost every entry for the next 31 years. She records their engagement on 19 February 1872 and three days later her buying him a ring. It seems that it was not until 6 March that Samuel told his father about their engagement and until the 14th that Lucy was taken to be introduced to her future father-in-law. The diaries are mainly concerned with their everyday activities; Lucy very rarely mentions national events apart from those concerning the royal family. She chronicles in great detail all their official and social activities, their attendance at chapel, and the comings and goings of their friends and family. Lucy was

obsessed with illness and gives full details of the state of her own and others' state of health. She also notes her many visits to the Wakefield cemetery to tend the family graves.

Because the diaries for 1873 and 1874 are missing we do not know when Lucy first met Mrs. Gissing but we can be certain that Samuel would have introduced his wife to the widow of his old friend. The two women soon became firm friends and it is obvious from the diary entries that they were very fond of each other. The diaries record many acts of kindness and generosity by Lucy and her husband to the Gissing family. The first reference to the Gissings occurs on 2 April 1875 when Lucy writes that "the two little Gissings [Margaret and Ellen] stayed to tea." On 9 October in the same year she tells us that Mrs. Gissing called and on 5 November the two Gissing girls along with several other children were invited to watch a fireworks display.

The next entry concerning the Gissing family is the first to mention George Gissing. This occurs on Friday 7 January 1876 when he was invited to the Bruces' home for dinner. The next references in April and May are to visits by his mother and brother William, and on Saturday 1 July 1876 Lucy wrote: "heard the sad sad news about G.G." The following Tuesday, 4 July, she visited Mrs. Gissing who was not at home; no doubt she was avoiding visitors. It seems strange that Lucy did not know about George Gissing being sent to prison until almost a month after the event. The fact that she and her husband were away on holiday from the 8<sup>th</sup> of June for seven days may partly explain the situation or it may be that Samuel did know but withheld the news from her. George's disgrace did not affect Lucy's relationship with the rest of the family and the diary is soon recording visits to her home by his mother and young sisters.

There are no more references to George Gissing in the diaries for almost 11 years. On 12 January 1887 Lucy tells us that she had finished reading *Isabel Clarendon* and on 24 December she turned to *Workers in the Dawn*. In March 1888 she is reading "G.G.'s tale in the *Cornhill*." This presumably is the serialisation of *A Life's Morning*, and one wonders whether Lucy picked out the Wakefield references in the story. Though she refers to other works by Gissing she rarely gives her opinions. This is not the case with *The Nether World*. Lucy began reading it on 14 June 1889 and by the 25<sup>th</sup> she was starting the third volume. By that date she had decided "definitely do not like it, characters all so low," and on 4 July she notes that she had "tried to finish G. Gissing's book." We know that Lucy later read

*The Emancipated* and *Eve's Ransom*. In that same year 1889, on 15 August, she mentions a visit from "George Gissing and Madge [Margaret Gissing]," a visit confirmed by Gissing in his own diary: "In evening with Madge to call on the Bruces, whom I have not seen for 14 years." He called on them again on 11 August 1890, but there is no record of this in Lucy's diary. Five years later, on 4 April, she wrote: "George Gissing called yesterday"—a call he duly noted on the 3<sup>rd</sup>; he was then staying in Wakefield for a few days with his family. The following year, also in April, after many arguments with his wife, he brought his elder son, Walter, to Wakefield to be looked after by his mother and sisters, and on that occasion, he "Spent evening with the Bruces ; genial," as the entry in his own diary for the 21<sup>st</sup> informs us. Walter was soon introduced to Samuel and Lucy and on 9 May 1896 Lucy notes that "Little Walter came for the morning. I took him home." On 25 June we are told, "Walter Gissing came for the day, and to sleep, as the Gissings were removing to their new home.<sup>5</sup> All the Gissings came to supper," and the next day: "Madge Gissing fetched Walter, whom we had all got to love." We know from Gissing's diary that he was in Wakefield again from 19 to 22 August, but he did not record, as Lucy did, his visit to the Bruces on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Later that year, on 10 December, we learn that Lucy gave Walter a birthday cake with his name on it and a set of railway trains to celebrate his fifth birthday. Her diary refers just to three more visits paid by George Gissing to her home: on 30 April 1898 we have: "George Gissing here last evening and this evening," and on the next day, 1 May: "G. Gissing spent evening here and stayed to supper." There is one more significant entry relating to him and his immediate family when on 9 March 1899 we find "N. Gissing came for lint for Walter who has had his tonsils out, his mole taken out and been circumcised." Lucy tells us that she went next day to see Walter, who, no doubt, was in need of cheering up after such an experience.<sup>6</sup>

Barely a week passes for thirty years without a mention in the diaries of one or more members of the Gissing family. It was not just the appeal of a kindly, generous and childless couple that attracted the young Gissings but also the almost constant presence of Lucy's nephews and nieces who were of similar ages. Lucy's sister, Catherine, had married James Bennett Baseley at Marylebone Parish Church on 13 May 1858 and over the next 20 years the couple produced 5 daughters and 2 sons, Catherine (1859-1937), Florence (1860-1938), James (1862-1947), Victoria (1865-1901) Hilda (1869-1951), May (1873-1905) and Reginald (1878-1952). James had set

himself up in Southampton as a tailor and outfitter but with little success due to his lack of business acumen. He started off in a shop on the High Street in Southampton but over the next 20 years he had to move to smaller and less prestigious premises. This lack of success and consequent lack of a decent income led to the offer of Lucy and Samuel Bruce to have the children to stay with them for long periods. These visits lasted sometimes for months and often there were up to three of them staying with the Bruces at any one time. The youngest daughter, May, who came to live in Wakefield when she was 13 years of age, was to stay for many years and be regarded by the Bruces as their adopted daughter. Two of the other daughters, Catherine and Florence, spent so much time with their Uncle and Aunt that they found their husbands in Wakefield.<sup>7</sup>

During his short life William Gissing was a regular visitor to the Bruces' home when he was in Wakefield. He often spent the evening with Samuel and Lucy, whom he entertained by playing the piano. William's health was not good and after a visit in July 1878 Lucy noted that "Will seemed very poorly." By November of the same year she tells us that Algernon had informed them that "Poor Willie broken down again," although he seems to have recovered sufficiently to have visited the Bruces on the 11 December. No more calls from William are recorded in the diaries. He died at Wilmslow, Cheshire on 16 April 1880, and on 20 April Lucy "Called to see poor Mrs. Gissing, found them all in terrible trouble about Willie's death."

Apart from Mrs. Gissing and her two daughters, Algernon was the member of the Gissing family who visited Samuel and Lucy's house the most. He was not always welcome and sometimes Lucy remarked in her diary "Algy had turned up again uninvited." The main attraction for Algernon was Catherine Baseley, the eldest of Lucy's five nieces. Algernon did not impress Samuel and Lucy; they thought that he lacked application and that his prospects were not very good. In the coming years, to their dismay and cost, they were to realise how accurate their assessment had been. Catherine, or Kity as she was known in the family, did not enjoy the best of health and Lucy records many instances of her illnesses, visits from the local doctors and journeys to see specialists in Bradford. There are vague references to haemorrhages, gall bladder problems and enlargement and congestion of the liver. None of these ailments prevented her from subsequently giving birth to five children and living to the age of 78. In her diary for 31 March 1883, a few days before Catherine's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, Lucy

wrote: "Algy in love with Kity." The following year, when Algernon was said to be suffering from some unspecified illness, the entry for 2 October reads: "Pitied young folks [Algy and Kity] who have no prospects before them." In 1885, Catherine was living with her uncle and aunt from January until early August, and in June of that year Algernon had managed to secure a job at last when he was appointed as managing clerk to a firm of solicitors in Richmond, North Yorkshire. Catherine returned home to Southampton but in April of the following year she suffered again from haemorrhages. Meanwhile Algernon had given up his post at Richmond to concentrate on writing novels. In her diary for 1 March 1887 Lucy rather tartly remarks, "Algy rolled another stone, this time to Wooler." On 8 September 1887, after an engagement that had lasted for four years, Algernon and Catherine were married at Christ Church, Portswood, Southampton. So began a marriage that was to last for almost 50 years and to bring to Catherine nothing but constant anxiety and near poverty.

In March 1888 Algernon informed Lucy that his book *Joy Cometh in the Morning* would shortly be published, and on 13 April she tells us "Read well on in Alg's book. Got dissatisfied with it, so crude, but perhaps he will improve later on." Over the years Lucy mentions reading some of Algernon's other novels. These were *A Village Hampden* in 1890, *A Moorland Idyl* in 1891, *Between Two Opinions* in 1893, and *The Scholar of Bygate* in 1897, which was sent as a gift with "a loving inscription and message." This was the least Algernon could have done after scrounging £75 from Samuel the previous autumn. Lucy only mentions once that Samuel had attempted to read any of Algernon's novels. This was in February 1894 when she remarks: "Samuel finished Alg's book *At Society's Expense*. Clever, though where can he get his ideas of drunkenness." A few months after the publication of his first book Algernon's first child, Enid (1888-1946), was born; she was followed by Roland (1895-1967), Alwin (1897-1973), Katherine (1900-1976) and Margaret (1901-1987). Algernon was unable to support his family by his own efforts and he became expert in obtaining loans, which he never repaid, from his own and his wife's family. Lucy often expressed her distress at the situation in her diary and chronicled the various ways in which she tried to make life easier for Catherine and her children. In December 1890 when Catherine was staying with the Gissings in Wakefield Lucy writes "Met Kity in the street looking shabby." And three years later in December 1893: "Rather depressed by Kity's evident poverty. Bought Enid a cart. Gave Kity a hood for Enid, 2 pairs boots,

1 pair shoes and ten shillings.” Over the coming years Lucy bought lots of clothing for Kity’s growing family and for herself. She often sent Kity small amounts of money to help with her day-to-day expenses and in 1898 she sent her £3 for her train fare so that she could come to Wakefield for Samuel and Lucy’s Silver Wedding celebrations. Two years previously, on 13 November 1896, Lucy had written in her diary “Poor Alg wrote dreadfully painful letter wanting £100, not able to work,” and on 16 November “My precious darling shaky and not well, who can wonder with this dreadful Willersey cloud hanging over us all. He sent £25.” Two days later she owns that she “Felt very worried about my poor Kity who writes so sadly and the effect on my precious darling who means to send the rest of the £100 to Alg which we had all saved this year to help pay off the mortgage.” On 23 November Samuel sent Algernon £50. To the end of her life Lucy continued to be very generous to Catherine and her children but there are no more large gifts of money to Algernon referred to in the diaries.

Lucy’s second niece, Florence, also spent a great deal of time in Wakefield. On 29 December 1887, at Christchurch, Portswood, Southampton she married Charles William Joseph Thompson (1858-1908), the son of Frederick Thompson (1833-1880), a corn miller with premises in Wakefield and Todmorden. Frederick Thompson was a good friend of Thomas Waller Gissing; they were both members of the Liberal party and the Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution. Frederick was one of the pallbearers at Thomas Gissing’s funeral in 1870.<sup>8</sup> Charles studied medicine but was never in practice as a doctor, possibly due to his delicate health. Charles and Florence were to have three children, Ralph (b. 1889), Oswald (b. 1892, d. 1899), and Edgar (b. 1896). At one time they had a house at Ilkley in the Yorkshire Dales and sometimes Mrs. Gissing and her daughters were invited to stay with them.<sup>9</sup>

The third niece, Victoria or Vita as she was known in the family, did not spend as much time in Wakefield as her sisters. In 1892 she married Alexander Henry Daniel von der Meden at St. James Church, Pentonville. Henry was described as a merchant, as was his father, but what type of merchandise they dealt in was not specified. In her diary for 2 November 1901 Lucy records “A little son was born to Vita and Aleck after ten years waiting.” The waiting was all in vain for on 27 November Vita was to die of Puerperal Mania and Septicaemia and the child, Alexander Pico, born brain damaged, was to spend most of his life in a mental institution.



Of all the nieces Hilda was the one who spent the least time in Wakefield. Quite headstrong and argumentative, she was not particularly liked by her Uncle and Aunt. May, the youngest niece, was their favourite and after the age of 13 she was to spend most of the rest of her life with Samuel and Lucy with only occasional visits to her parents' home. In March 1888, James Baseley, Lucy's brother-in-law, wrote to Samuel to tell him that he was in serious financial difficulties. A month later he wrote again saying that he owed the banks £300-£400 but Samuel wrote back refusing to lend him any money. By 18 March James had suspended payments of his debts and on 20 March Lucy records in her diary: "Samuel wrote most painful letter to J.B.B. saying he dare not be guarantor for him." On 23 May she writes in her diary: "J.B.B. signed papers promising to pay seventeen shillings in the pound in 18 months. God help them all. Wrote and offered to do what we could for May." The following year on 10 August 1889 James had another attempt at extracting money from Samuel and Lucy: "Appalling letter from J.B.B. wanting Samuel to buy High Street property and sending Deed of Assignment, it looks as if they would have nothing left to live on at all." The offer was refused. Things went from bad to worse for James and after trying unsuccessfully to obtain paid employment he, his wife and youngest son went to live in lodgings in Finchley and then on to Jersey where, presumably, the cost of living was much lower than in England. The only regular income they had was the income from £1,500 left to James' wife, Catherine, by her father, William John Hall. The Baseleys' two sons, James and Reginald, visited Wakefield occasionally but they do not feature very often in the diaries.

Over the years the three female members of the Gissing family continued to be regular visitors to the Bruces' house. Lucy liked Mrs. Gissing very much and she always recorded her meetings with her. In March 1897 Lucy tells us that she visited Mrs. Gissing and "gave her the needful to go to Ilkley." On her return from Ilkley Mrs. Gissing stayed with the Bruces for a week, presumably because both her daughters were away from home. During this stay Lucy writes in her diary for 29 April: "Mrs. Gissing went, as usual, to feed the cat and for a walk, both of us a quiet afternoon and evening. I played whilst Samuel and she sang." One wonders what George Gissing would have made of this little scene?

Another incident that seems not to have been mentioned in George Gissing's letters until several weeks after the event concerns an illness of his sister, Margaret, in 1895.<sup>10</sup> In her diary for 3 August Lucy writes

“Ghastly news from N. Gissing that poor Madge is to have chloroform on Wed. for doctors to see what is the matter in her breast,” and on 7 August “Poor Gissing girls here to tea. Madge brave and having perfect faith in her doctor.” On the 8 August “Drs. Lett and Stanger operated on Madge, Lett there until 10 o’clock. Dreadful night, Mrs. Gissing and Nellie up the whole of it.” The next day Lucy called at the Gissings’ house bearing beef tea and a pigeon pie. She called again the next day and found Margaret much better and able to take solid foods, then on 12 August she relates how she “Picked lovely flowers and took them and grapes to Madge Gissing. Saw her in her patience and bravery.”

The last few years of Samuel and Lucy’s lives were not particularly happy ones as both of them were experiencing problems with their health. Lucy, who very rarely mentioned national events in her diary, was greatly disturbed by the outbreak of the Boer war. On 31 October 1899 she notes: “Awful news about the War and our reverses,” and on 7 November she tells us “Very little news of the War. Carrier pigeon brought tidings of the death of Commander Egerton, nephew of the Duke of Devonshire.” Later that month she joined the committee of the “Soldiers’ Wives Fund,” an organisation which had been formed to help the wives of the local reservists who had been called up to serve in South Africa. Samuel and Lucy made a donation of £8 to the fund and Lucy was kept busy visiting many of the soldiers’ wives who were in financial difficulties. In December, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Lucy writes: “Dreadful news from South Africa. Second serious British reverse, 600 more of our brave men prisoners.” And 3 days later on 14 December: “Fearful news about the war. Our third reverse. Another General killed and the Black Watch almost to a man.”

The pressures from Lucy’s family never seemed to diminish. May, Samuel and Lucy’s niece, their “adopted daughter,” who was always considered to be highly strung, had a mental breakdown in 1901. She was sent to see a specialist in London who recommended that she should spend some time away from Wakefield. Samuel and Lucy agreed to this and she went to live as a residential patient with two doctors in the Reading area who specialised in the treatment of people with mental health problems. By 24 October May was back in Wakefield and Lucy was telling us that “Bairnie so sweet, just like her dear old self.” This state of affairs was not to last long.

In February 1902 Lucy was still worrying about her niece Catherine Gissing and at the end of the month she sends her £1, some old clothes and

a suit for her son, Roland. In March Algernon was up to his old tricks again when he wrote asking Samuel for the loan of £30. The entry for 13 March in Lucy's diary reads: "Samuel wrote painful letter to Alg refusing to lend him money. We mean to go on straight lines to help poor Kity personally all we can but not to help Alg to earn his living by paying into the hands of middle-men agents." A few weeks later on 10 April we hear of "Disquieting letter from Kity virtually begging 2/6d from May and asking me to send Parishes Food both for her and Enid who has a bad cough."<sup>11</sup> Lucy herself was not very well, she was suffering with pains in her hands, probably caused by arthritis, and heart problems causing shortness of breath when walking. In June Samuel and Lucy went to Whitby on the Yorkshire coast for two weeks but it did not bring about an improvement in Lucy's health and she came home to hear more doleful news about Algernon and Catherine. On 12 July she records a call from Margaret Gissing, who told her that she and her sister and mother gave every penny of their savings to Algernon and Kity, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> how she and Samuel had "Our happy wedding anniversary, the 29<sup>th</sup>. Dressed up in my white wedding gown." The next month they escaped from the family and spent four weeks in the Lake District but the year ended on a sad note when Samuel was taken ill and he was diagnosed as having a large patch on his left lung.

1903 started badly with both Samuel and Lucy still experiencing poor health but also with the arrival of Kity on 15 April almost in a state of collapse. On 21 April Lucy grieves in her diary: "Poor dear Kity, how my heart aches for her in her weakness and pitiful poverty." Three days later she sent for the doctor who declared that Kity was in a very serious condition, not only thin and weak, but bowels and stomach both so thin that there was a danger of haemorrhages. Kity was confined to bed, where she was to remain for the next three months. Lucy had not only the worry, and expense, of Kity's illness but also the problem of May, who was once again displaying signs of her old mental problems. On top of all these worries the house was full of workmen for several weeks, making improvements to the kitchen and bathroom. It all proved too much for Lucy who on 17 May confided to her diary: "Confined to bed. Heart very tiresome and oh so tired. My most precious husband and I so depressed, we actually cried." On a happier note she tells us on the 27<sup>th</sup>: "Mrs. Gissing came as usual and touched me very much by insisting on giving me 5/- from herself and Kity for a drive as a birthday present." From 5 to 29 June Samuel and Lucy were at Buxton in Derbyshire, where Lucy took a course of treatment that in-

cluded drinking the water and having a series of Nauheim baths.<sup>12</sup> They returned home to find Kity still confined to bed but making a reasonable recovery. She left Wakefield on 23 July after a stay of 14 weeks. On 1 August Lucy was complaining to her diary that the house was full of visitors, mainly her Baseley relatives, and that it was like living in a boarding house, while on the 3<sup>rd</sup> we are told that “Samuel beginning to rage furiously to me that it is impossible for me to be quiet with my poor, poor heart beating at this terrific speed and apparently it is of no concern to what was once our loving Bairnie.” The next day, after a telegram from Lucy’s nephew Reginald Baseley, announcing that he was coming to Wakefield that evening, Samuel finally lost his temper and said, “This house should not be a Baseley refuge.” Lucy persuaded Samuel to let Reginald stay and she records that “They all to York went gallivanting.” For the next few days the entries in her diary tell of how very ill she was feeling, and that for 12 August: “In very great pain all day, gastro dyspepsia has set in now and oh this shortness of breathing.” After this the remaining pages in the diary for that year are blank. Lucy died fifteen days later on 27 August.

Samuel was greatly affected by Lucy’s death and although his health wasn’t very good he returned to his official duties. His life wasn’t made easier over the next twelve months by the erratic behaviour of his adopted daughter, May Baseley, who believed that her conduct had contributed in some way to her aunt’s death. This led to a breakdown in her health, followed by another serious mental collapse. It was decided that she should go to stay with her sister, Florence Thompson, who was then living at Rudington near Nottingham. On 24 January 1905 May went missing from her sister’s house and some days later advertisements were placed in several newspapers offering a reward of £100 for information leading to her discovery or, if dead, a reward of £50 for the recovery of her body. Her corpse was eventually found some weeks later in the River Trent near Nottingham. After a coroner’s inquest the verdict was that the cause of death was “Suicide by drowning while in an unsound state of mind.” Samuel did not survive this terrible event for long and he died on 20 March 1905. The *Wakefield Express* reported his death on 25 March stating: “The deceased had been in failing health for some time past, but there is little doubt that the tragic death of his adopted daughter a few weeks ago hastened the end.”

Lucy Bruce left a quite straightforward will in which she bequeathed her wedding rings to her husband and small bequests to her sister, nieces, nephews, and domestic servants. The income from the bulk of her estate,

which amounted to about £2,600 was left to her husband in his lifetime, then to her niece, whom she referred to as “her adopted daughter May Baseley Bruce, for her life with power by her own Will to dispose of as she wished.” After Lucy’s death Samuel executed several wills first in favour of May Baseley and then in favour of her sister Hilda Baseley, but in consequence of the ill health of the former and unpleasantness with the latter he on 6 February 1905 revoked all his testamentary dispositions. He then drew up a new will in which he left legacies to several friends and servants and the residue of his own estate, as distinguished from the Trust Fund of his late wife, to his cousin Margaret Bruce of Ilkley. With regard to his wife’s Trust Fund he intended to leave £1,500, being the equivalent of the money that came to Mrs. Bruce from her own family, to the daughters of his late wife’s sister Mrs Baseley and their children. Samuel died before he could sign this will and as a consequence his estate, apart from Lucy’s £1,500, was divided between his 16 cousins. Lucy’s £1,500 was used to set up the Baseley Trust which for many years, until it was wound up in 1952, paid out the income to her nieces, Catherine Gissing, Florence Thompson and Hilda Baseley. The interest was paid twice each year and each payment varied between £8 and £10 or thereabouts. These variations used to cause much concern to Catherine Gissing, who relied on these payments, and the Baseley Trust papers contain several letters from her asking for the reasons which accounted for them. It is some indication of how poor she was when on 17 January 1915, she wrote thanking the solicitors for her dividend of £9-5-6d, adding “May I ask you of your courtesy to explain to me how it is the cheque is so much smaller than Jan. 1914, it was then £10-2-1d.” It is obvious that Catherine knew little about investments, but with a husband like Algernon how could she?

Samuel and Lucy are buried in the same grave as Samuel’s father, Thomas, in the unconsecrated portion of Wakefield cemetery. Their monument, an obelisk standing about 15 feet high, is of grey polished granite. His inscription simply reads, “Samuel Bruce, J.P. Barrister at Law. Born 10 July 1829. Died 20 March 1905.” Lucy’s epitaph, placed there by Samuel, reads “Lucy Bruce (Wife of Samuel Bruce). Born 28 May 1843. Died 27 August 1903. Loving, loved, and deeply mourned. Her price was far above rubies.”

<sup>1</sup> Obituary, *Wakefield Express*, 25 March 1905, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> After the death of T. W. Gissing in 1870 Bruce was invited to stand as the Liberal candidate for the St. John’s ward but he declined.

<sup>3</sup> John Shepherd Eastmead (1822-1885) was the minister at Salem Congregational Chapel in Wakefield for 31 years and a man prominent in the affairs of the town. His wife, whom he married in 1854, was Eliza Plaister (1812-1890), the aunt of Lucy Bruce. They are buried in Wakefield cemetery in a grave next to that of Samuel and Lucy Bruce.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. William Ralph Milner (1810-1868) was the surgeon at Wakefield prison, his sister, Mary, George Gissing's first schoolteacher. Dr. John Holdsworth was a local G.P.

<sup>5</sup> In June 1896 Mrs. Gissing and her daughters moved house from 17 Westfield Grove to 9 Wentworth Terrace, where Margaret and Ellen were to open their Boys' Preparatory School.

<sup>6</sup> On 10 March 1899, George Gissing wrote to his son Walter about these operations and 12 days later he went to see Walter at the Willersey home of Algernon where Margaret had taken the boy for a short holiday.

<sup>7</sup> In fact three members of Lucy's family had found a marriage partner in Wakefield. James Plaister Harris (1837-1908)—he later added the surname Gastrell—was Lucy Bruce's cousin, being the son of James Hawke Harris and Maria Plaister. In 1862 he married, at Salem Congregational Chapel, Wakefield, Martha Shaw (1837-1912), the sister-in-law of R. B. Mackie, the Liberal M.P. for Wakefield. The marriage broke down in the 1870s and he obtained a German divorce at Wiesbaden in 1884. Harris-Gastrell, a member of the British Diplomatic Service, held posts in Russia, Germany, Austria, Rio de Janeiro and Chicago.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Thompson's corn milling business failed in 1878 but he was able to continue living in great style due to the wealth of his wife. He died in a drowning accident during a visit to Illinois, U.S.A. in 1880. He had married Mary Murray March, the daughter of a prosperous Leeds iron founder, and they had four children, Charles who married Florence Baseley, twin sons William and Joseph and a daughter Mary Rosa. William (1859-1890) was a solicitor; he died whilst out riding in 1890. Joseph (1859-1922), a schoolmaster, was at the time of his death living in Plymouth. Neither of the twins married. Mrs. Thompson died in 1924 in her 94th year, and the following year her unmarried daughter conveyed the very large family house in South Parade to the Church of England. It is still in use today as the administrative centre for the diocese of Wakefield.

<sup>9</sup> Charles William Joseph Thompson trained as a doctor but never practised. He and his family lived at various addresses at Leeds, Ilkley, Nottingham and Grantham. He collapsed and died in Westgate, Wakefield, on 9 December 1908 whilst hurrying to catch a train at Westgate station.

<sup>10</sup> We are not told exactly what it was that needed such an operation but presumably it was breast cancer. In a letter to his sister Ellen, written on 15 November 1895, George Gissing remarks: "Where on earth can Madge have picked up this ailment?" which suggests otherwise. Dr. Richard Lett (1822-1902) was the doctor generally consulted by the Bruces and the Gissings but they eventually lost confidence in him and both families transferred to Dr. J. Walker. Dr. William Stanger was in general practice in Wakefield; he lived at The Towers, in the St John's area of the town.

<sup>11</sup> Parishes Food was a proprietary brand of food for invalids.

<sup>12</sup> This was a type of carbonated bath given to sufferers from heart trouble and the name is taken from the German spa town of Bad Nauheim.

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## Gissing and Horace

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The view that the reception of Horace in Victorian England was favoured by its “functionality” to the main tenets of bourgeois ideology has been recently reasserted. More specifically, it has been shown how the Horatian *topoi* were essential “to the construction of the English gentleman who represented the values of the male and homosocial Victorian England: moderation, clubbability, leisured gentility, patriotism, and (even) religion.”<sup>1</sup> This view, though, undoubtedly unquestionable in general, does not seem to hold properly when referred to the specific case of George Gissing, whose Horatianism stands quite apart as an exception to the general rule, as an outcome of an idiosyncratic rather than a shared reading modality. But this should not come as a surprise since as part of a human and literary universe, Gissing’s Horatianism could not but reflect his more general critical attitude towards the alleged values upon which the Victorian pedestal was grounded.

As is well known, this attitude, overtly and covertly present in all of Gissing’s works, is epitomized at the beginning of *By the Ionian Sea*, where his refusal of the society of his time takes on the form of a flight, of an “escape.” After reminding us that “every man has his intellectual desire,” the writer adds: “mine was to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood.”

My assumption is that a very conspicuous part of the “imaginative delight” deriving from the flight into “this old world” was fostered by Horace’s poetry, and in order to support this conviction I think it necessary to take into consideration what to me is Gissing’s spiritual testament: *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Even if, in fact, Horatian allusions and reminiscences are to be found in many of Gissing’s novels,<sup>2</sup> it is in this latter work that his indebtedness to Horace seems to me to be better exemplified.

The relevance of *Ryecroft* to my argument lies mainly in the fact that its autobiographical structure seems to reflect one of the pivotal themes of Horace’s human and ideal biography. Ryecroft’s contentment for being enabled by a legacy to live the kind of life he has always cherished (retiring to a small house in the country, away from the squalor and noise of the town, with plain food and among good books) has an unmistakable Horatian

flavour. Horace, in fact, who was able to fulfil the same dream thanks to the liberality of his patron Maecenas, celebrated this ideal condition of life in many of his compositions, the most famous of which opens, as we know, with the line “Hoc erat in votis” (*Sermones*, II, 6). Now it is precisely this Horatian tag that Gissing uses as an epigraph to *Ryecroft*, not to mention the subtitle of the jocular poem entitled “The Humble Aspirations of G. G., Novelist” which, according to Morley Roberts, he wrote “one night after talking about Coleridge’s luck in having discovered his amiable patron.”<sup>3</sup>

The Horatian precedent in *Ryecroft* is of course not to be traced only in the general situation of the narrator’s retirement, as it is also used to deepen and dramatize his moral and psychological physiognomy. The examples that could be brought to bear on this aspect are many, but for brevity’s sake I will restrict myself to those which in my opinion better connote the identity of the narrating voice. In *Summer XXV*, for example, where *Ryecroft* talks about his present likes and habits which make him a man so different from what he used to be as a young man, he borrows from Horace (*Odes* IV, 1) the phrase “*non sum qualis eram,*” with a chaste allusion also to his sentimental life, because as we know, in the original the expression is used by Horace in a sexually connoted context. The following, instead, is an example of how Gissing plays on the most famous Horatian *topoi*, in particular the *carpe diem* motive which is exploited to reinforce the dramatic intensity of the meditation on time and on the sense of transitoriness of human life on the last page of *Ryecroft*:

“...the week gone by is already far in retrospect of things learnt, and that to come, especially if it foretell some joy, lingers in remoteness. Past mid-life, one learns little and expects little. To-day is like unto yesterday, and to that which shall be the morrow. Only torment of mind or body serves to delay the indistinguishable hours. Enjoy the day, and, behold, it shrinks to a moment”.

Unmistakably Horatian (*Epistles*, I, 2, 46 : “quod satis est cui contiguit, in his amplius optet”) is *Ryecroft*’s exaltation of sobriety: “But oh, how good it is to desire little and to have a little more than enough”; and unquestionably Horatian (*Odes*, III, 1 : “Odi profanum vulgus et arceo”) seems to me *Ryecroft*’s aloofness and fear of the people: “I am no friend of the people...they make me shrink aloof, and often move me to abhorrence.”

That this ideal of secluded life as a means to immunize himself against the evils of the times was not a literary pose, is documented by the fact that it is insisted on in Gissing’s private correspondence as well. Here follows indeed its prescription in a letter to his brother Algernon:



“Keep apart, keep apart, and preserve one’s soul alive,— that is the teaching for the day. It is ill to have been born in these times, but one can make a world within the world. A glimpse of the morning or evening sky will give the right note, and then we must make what music we can.”<sup>4</sup>

Besides being an existential need to preserve one’s authenticity, Horace is seen as an effective antidote to counteract the gloomy crotchets and prejudices typical of the puritanical cast of mind, as the following passage, this time from *The Emancipated*, clearly shows:

“I should have pictured you grandly jovial, wreathed perhaps with ruddy vine-leaves, the light of inspiration in your eye, and in your hand a mantling goblet! Drink, man, drink! You need a stimulant, an exhilarant, an antiphlegmatic, a counter-irritant against English spleen. You are still on the other side of the Alps, of the Channel; the fogs yet cling about you. Clear your brow, O Painter of Ossianic wildernesses! Taste the foam of life! We are in the land of Horace, and *nunc est bibendum!*”<sup>5</sup>

Even if iconographically the preceding quotation seems to stress the idea of a convivial context, the invitation to drink in order to “taste the foam of life,” is not to be interpreted in a literal sense. As will be clear in the course of our discussion, the “draught” the writer refers to is symbolical rather than referential: it connotes an aesthetic experience of regeneration, very akin, if not identical, to the one he expects to make in Magna Græcia, in the “land of romance...where the waters of two fountains mingle and flow together” and whose “draught will be exquisite!”<sup>6</sup> Gissing’s artistic tension, in other words, could be considered, *mutatis mutandis*, as the Victorian version of the same yearning which many decades earlier had fostered Keats’s desire of “a beaker full of the warm South.” But in order for us better to appreciate all the implications of this romantic aspiration, and the role in it played by Horace it is perhaps useful to take into examination the following entry in his *Commonplace Book* relative to his first stay in Rome:

“Perhaps the supreme moment of my life was that when I woke one night in Rome, and lay with a sense of profound and peaceful *possession* of what for so many years I had desired. Before going to bed I had read Horace. Never have I been so free of temporal cares (in soul, that is to say) and so clearly face to face with the ideal of intellectual life.”<sup>7</sup>

And to compare it with what he wrote in his diary on 8 December 1888. On his way back to his boarding house after visiting the Forum, Horatian lines from *Odes*, III, 30, keep echoing in his ears:

“As I ascend homewards from the Forum, I always hear singing in my head ‘*Dum Capitolium / Scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex.*’ After dinner, home and read Horace’s First Epistle”.

Let’s now turn our attention to a passage in a letter from Naples to his sister Ellen of some weeks earlier (November 9th). In describing (among other things) the beauty of Baiae, the writer notes that the place had been celebrated by Horace; then he mentions the mountains of Ischia, the lovely shore, Capri in the distance, and here is how the sense of the ineffable beauty of the view is expressed:

“These things Horace saw just as I see them.— No, no; one can’t speak of it!”

From what we have been saying so far it seems to be clear, then, that Horace’s poetry has for Gissing the function of a catalyst which enables him to make an intellectual and aesthetic experience of a peculiar kind: an experience, that is, whereby he can almost “see” and “feel” what the Latin poet saw and felt twenty centuries before. Even if in his ramblings he follows the indications of the Baedeker volumes he has always with him as his “faithful companions,” it is mainly through the evocative power of his Greek and Latin reminiscences that he catches the grandeur and significance of the places he visits in southern Italy, and in particular through Horace’s eyes. In a sense, the impression formulated by his first biographer “that in some previous incarnation Gissing must have been an Italian writer of the South” is justified.<sup>8</sup> We do not know if Gissing really thought of himself as a reincarnation of Horace; but if not in terms of self-identification, we can definitely talk of a strong empathy which tied him to the Latin poet. But if we want to qualify the sense of this empathy we must direct once more our attention to *The Emancipated*, and in particular to a scene where the novelist expands narratively his travel notes relative to his first stay in Rome. In this scene, set on a terrace overlooking Rome, one of the characters points towards the horizon, where Mount Soracte stands clearly visible in the distance, and comments:

“Through there is the country of the Volsci [...] Some Roman must have stood here and looked towards it, in days when Rome was struggling for supremacy with them. Think of all that happened between that day and the time when Horace saw the snow on Soracte; and then, of all that has happened since.”<sup>9</sup>

This reference to Mount Soracte is not isolated. The famous mountain celebrated by Horace (*Odes*, I, 9) had already been alluded to in a letter to his sister Margaret of 17 December 1888. Here, in fact, after saying that

“the Roman life and literature” for him becomes “real in a way hitherto inconceivable”; that it compels him to readjust his view of things, so much so that he regrets not having come to Italy years before, Gissing thus concludes:

“Horace begins one of his poems with saying: ‘Do you see how Soracte stands there covered with white snow?’—And almost every day I see that mountain Soracte, in the far distance, though not as yet with snow on it. I shouted with delight the first time I recognized it.”<sup>10</sup>

Some ten years later Gissing would come to Italy again (for the last time) to visit Magna Græcia, in particular. Once in Taranto he decided to see the river Galæsus that Horace, as we know, immortalized in *Odes*, II, 6. When the novelist is shown the alleged spot referred to by Horace he describes the landscape as if it were the same as two thousand years before. Nothing seems to have changed: the same music of the wavelets lapping upon the sand; the same goatherd with “his flock straggling behind him”; in the distance the same boats “of the fishermen float[ing] silently.” The only thing to be heard, the rustle of a figtree which is dropping “its latest leaves.” The golden serenity of the day, and the stillness “as of eternal peace” that holds “earth and sky” convey to him a sense of suspension of the soul, of a spiritual stasis; the original Horatian lines sing again in his head. So sweet is his mood that he does not care that the river in front of him might not be the actual river celebrated by Horace. For him “the memory has no sense of disappointment” and “those reeds which rustle about the hidden source seem to me fit shelter of a Naiad.” As long as he lives he will continue to think of the Galæsus river as the one which “purl[ed] and glisten[ed] in the light of that golden afternoon.”

When he first came to Italy, soon after crossing the Channel, Gissing wrote in his diary that he had become “a poet pure and simple [...] an idealist student of art.” He would be no more concerned with the harsh and raw reality he had represented in his first novels. On leaving England he had also left behind his old poetical faith and embraced a new one; one which would enable him to attain a superior form of reality, for which the realistic mode was unfit. As he puts it at the outset of *By the Ionian Sea*, he would no more deal with “life as he knows it.”

Horace’s is precisely one of the voices of the past which helps him grasp this superior dimension of reality. In a certain sense the Latin poet is to him what the Grecian Urn had been to Keats: the means whereby to transcend time and history and attain to the eternity of the idea.

Meaningfully, in *Ryecroft* the memory of the river Galæsus episode is fused with another memory, that of his visit to the ruins at Pæstum. Here too the contemplation of the beautiful scenery, along with that of the imposing vestiges of the past, had regenerated, as it were, his perceptivity, making it fit for the communication with a superior form of being, with what we could define as a sort of lay divinity. Not by chance, the memory is given the structure and cadence of a religious ritual, of a prayer, whereby a perpetual renewal of sublime emotions is effected:

“Could I but live for ever in thoughts and feelings such as those born to me in the shadow of the Italian vine!”

The optative mode is then stressed by the repetition of the word “there” placed in anaphorical position (“*There* I listened to the sacred poets; *there* I walked with the wise of old; *there* did the gods reveal to me the secret of their eternal calm”); and by the imagery of the Horatian reminiscence depicting a scene of a religious sacrifice (“Chant in the old measure the song imperishable: ‘*Dum Capitolium/scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex*’”) and which therefore conveys by itself the sense of a momentous, solemn experience worth reiterating *ad infinitum*: “Aye, and for how many an age when Pontiff and Vestal sleep in the eternal silence.”

But the full import of this memory/prayer is to be found soon after, when Ryecroft/Gissing distances himself from the “slaves of the iron gods.” Meaningfully, in his reasoning all those whose stern dogmatism makes insensitive to the “smile and the melody of the Muses” are also unresponsive to the warmth of “Falernian,” the wine Horace was so fond of. It comes as no surprise then, that the memory/prayer ends with another Horatian *topos*, with the wish that the vital cup be replenished and enjoyed before it is too late:

“Let the slave of the iron gods chatter what he will; for him flows no Falernian, for him the Muses have no smile, no melody. Ere the sun set, and the darkness fall about us, fill again!”

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Harrison, “Horace and the Construction of the English Victorian Gentleman,” *Helios*, vol. 34, No. 2, Fall 2007, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in *Workers in the Dawn*, Isabel Clarendon, *The Crown of Life*, New Grub Street, *The Emancipated*.

<sup>3</sup> See Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912), pp. 163-64.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Michael Lloyd, “Italy and the Nostalgia of G. Gissing,” in *English Miscellany*, 1951 (2).

<sup>5</sup> *The Emancipated* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> *By the Ionian Sea* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2004), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Korg, ed., *George Gissing's Commonplace Book*, New York, 1962, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Morley Roberts, *cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> *The Emancipated*, p. 325.

<sup>10</sup> *Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume III 1886-1888*, p. 322.

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## Gissing in French Louisiana

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The annual Louisiana Conference on Literature, Language and Culture took place on 5-7 March 2009 at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in the heart of French Louisiana. The conference is organized specifically with the emerging scholar in mind—that is, advanced post-graduate students and junior faculty. This year, however, a special Gissing treat was offered: a panel introduced by Christine Huguet (Université Charles-de-Gaulle Lille 3, France), with Constance Harsh (Colgate University, USA), Malcolm Allen (University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, USA), and Lewis Moore (University of the District of Columbia, USA) presenting papers.

The overall theme of the conference was “Beyond Pleasure: The Force of Desire in Text and Culture,” and the papers in the Gissing panel each focused on the theme of “desire” in some form. As Dr. Huguet pointed out, “In eroding the accepted patterns of sexual stability it sets out to represent, Gissing’s fiction contributes to the construction of profoundly new notions of masculinity and femininity . . . His fiction may be seen in particular to entail an elaboration of the complexities of desire—a concept central to the writer’s understanding of life itself.” She went on to say that “Instinctual desires blight Gissing’s vulgar people and his ‘nether World’ alike, predictably ensuring death or lives of insignificance. Unsurprisingly, desire dooms the more subtle and sophisticated characters, too, with the usual result that they ultimately find either bitter frustration or ironic, unenviable fulfillment.”

Constance Harsh presented a fascinating paper entitled, “Gissing and Women in the 1890s: the Conditions of Narrative Sympathy.” In her paper she examined the general shape of Gissing’s treatment of women as protagonists in the 1890s. She noted that “Early in the decade he wrote some of his most sympathetic treatments of women’s aspirations and intellectual

lives in such novels as *The Odd Women* and *In the Year of Jubilee* . . . Yet in a novel such as *The Whirlpool* (1897), aspiring women constitute a symptom of a problematic modernity rather than a point of resistance to it. For this novel the central female character, Alma, becomes an object of narrative contempt.” Harsh’s paper considered the conditions under which a woman could count for Gissing as a “self” and those under which she became a dangerous “other.”

Lewis Moore’s paper was titled “Desire and Divergence: George Gissing’s *Born in Exile* and Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.” Moore noted that “Desire suffuses both novels, desire in many forms that turns on its possessors and inhibits their ability to fulfill their lives. Neither writer suggests an otherworldly source for these unhappy results, but there is in both a suggestion of something akin to fate, a fate lodged in the characters’ physical, emotional, and mental make-ups that ensures their failures.”

In his paper, “Gissing, the *Grisette*, and the Nature of Desire,” Malcolm Allen explored Gissing’s relationship—literarily speaking—with “bought women.” He noted that most critics have examined Gissing’s interest in prostitution in his novels in the context of the author’s biography. Allen’s aim was to place Gissing’s interest in such women in the context of the French *grisette*, “the working-class young woman who may permit herself sexual freedom but who cannot be regarded with pity or contempt.” Allen claimed that “Gissing saw with envy the social freedom granted Parisians, and regarded the artistic license accorded French novelists with envy and respect,” and that “Some of his portraits of women can be seen as responses to, if anglicizations and domestications of, the *grisettes*, those creations of Musset and Murger he saw as representing ‘ideal excellence . . . delightful, healthful, absolutely pure.’”

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### Notes and News

One obscure point in the Gissing genealogy as it was known until this year has apparently been clarified by the Sinden Bequest so copiously commented upon in the *Wakefield Express* and the *Yorkshire Post* last April, but it is not an aspect of his ancestry of which the novelist is likely to have been aware. Unlike his brother Algernon who loved to imagine that his ancestors had once been famous people, Gissing did not care for

genealogical research and distinction. A wealth of genealogical information became available to the present writer when he wrote his essay on the Gissing family and all the allied families on the paternal and maternal sides in the late 1980s, information which was supplied by personal research at St. Catherine's House, Somerset House and County Record Offices, as well as obtained from private sources, and no official source was consciously left untapped. Investigation was carried as far back as possible on both the Gissing and the Bedford sides, which meant, on the Gissing side, no further back than the novelist's great-grandfather, Tobias, the son of Margaret Gissing, née Clark, whose husband had died several years before his birth. Tobias, born in the Suffolk village of Eye on 19 October 1781, married Judith Foulsham of Blythburgh, who was one year his junior, on 15 November 1804, and they had what some contemporaries would have called a goodly number of children: Robert Foulsham (Gissing's grandfather, 1805-1892), John (1808-1874), Mary Ann (1811-1849), Samuel (1814-1838), George (1817-1877), Maria (1820-1839), and Charles (1823-1866). The lives of these seven children were, we thought, satisfactorily charted. The first two and the youngest had married, Maria had died, the other three had remained single. At least this seemed to have been the case of Mary Ann, since the records at St. Catherine's House and the family Bible, which E. K. Rahardt had generously allowed the editors of the *Collected Letters* to consult, were silent about a possible marriage and concurred about her death in 1849 at the age of 38. Further investigation about her condition and potential descent seemed pointless. But Anthony Petyt, starting from the Sinden papers, recently discovered that Gissing's great-aunt did marry in 1845 in London a Suffolk man, two years her junior, William Etridge. She had been living and working for some years at a London address, 26 Cator Square, which has disappeared from modern maps. A daughter, Alice Judith, was born to Mary Ann and William in 1846 at Badingham, where William, a grocer and draper, lived on to the end of his life, having married again and had two daughters by his second wife. The two letters from Mary Ann to her brothers John and George are among the valuable documents in the Sinden bequest. When all is said about her an inexplicable fact remains—why is her death recorded officially as that of Mary Ann Gissing and not under her married name?

Gissing and France is a subject which has appealed to French people interested in Gissing for geographical and cultural reasons. Yet a bibliogra-

phy of writings strictly devoted to the question would not cover much space. In the early twentieth century, when Gabrielle Fleury was still alive and probably despaired of seeing his merits prominently acknowledged in some major periodical, a few worthy attempts were made by capable commentators to give him his due. Émile Henriot wrote a stimulating introduction to the French translation of *Born in Exile*, which Henry-D. Davray had virtually promised he would do, but which, when at long last a similar project materialized, proved to be the work of a respected translator of the period, Marie Canavaggia. In Brussels, a friend of Denise Le Mallier, Simone Bruny, agreed to contribute a solid article on Gissing's works to the learned monthly *Synthèses* and André Maurois, whose books and articles worked like magic on French publishers and editors, upheld Gissing's cause when the time came to honour him on the centenary of his birth. After that the present writer did his best to carry on the good work of his predecessors, and Gissing's novels, volumes of belles-lettres and short stories were given a new lease of life in a language which we are told he spoke with the southern accent. Colin Lovelace, an Englishman who has lived for some years in France with his wife and children, has broken new ground in that, to the best of our knowledge, he is the first Englishman to lecture on Gissing in French in France. He gave his talk on 13 May to the Association France-Grande Bretagne (Pays Basque) at the Golf Club de la Nivelle, the river which flows between St. Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure. His presentation of Gissing was based in part on French publications about Gissing, in particular the Aubier bilingual edition of the *Ryecroft Papers*, and it was broadly biographical, stressing the difficulties that Gissing had to overcome in his private life as well as in his literary career before his originality and distinction were widely recognized. Naturally the connection between Gissing and the Basque country was stressed by the lecturer, who is familiar with the places where Gissing and his French family lived in 1902-03.

There were twenty-seven people present and they were a lively audience who seemed genuinely interested, not to say astonished to learn about Gissing and to realize his status in English letters. After the lecture a number took the address of the Presses Universitaires de Lille with a view to purchasing the French translation of *New Grub Street*. In the afternoon a smaller group of about fifteen people laid flowers on Gissing's grave and they left a grey stone flower pot for future flowers. The Biarritz edition of the regional paper, *Sud-Ouest*, gave the event some publicity and one result



was that Christine Weston, the President of the regional branch of the Association France-Grande Bretagne was contacted by a French teacher of English in St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, M. Daniel Maury, who said he was sorry he was not able to attend and requested a copy of Mr. Lovelace's talk. Mr. Lovelace informs us that he would gladly lecture on Gissing again in France before other branches of the Association of which he is a very active member. He also wishes it to be known that he "would be quite happy to show 'Gissing Journal' visitors the Gissing sites here, i.e. the cemetery, the house in Ciboure and even the house at Ispoure in return say for my petrol (or a lunch!!) which could save them some time in hunting around with a map." His address is

31, rue de Labertranne  
64600 Anglet  
e-mail: [colin.lovelace@numericable.fr](mailto:colin.lovelace@numericable.fr)

Anglet is a seaside resort in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques with a population of about 35,000.

The quest for reprints of Gissing's short stories or translations of them continues. Until the advent of the internet, chance was the scholar's best ally, but Cyril Wyatt, through other means, has traced a hitherto unrecorded Indian reprint of "Christopherson," a late Gissing short story and one of his very best. This reprint was published in a collection of modern short stories in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras by Longmans, Green and Co in 1932; it is the first in the volume. Notes on "Christopherson" are printed on pp. 126-27. The second of C. M. Wyatt's discoveries is the ninth edition (1960) of *Short Stories*, Band 42, in Langenscheidts fremdsprachliche Lektüre (Berlin: Langenscheidt KG). "The Justice and the Vagabond" is reprinted on pp. 34-42.

For greater clarity's sake a bibliographical note to Roger Milbrandt's leading article in our January 2009 number should perhaps have informed readers that facsimiles of Gissing's "Accounts of Books" for the years 1880-1898 were published in Part 18 (1934) of *The Colophon*. They were at the time, and remained for years, the only easily accessible source of information on his income. The owner of the original "conspectus," as Gissing called it in his diary entry for 20 September 1895, was George Matthew Adams, a major Gissing collector of the interwar years. The originals of the "Accounts of Books" for the years 1899-1903, once in the

Pforzheimer Library in New York, are now held by the Lilly Library. It is interesting to note that Alfred Gissing sold these accounts so carefully compiled by his father several years before he completed, in the late 1930s, his biography, only extant to-day in typescript form.

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## Recent Publications

### Volume

Gissing's third published novel was never reset in one volume, so when it became known to us that the Dodo Press had reprinted *Isabel Clarendon* in one volume selling at £10.97, we procured a copy. The girl on the front cover is assuredly very different from the heroine imagined by Gissing. As for the text, it covers about 380 pages and though no misprint has so far been spotted, it can fairly be described as an unprecedented typographical eyesore. The first line of paragraphs is not indented, and paragraphs are separated by objectionable blanks. The Dodo Press does not care for the aesthetic aspect of its books, which are books on demand.

### Articles, reviews, etc.

Francesco Misitano, "Tristia: Il tramonto di un astro della cultura," *Calabria Sconosciuta*, January-March 2009, p. 6. Obituary of Francesco Badolato with a photograph of him.

Anthony Curtis, "Book Reviews," *Book Collector*, Spring 2009, pp. 144-45. Review of Martha Vogeler's book on *Austin Harrison and the English Review*.

Jerry White, "In Brief," *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 April 2009, p. 33. Review of Michelle Allen's *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London*. Two chapters are especially praised, one on *Our Mutual Friend*, the other on *The Nether World*: the latter "picks its way over the stones of Clerkenwell [...] in the wake of slum clearance and road building in that crowded parish. Sanitary geographies aside, [both chapters] are worth the price of the book on their own."

- Ian Critchley, "Pick of the Paperbacks," *Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 2009, page unknown. Review of the paperback edition of Delany's biography of Gissing.
- Andrew Robinson, "Student shame recalled in Gissing memorabilia," *Yorkshire Post*, 23 April 2009, p. 3. With photo of young Gissing taken at Brown's studio, Manchester, in 1875, exhibited at the Gissing Centre, Wakefield.
- Victoria Turton, "Rare Gissing Picture Gift to Museum," *Wakefield Express*, 24 April 2009, p. 18. Photograph of Anthony Petyt holding the photo of Gissing mentioned above.
- Martha Vogeler, "Book Reviews," *Choice*, April 2009, page unknown. Review of Lewis D. Moore's critical analysis of Gissing.
- Tina Brown, "Books on Reputation: The vagaries of reputation are superbly portrayed in these novels," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 May 2009, p. W8. The five novels, an abstract of which is given by Tina Brown, are *The Portrait of a Lady* (Henry James, 1881), *Parade's End* (Ford Madox Ford, 1924-28), *Little Dorrit* (Charles Dickens, 1857), *New Grub Street* (Gissing, 1891), and *Middlemarch* (George Eliot, 1873).
- Tim Radford, "Weather Watch," *Guardian*, 2 May 2009, page unknown. A passage from *By the Ionian Sea* in which Gissing describes the "brutto tempo" (beastly weather) he had to put up with during his memorable journey from Catanzaro to Squillace.
- Olivier Bonnefon, "Ils rendent un culte au five o'clock tea," *Sud-Ouest* (Bordeaux daily paper), 12 May 2009, p. 22 (in the Biarritz section). With photograph of Christine Weston and Colin Lovelace. On the Association France Grande-Bretagne and the talk on Gissing to be given next day (see "Notes and News").
- Chris Burgess, "Book review: the compelling life of George Gissing," *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 15 May 2009, page unknown. Review of Delany's book.
- Sue Arnold, "Audio," *Guardian*, 23 May 2009, p. 8 of the Review Section. Review of *New Grub Street*, read by Peter Joyce (22 hours, unabridged, Assembled Stories, £38.49).

Pierfranco Bruni, "Dalla Calabria a Taranto nella Magna Grecia di George Gissing," *La Calabria*, 25 May 2009, page unknown. A good article.

Claire Harman, "Coloured like the moon," *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 June 2009, p. 23. Review of *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 5, 1929-32, Hogarth Press, 2009.

Stuart N. Clarke (ed.), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 5, Hogarth Press, 2009. The correspondence between V. Woolf and Alfred Gissing, which lasted several weeks in the *Times Literary Supplement*, is reprinted, but it is impossible to side with Woolf, who cared little for accuracy and proves once more to be a crotchety person.

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### Tailpiece

#### Mrs. Stratton and her sons

Mrs. Stratton arrived at Knightswell, bringing her youngest boy, a ten-year-old, whose absence from school was explained by recent measles. [...] At the age of forty Mrs. Stratton had four children, all boys; the two eldest were already at Woolwich and Sandhurst respectively, the third at Harrow, extracting such strategic science as Thucydides could supply, boastful of a name traceable in army lists three generations back. These four lads were offspring whereof no British matron could feel ashamed: perfect in physical development, striking straight from the shoulder, with skulls to resist a tomahawk, red-cheeked and hammer-fisted. In the nursery they had fought each other to the tapping of noses; at school they fought all and sundry up through every grade of pugilistic championship. From infancy they handled the fowling-piece, and killed with the coolness of hereditary talent. Side by side they walked in quick step, as to the beating of a drum; eyes direct, as looking along a barrel; ears pricked for the millionth echo of an offensive remark. At cricket they drove cannon-balls; milder games were the target of their scorn. Admirable British youths!

[...] With the two eldest she was a sort of sister. They walked with her about the garden with their arms over her shoulders. [...] They were stalwart young ruffians, these two, with immaculate complexions and the smooth roundness of feature which entitles men to be called handsome by ladies who are addicted to the use of that word. Mrs. Stratton would rather have been their mother than have borne Shakespeare and Michael Angelo as twins.

*Isabel Clarendon*, Vol. I, pp. 224-26, and Vol. II, p. 39.

