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

Thomas Waller Gissing before his Move to Wakefield: Some Materials towards his Biography

BOUWE POSTMUS
University of Amsterdam

To the end of his brief life Thomas Waller Gissing remained grateful to his benefactress, Miss Ellen Sophia Whittington (1795-1862),¹ whose kind and timely financial assistance allowed him to attend Harvey's Academy² in Halesworth (see picture), his birthplace. He included a dedicatory sonnet to her in the first published volume of his poems,³ expressing his great appreciation of her benevolent encouragement. When in 1867 his younger daughter was born, he called her Ellen Sophia Gissing, in another late recognition of the great kindness of the woman whose life had



Harvey's Academy 2007

been largely spent in companionship with Thomas Waller Gissing's aunt Emily Waller. Had it not been for Miss Whittington's generous offer, the son of a Halesworth and Badingham shoemaker would have had to face the world with no more than the very limited education provided by the National school at Badingham. In principle Harvey's Academy catered for boarders, but a few day pupils were allowed to share in the more privileged schooling intended for the sons of wealthier and socially more ambitious parents. As the 1841 Census confirms that 11-year-old TWG was still living with his parents at Badingham, it would seem logical to assume that some time after March 1841 he became a boarder at the Academy, run by Joseph⁴ and Harriet Harvey, assisted by some of their children. There were never more than about twenty boys at any given time in the history of the Academy, which made for a most attractive educational environment, compared to the average schools of the day.

It is likely that not long after his fifteenth birthday Thomas Gissing left the studious security of Joseph Harvey's Academy to enter upon an apprenticeship with the chemist William Sawyer (1815-1883), in the Suffolk capital of Ipswich, some 30 miles south of Halesworth. Traditionally chemists and druggists had been admitted to their calling by serving an apprenticeship of up to six years. A master expected a payment (of about £15) in return for his willingness to initiate his new apprentice into the secrets of his trade, besides clothing, feeding, lodging and looking after him properly. The text of the indenture drawn up between them may well have contained the following traditional formulations:

that he the said [Thomas Waller Gissing] shall and will faithfully serve his said Master his Secrets keep, his lawful Commands gladly obey and do; hurt to his Master he shall not do, nor suffer to be done by others, when it is in his power to prevent the same. His Master's goods he shall not waste or embezzle, the same give or lend without leave; Day and Night absent himself from his said Master's service nor do any other act, matter, or thing whatsoever, to the prejudice of his said Master but in all things shall demean and behave himself towards his said master and all his family as a faithful Apprentice ought to do.⁵

From a membership list of the Phonographic Society⁶ for the year 1844 we learn that the apprentice Thomas Gissing resided at Fore Street, Ipswich, in Wm. Sawyer's chemist's shop. Under the terms of his contract T. W. Gissing would have completed his apprenticeship by 1849, but it may have been terminated prematurely as we find Wm. Sawyer in Ipswich goal for debt⁷ in December 1849, suffering the supreme Victorian indignity and disgrace of bankruptcy, while his apprentice has found himself a new master at Leicester.⁸ Competition among retail chemists and druggists was fierce⁹ and we find that in 1844 there were at least thirteen chemists in Ipswich (with a population of about 27,000). It may be worthy of remark that, with the exception of Leicester (population of 60,600 in 1851), TWG spent his working years in towns all of comparable size: Ipswich had a population of about 33,000, Worcester 27,528, and Wakefield 33,117 (Census 1851).

The period from 1841, when the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain was established, to 1868 when the Pharmacy Act was passed, was of great significance in raising the status of the corporate profession. The practice of pharmacy was gradually elevated from the rank of an occupation to that of a profession, particularly by the institution of the Pharmaceutical Society and the introduction of qualifying examinations to ensure the professional competence of candidates entering the ranks of its registered members.¹⁰ Though in his early years as an apprentice TWG must have

relied on the old system¹¹ for learning his artisan's trade, depending chiefly on the good will and competence of his master, he clearly welcomed the winds of change and after the brief spell with a Leicester¹² chemist, he moved to Worcester¹³ in 1851, joining the firm of Whitfield & Son, where he found a stimulating environment conducive to more comprehensive and advanced study by way of preparation for the new examinations. John Lockley Whitfield (1795-1877) was educated at Shrewsbury school under headmaster Samuel Butler, and had been associated with the chemist's shop at 44 High Street, Worcester, since the early 1820s. In 1851 he employed six men. He was a prominent Worcester citizen, a Member of the Forty-Eight and a land-tax commissioner.

Not less significant was TWG's meeting with a young Worcester girl by the name of Margaret Bedford. From the 1851 Census we learn that 18-year-old Margaret was employed as a dressmaker's assistant by four Barnes sisters in their millinery and dressmaking shop at 12 Foregate Street, a minute's walk away from the Whitfield's chemist's shop. Alternatively, he may first have seen her at or near George Thomas Everill's cutlery shop at 81 High Street, where Margaret's sister, Elizabeth Bedford, was a shop assistant or later still, when Elizabeth had her own "lace, hosiery, baby linen and millinery establishment"¹⁴ at 80 High Street, a mere stone's throw from the chemist's. However, a copy¹⁵ of TWG's *Miscellaneous Poems* inscribed to "Miss M. Bedford, with the affectionate regards of the Author. March 1853," confirms that by then he had befriended the young woman who was to become his wife.

At Worcester, too, TWG met William Medley (1826-1875),¹⁶ employed as an assistant by Charles Bird, another chemist of the city. Only three years older than Gissing, Medley was a keen botanist, who became his close friend, often accompanying him on his botanizing expeditions. He remained a bachelor and was named as executor in TWG's will of 1862. Medley became a certificated pharmaceutical chemist in 1853 and in 1858 he acquired his own pharmacy at 21 Iron Gate, Derby, where he died in 1875.

When TWG passed the Major examination of the Pharmaceutical Society in 1856, he was entitled to style himself a Pharmaceutical Chemist and immediately after he moved to Wakefield where he started his own business in Westgate. Five years later he had the satisfaction, together with other chemists, of "finding themselves officially listed in the Census of 1861 among the professional class, as 'persons who render direct service to mankind.'"¹⁷

It is appropriate to remember that the apprenticeship years of TWG coincided with what came to be called the “Hungry Forties” when Chartism was playing a crucial role as a mass radical movement, seeking to extend the franchise to every Englishman over 21, and to improve the working conditions of the working classes. We cannot help but admire the intellectual curiosity, social commitment and energy of the young apprentice, who after a regular working day of twelve hours, actively engaged himself with the political issues of his day. We find a reference to him in *The Northern Star, and National Trades Journal* of December 18, 1847, when the leading Chartist Ernest Jones (1819-1869) answers a legal query of his, and in April 1849 the same paper publishes his name as one of the contributors to The National Victim and Defence Committee to the Chartist Public.¹⁸ The Committee was set up when, in the wake of the Chartist petition presented at Kennington Common in April 1848, many leading Chartists (among them the above-mentioned Ernest Jones, James Leach, Peter Murray McDouall, John West and George White) had been arrested for “advocating their glorious principles” and condemned to languish “in the dungeons of their oppressors” for one or two years, leaving their “law-made widows, and nearly one hundred orphans” dependent on the voluntary contributions received by the Victim and Defence Committee.¹⁹ TWG’s gift of a shilling leaves little doubt about his sympathies for the Chartist ideals and principles promoted by the leading Chartist organ of his time and it demonstrates his willingness to put his money where his mouth was.

In addition to his pursuit of radical political interests, TWG found time to cultivate his love of poetry, and it was John Saunders, the editor of *The People’s Journal*, who accepted the following two sonnets for publication in April and June 1849:

APRIL:—A SONNET.²⁰

BY T. W. GISSING.

April! thou month of vernal showers, all hail!
Thou sweet beginning of the gentle spring,
Right happily we greet thy opening;
With violets meek thou fill’st the smiling dale,
The cuckoo[’s] mellow note is heard along the vale;
Thy cheering sun deprives the harsh March wind
Of all its rigour, and thou leav’st behind,
Stern, hoary Winter, with looks so shrunk and pale,
That poverty’s hard lot is doubly drear.
April! we love upon a beauteous day

To roam through meads, where simple lambkins stray,
The lowing of the distant herd to hear;
To listen to the shepherd's homely lay,
As by the rippling brook he takes his lonely way.

SONNET TO ROBERT EMMETT.²¹

By T. W. GISSING.

Ireland— (renown'd for beauty, wit, and grace,—
For valiant deeds that shall outlive all Time,—
For vices that contaminate her clime,)
Gave birth to thee, an honour to thy race.
Few men so great, can thy poor country trace;
For who can think on thee, and then not feel,
A thrilling glow, a burning, holy zeal,
The cause for which thou died likewise t' embrace.
Thy country from her yoke, thou would'st have free'd,
Staking thy *all*, thy *life*, upon the cast,
But she, unmindful of the Godlike deed,
And all forgetful of the wretched past,
Decreed that thou, her noblest son, should bleed,
Thus forging chains, for long, long years to last.

Harriet Martineau, Charles Mackay, Goodwyn Barmby,²² and W. J. Linton were some of the better known contributors to *The People's Journal* and it was the latter, Willam James Linton (1812-1897), with whom TWG would correspond in later years. Linton²³ was a fellow Chartist, poet and the leading Victorian wood-engraver, whose most important works were “botanical studies for his ... *Ferns of the Lake District* (1864) and the views and other subjects for his wife's (=Eliza Lynn Linton's) *The Lake Country* (1864).”²⁴ TWG's two letters to Linton have been preserved and are now in The National Library of Australia²⁵ and they are included here for the light they may shed on the botanical interests the two men shared:

Wakefield

May 29/66

Sir

As I have little doubt that your & Mrs Linton's beautiful work (*The Lake Country*)²⁶ will be wanted in a different form for general visitors to that district I take the liberty of sending you a few localities for plants that have come under my own observation. From the general lists given I am led to believe that the general

distribution of plants in the Lake district has not been much attended to, – better records may exist in M.S. than have been published.

Yours is the best I have seen.

May I ask whether by “The Screes” – Mrs Linton²⁷ invariably means the Wastwater Screes?

I am
Yrs respectfully,
T. W. Gissing

W. J. Linton Esq.

Teesdalia nudicaulis beginning of the Screes at WWater Strands end.

Menyanthes trifoliata Seascale Moor.

Orchis ustulata – Slopes above Silverdale.

Habenaria virile – do. & near Hatherslack Tower.

Habenaria bifolia } both abundant about Arnside &

Habenaria chlorantha } Silverdale. Specially the H. bifolia.

Narcissus poeticus – Meadow near Arnside – probably only naturalized.

Convallaria polygonatum – Wood between Silverdale & Arnside.

Polystichum Lanchitis – within a few miles of Burton-in-Kendal. I believe on some part of Farlton Knot – I have received living fronds.

Wakefield
June 11/66

Dear Sir

Excuse my delay in acknowledging your kind present of the Ferns of the Lakes.²⁸

It was very gratifying to receive it & you must accept my very best thanks.

I have been a bit of an author myself & send for your acceptance a copy of a work²⁹ similar to your own but unfortunately for me not possessing equal merit inasmuch as I was not able to draw for my own engravings.

To this letter I append a further list of fresh plants or new habitats which *may* be useful at some time.

A “mutual friend” – Mr Barmby,³⁰ desires to be kindly remembered to you.³¹ I am much obliged for your kind invitation & if ever able shall have much pleasure in availing myself of it.

I am
faithfully yours

T. W. Gissing

[W. J. Linton Esq.]

At this stage it may be useful to make the important point that in Victorian England the study of botany was a major and integral part of a chemist's training. For too long TWG has been called a chemist AND a botanist, as if these were separate spheres of interest. He may certainly have derived great recreational pleasure from the botanical studies, which took him to Devon, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, Dorset, Monmouthshire, Westmoreland, Durham, Cumbria, Suffolk, and Yorkshire, but the extension of his knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs and plants was and remained significantly dependent on these field trips. In this context it is significant that TWG—a club man if ever there was one—was one of those who, on 22 April 1853, established the Worcester branch of the Phytological Club (in connection with the Pharmaceutical Society).³² Mr. John Severn Walker, another Worcester chemist, was appointed its first chairman, while TWG became its secretary.³³

In a lecture to the British Pharmaceutical Conference at Nottingham in 1866, Robert Bentley, professor of botany at King's College, London, and President of the Pharmaceutical Society, spoke of the study of botany in connection with pharmacy. He mentioned the close relations which exist between botany and pharmacy, and considered some of the more immediate and direct advantages which the pharmacist would derive from a detailed knowledge of botany, claiming that at that time there were four hundred species of plants, some parts of which, or their products and secretions, were employed as remedial agents, and a considerable proportion of which entered into the official preparations of the British Pharmacopœia. Bentley went on to claim that "it cannot but be regarded as important that those who have constantly to handle and make use of these substances should be able to recognise the species of plants which yield them, to know the countries from which they are derived, to describe their general characters and structure, their position in the vegetable kingdom, and their medical properties and uses."³⁴

After the collapse of his Chartist hopes and his move to Worcester in 1851 the focus of TWG's activities shifts from the political to the poetical and botanical, the latter chiefly as a consequence of the increased emphasis on his preparations for the pharmaceutical examinations. This decade sees the publication of four volumes of poetry,³⁵ the fourth of which clearly reflects the discovery of love, in the person of Margaret Bedford, his future wife. In the 1850s he is also beginning to contribute notes and articles³⁶ to publications like the *Pharmaceutical Journal*, and *The Phytologist*, and after passing his final pharmaceutical exam in 1856 he becomes a very

active member of the Pharmaceutical Society. Once he establishes himself in Wakefield, it is not long before he becomes heavily involved in the social and political life of the town.

APPENDICES

I

We give the text of one of TGW's poems dedicated to his benefactress, Miss Ellen Sophia Whittington:

DEDICATORY SONNET.

LADY! To Thee I owe that little share
Of knowledge, which to me has fall'n. Through Youth,
And timid Childhood, ere the seeds of Truth
Had taken root, with unabated care,
Thou tended'st me. Thy gentle heart, laid bare
By many gen'rous deeds, has ever shed
Its watchful influence o'er my life; and led
Me on my path, with kindness most rare.
To Thee! Fair Lady, falt'ringly I bring
These humble first fruits of my bashful muse,—
I bring them as a grateful offering
For benefits which I can never lose.
Whate'er is *good*, springs from the noble part
Thou'st borne: —whate'er is *bad* comes from my wayward heart.

II

To William Medley

Medley! our friendship is not of a day;
Nor is it bound, I hope, by fragile band.
When here alone, with kindred far away,
Thou wert the first to give thy kindly hand.
My friend! Since then we've breasted rugged hills,
And wandered pleasantly in summer woods;
Together we have traced the upland rills,
And basked 'midst heather where the cony broods.
We've rifled nature's garden, in pursuit
Of floral gems; and reaped the pleasant fruit,

In memoried rambles o'er the social glass.
Distance may part us, but the past we know
Makes future years more happy as they pass—
And may our friendship greenly flourish so.

III

FLOWERS IN TEESDALE IN JUNE

BY T. W. GISSING

Although Teesdale is a district that has been pretty well worked botanically, it may be interesting to some collectors, more particularly the younger ones, to know what plants were to be found in flower there at the beginning of last June. I have only given localities in a very general way, because of the unscrupulous abuse of the knowledge of the exact place of growth by some men, who, from their position and botanical knowledge, ought to be more careful of their own reputation, and of the preservation of British plants. Some men who often visit the Teesdale district, are absolutely disliked by the natives, on account of their greedy ways—they even go so far as to *eradicate* a plant rather than leave it for some one else to find. They are described by one or two local botanists (not *collectors*,) as “cunning, greedy old men.”

I may say that the course of our journey was, from Barnard Castle, through Lartington, Cotherstone, and Romalldkirk, to the turnpike before crossing the Tees to enter Middleton-in-Teesdale, thence on the Yorkshire side of the river, by Crossthwaite Scars, through Holwick, by Holwick Scars, and across the meadows to Winch Bridge (which, by the way, is not marked on the Ordnance Map,) then for a short distance up the bed of the Tees, crossing to the Durham side, and along the high road to High Force Inn, thence through the woods to High Force, crossing the river above the fall into Yorkshire, and down about a mile to the foot bridge, and back to High Force Inn.

This was our first day. On the second we left the inn and kept to the road for somewhat over a mile, then turning into the enclosed pastures, keeping to the Durham side of the Tees, we passed Cronkley Bridge, under Cronkley Scars, along Widdy Bank, up the front and over the top of Falcon Clints, dropping down to Cauldron Snout, close to which is the junction of Yorkshire, Durham, and Westmoreland, these counties being separated by Maizebeck and the Tees. Here we crossed by the foot bridge half way down

Cauldron Snout into Westmoreland, and then over Maizebeck again into Yorkshire, thence over Cronkley Fell down to White Force (now dry) and the Tees, on by the river to the top of High Force, over again into Durham and up through the woods to High Force Inn. Our walk this day was shortened by a heavy storm that came on about noon, and wetted us all to the skin. In the evening (after partial drying) we rode to Barnard Castle to sleep.

On the third day we walked along the Durham side of the Tees to the "Pay Bridge," (as it is locally called,) just below Egglestone Abbey, crossed to see the Abbey, and then kept along the road to the corner of Rokeby Park, thence by the river side to the junction of the Tees and Greta, over the stone bridge by "The Dairy," past Mortham Tower, and down to Greta Bridge, which looks deserted and smells of mould and decay; by Tutta Beck, past the Roman Camp, back to the Greta, and along the bed of the river to Brignall, passing on our way the very lovely ruins of the old church,³⁷ with the little square walled-in churchyard, and the graves hidden in the long rank grass. Then, on through the wood by Scargill Cliff and Brignall Banks out into the open meadows, and finally back into the Roman Road (which we left at Greta Bridge,) and up to Bowes, where we saw "Do-the-boys Hall," and dined, and then by rail to Wakefield.

The following list contains only plants that are not common in almost every district, and only those found in flower.

Geum rivale, from Greta Bridge up the valley.

G. intermedium, occasionally.

Gentiana verna, about Cronkley, much less abundant than I expected.

Potentilla fruticosa, very abundant about High Force.

Thalictrum alpinum, Cronkley Fell.

Trollius europæus, very abundant. Apparently taking the place of common species of *Ranunculus*.

Cardamine amara, occasionally.

Helianthemum canum, Cronkley Fell.

Viola palustris, frequent.

V. lutea, very abundant, and all shades of colour, from deep purple to bright yellow.

Arenaria verna, frequent.

Geranium sylvaticum, common.

G. lucidum, frequent, but not abundant.

Anthyllis vulneraria, frequent.

Prunus Padus, frequent.

Dryas octopetala, very sparingly on Cronkley Fell.

Sanguisorba officinalis, frequent.

Pyrus Aria, very frequent.

P. aucuparia, frequent.

Ribes Grossularia, apparently truly wild, occurring very far from either cultivation or habitation.

Saxifraga granulata, frequent.

S. hypnoides, frequent.

S. tridactylites, frequent.

S. stellaris, sparingly, near Falcon Clints.

S. aizoides, frequent.

Chrysosplenium alternifolium, sparingly.

Myrrhis odorata, abundant.

Galium boreale, Banks of the Tees.

Gnaphalium dioicum, frequent.

Campanula glomerata, near Barnard Castle.

Menyanthes trifoliata, occasionally.

Veronica montana, frequent.

Bartsia alpina, Cronkley and Widdy Bank.

Pedicularis palustris, frequent.

Myosotis sylvatica, frequent.

Pinguicula vulgaris, frequent.

Primula farinosa, abundant.

Chenopodium Bonus-Henricus, frequent.

Polygonum viviparum, very sparingly.

Juniperus communis, abundant and remarkably fine.

Tofieldia palustris, plentiful in a few places.

Eriophorum vaginatum, frequent.

Carex capillaris, Widdy Bank, &c.

Polypodium Dryopteris, frequent.

P. Phegopteris, frequent.

Allosurus crispus, frequent.

Asplenium viride, Falcon Clints.

Lycopodium alpinum, frequent.

L. Selago, frequent.

L. selaginoides, frequent.

Equisetum variegatum, Winch Bridge.

Woodsia and *Polystichum Lonchitis* may still be found in inaccessible places, but from my experience they have both disappeared from all parts easily and safely scaled.

Wakefield, August 4th, 1864.

From: *The Naturalist: Journal of the West-Riding Consolidated Naturalists' Society*, Vol. I, May 1864 to May 1865 (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Huddersfield: Geo. Tindall, 1865), pp. 151-54.

Brignall Old Church

I

Still! so still! fit place for the dead!
Nothing unholy to raise a sigh!
Playfully o'er its rocky bed
Greta's stream goes tumbling by.
From rugged crags far overhead,
Summer woods send a smothered sigh;
And winter brings the leaves they shed
To hide the knolls where darlings lie.

II

Gently, gently, the long grass waves,
In heated air of summer noon;
And overtops the rustic graves,
Where grief so oft has made its moan.

III

The church, tho' crumbling, guards the place,
And like a watchful mother stands,
Protecting with its sacred grace,
This little spot from ruthless hands.

IV

The drowny hum of woodland bee—
The noiseless flight of songless bird,
The lull of insect minstrelsy,
From trees where leaves are barely stirred—

V

Bring softened memories of death,
Of life and love gone long ago;
And angels named with whispered breath,
Bring heart to heart again below.

VI

Still, very still! farewell! farewell!
'Mid winter snow and summer gleam,
May holy peace for ever dwell
With Brignall graves by Greta's stream.

July, 1864

IV

A Poet-Pharmacist **By J. W. Stainer, Ph.C., F.C.S.**

It does not appear that pharmacy has contributed very greatly to literature. By literature I mean the art of letters, not its use for expressing scientific investigation. The choice use of language for exciting the emotions of the mind and portrayal of animated and various human sentiment is very different from the narration of studious judgments of a court of law or the findings of precise science. Poet-pharmacists are few and hard to find, while essayists and novelists in pharmacy are almost as rare. Literary gifts do not seem to be in the pharmaceutical breed. We engender men of science and medicine very often; indeed, it may fairly be said that we are a stage in their evolution. We turn out Nonconformist ministers in abundance, and Clergy for the Church, and occasionally actors, artists, and soldiers; teachers, too, are very commonly of pharmaceutical ancestry. A poet-pharmacist with a distinguished literary son is worth remembering.



THOMAS WALLER GISSING

At the British Pharmaceutical Conference, in social intercourse, I frequently mentioned the name of Gissing. I found too often that his name excited no comment or only a languid recognition that such a man had existed, but what he wrote and who he was my companions scarcely knew. Yet the father, Thomas Waller Gissing, who followed our calling, was no mean poet, and the son is so highly esteemed by men of literary taste that they consider him one of the most gifted writers of his day. I had the good fortune recently to come into possession of an old glass photograph of the father, and the present illustration is a copy made from it. My father³⁸ was an assis-

tant with the elder Gissing at the time when the son George was born. This occurred some seventy years ago, when the elder Gissing had a pharmacy at Wakefield. My father used to speak of him as an extremely quiet man given to botany and cultured reading. He published several poems, which

appeared in various periodicals of the time or in the “Wakefield Free Press.” Thomas Gissing had a few choice friends among the more intellectual of his townsmen, but he was not a Yorkshireman, nor popular or at home among them. His poems appeared in book form under the title of “Metrical Compositions, by T. W. G.,” and “Margaret and Other Poems, by an East Anglian.” His son George showed great promise as a boy. He and his father seem to have been intimate companions while he was young, the father reading the more noble authors to the lad on Sunday mornings in his garden. He gained a scholarship and went to Manchester to college, but, alas! fell into bad company, and was ignominiously expelled. But for this bad start in life, it is considered by his friends that he would have been one of the foremost classical scholars of his day. The sombre disposition which the son inherited tinged his literary work, and the sadness of many of his books makes his novels unpopular to-day; but as literature they are amongst the best. The “Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft” reveal his inner mind, and are wonderfully charming and full of literary grace. His best-known novels are “New Grub Street,” “Thyrza,” and “The Nether World.”

The Chemist and Druggist, 8 December 1923, p. 795.

¹She died at Ynystawe, Llangyfelach, at the home of Trevor Addams Williams (1828-1882) and Emily Waller Williams (1810-1867), and remained a loyal friend to her *protégé* until the very end of her life. In the year of her death Miss Whittington’s name occurs in the list of subscribers to TWG’s, *The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood*, illustrated by J. E. Sowerby (Wakefield: R. Micklethwaite, 1862). Her subscription for six copies was the largest of all.

²In an 1820 brochure Harvey recommended his Academy as follows: “At Mr Harvey’s classical, mathematical, and commercial academy, Halesworth, young gentlemen are liberally boarded, tenderly treated, and carefully instructed in every department of genteel and useful education.”

³*Miscellaneous Poems* by T.W.G. (Framlingham: W. D. Freeman, 1851), p. 1. See Appendix I. TWG repeated the gesture in his second volume, *Metrical Compositions* (1853), which opened with “Dedicatory Stanzas. To E.W.”

⁴Joseph Harvey (Ufford, Suffolk, 1797-after 1861, Halesworth). He first published a *Key* to the parsing exercises contained in Lindley Murray’s grammatical exercises and in his abridgment of English grammar (London: 1821). In 1841 he followed this up by an *Abridgment of Murray’s English Grammar, Improved, with an Enlarged Appendix, containing Exercises in Orthography, Parsing, Syntax, and Punctuation, much more numerous than in former editions of this Grammar* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.).

⁵Colin A. Russell, “Edward Frankland and the Cheapside Chemists of Lancaster: an Early Victorian Pharmaceutical Apprenticeship,” *Annals of Science*, 35 (1978), p. 254. Edward Frankland (1825-1899) was one of the leading Victorian chemists. On his fifteenth birthday he started a six-year apprenticeship with a chemist at Lancaster. From 1852 to 1857 he was the first Professor of Chemistry at Owens College, Manchester.

⁶Established by Isaac Pitman, who in his *Manual of Phonography* (1840) set out a system of writing by sound, as a natural method of writing by signs that represent the sounds of language, specially adapted to the English language as a complete system of phonetic shorthand. Pitman was a keen spelling reformer too, who developed a phonetic system that he actively and successfully promoted. In the spring of 1845 there were 500 pupils of phonography in Ipswich, and it is likely that TWG was one of them. According to Joseph Pitman (Isaac's brother) there was no town or city in the kingdom that could boast of a greater number of true and zealous phonographers. Cp. *Phonotypic Journal* for the year 1845, vol. 4 (Bath: Isaac Pitman, 1845) 100.

⁷*The Jurist*, for the Year 1849, Vol. XIII, Part II (London: S. Sweet, *et al.*, 1850), pp. 518, 528.

Sawer was to bounce back and later tried his luck as a chemist in another part of the country (we find him in Stroud, Glos., in 1853) and he eventually returned to Nayland in his native Suffolk, where he successfully combined his pharmaceutical activities with those of honorary secretary and librarian of the local Literary Institute. On his retirement in 1879 he returned to Ipswich.

⁸The Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee (whose secretary was Collet Dobson Collet [1813-1898], the father of George Gissing's close friend Clara Collet [1860-1948]), was actively promoted by the Chartist/Secularist/Socialist G. J. Holyoake's *The Reasoner: Journal of Free Thought and Positive Philosophy*. In the number for Wednesday, 19 December 1849, p. 378, the Committee gratefully acknowledged the contribution of 1/ by "T. W. Gissing, Leicester." TWG's subscription to *The Reasoner* is one of many indications of TWG's radical sympathies during his apprenticeship. His attendance at a Chartist rally in the New Hall, Leicester, where the ultra-radical and abolitionist, George Thompson, M.P. spoke, is another.

The titles of some of the poems in his volume *Miscellaneous Poems* clearly indicate how poetically fruitful the Leicester year had been for him, e.g. "Braunstone," "On Hearing George Thompson Speak in the New Hall, Leicester," "Kirby Muxloe Castle, Leicestershire," and "Sonnet.—On Bradgate Hall." Also, cp. note 12.

⁹The bankruptcy of his master must have been a first warning of the financial risks associated with the chemist's trade. Though the professional status of the properly educated chemist had clearly been much improved between 1841 and 1868, the financial prospects would remain fairly bleak. In a letter to Joseph Ince F.L.S., who had been invited to lecture to the British Pharmaceutical Conference at Nottingham in August 1866 on the subject of "Ethics of the Extension of the Chemists' Trade," TWG leaves little doubt about his grave concerns about the income of the best educated pharmaceutical chemist. He strikes a somewhat disdainful note in the enumeration of the various solutions tried to improve their often desperate financial situation, but there is no doubt that he feels some sympathy for colleagues who tended to diversify in order to cope with competition. Ten years after starting his own business in Wakefield, TWG is clearly speaking from his own experience when he expresses his discontent and disgust about his comparatively miserable income:

"Dear Sir,—In the above subject [Ethics of Trade Extension] I think one point should be particularly considered, and that is the increasingly mixed character of the business conducted by most of the best educated chemists. My belief is that this feature will become every year more marked, and I believe one of the main reasons of the development is the comparatively miserable incomes that even the best business yield when confined entirely to drugs.

The most intelligent men (especially if they have a little capital) are the first to rebel against the restricted form of business: they feel disgusted to see men around them in other businesses with no education (compared with their own) amassing wealth easily, whilst they may go on through a long life and barely live.

Whether any law compelling surgeons to give up dispensing would alter it, will be much discussed. My opinion is that *that* would affect only a few, and that the great mass of pharmacutists and non-pharmacutists would still be left in the same condition. As it is, the thing crops out in every form. One man makes soda water; another indulges in oils and colours; another does a private wine trade; another pushes some proprietary article; others become manure makers; and so on. But it all tends to one thing, and that is to prove the discontent of the most intelligent of our business with their remuneration.” (*Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions*, second series, vol. VIII, 1866-67 (London: John Churchill, 1867), p. 149.

¹⁰Frederick Kurzer, “George S. V. Wills and the Westminster College of Chemistry and Pharmacy: A Chapter in Pharmaceutical Education in Great Britain,” *Medical History*, 2007, vol. 51, p. 477.

¹¹Kurzer, pp. 482-83: “the completion of a plain apprenticeship continued to be a sufficient qualification for owning or managing a retail pharmacy [until 1868].”

¹²We know for certain that by the autumn of 1849 TWG had established himself in Leicester. His (abbreviated) name occurs a number of times in George Holyoake’s Chartist and socialist weekly *The Reasoner*. In the number for 21 November 1849 he is mentioned as a contributor to the *Reasoner*’s Shilling List, set up to save the weekly, whose existence was under severe threat: “T.W.G., Leicester (quarterly).” On 26 December 1849 there is another reference to TWG in the correspondence column of *The Reasoner*: “Intimations. Received. “Men of Action,” by T. W. Gissing; and, finally, on January 30, 1850, in the same column of *The Reasoner*: “Intimations. Received. – T.W.G., Leicester, and another or two, intend sending all the clergymen of Leicester (of all denominations) copies of the *Reasoner* as often as they can.”

¹³Though we find TWG with his parents in Church street at Badingham, at the time of the 1851 Census (30 March), his residence at Worcester is confirmed by a reference in *The Phytologist: a Popular Miscellany*, vol. IV (London: John van Voorst, 1853), p. 815: “The President read the following note from Mr. T. W. Gissing, dated Worcester, November 3, 1852: ‘Observing ... that Messrs. Shipley and Reynolds had seen *Veronica spicata* in North Wales, I was reminded that I had discovered the same plant by the Severn, in *September, 1851*, about four miles from Worcester.’ [author’s italics].”

¹⁴*M. Billing’s Directory and Gazetteer of the County of Worcester* (Birmingham: M. Billing: 1855), p. 34.

¹⁵In the collection of Pierre Coustillas.

¹⁶In *Margaret and Other Poems* by an East Anglian (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1855), there is a poem dedicated to him: “To William Medley,” (p. 74). See Appendix II.

¹⁷Kurzer, p. 479.

¹⁸*Northern Star, and National Trades’ Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 598, 7 April 1849: “For Wives and Families of Victims: ... Thomas Gissing, Ipswich, 1s.”

¹⁹*Northern Star, and National Trades’ Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 596, 24 March 1849, p. 1.

²⁰*The People’s Journal*, vol. VII (London: Willoughby & Co.: 1849), p. 218. Two years later (1851) the sonnet was included in TWG’s first volume of verse, *Miscellaneous Poems* (Framlingham: W. D. Freeman), p. 7.

²¹*The People's Journal*, vol. VII (London: Willoughby & Co.: 1849), p. 294. This sonnet too found its way into *Miscellaneous Poems* (1851), p. 8. The poem illustrates TWG's attempt to combine his political and poetical concerns. Robert Emmet had become something like the patron saint of the Chartists, but the sonnet is no straightforward celebration of Emmet's revolutionary courage: its tone also reflects the disillusionment of the Chartists after the tide had turned against them in the year of revolutions (1848).

²²[John] Goodwyn Barmby (1820-1881). Born in Yoxford, East Suffolk. Chartist, feminist, and Utopian socialist and poet. He was a founding member of the Communist church (1841) and served as Minister of the Westgate Unitarian Chapel at Wakefield from 1858-1879. TWG must particularly have enjoyed the friendship with a fellow East Anglian and sent his children to Westgate Chapel Sunday school. Barmby lived at 113 Westgate and was closely involved in the Wakefield Liberal Association from 1859 on. Buried at Framlingham. He was one of the subscribers to TWG's *Ferns* book.

Did Gissing remember his Wakefield neighbour when he created Godwin Peak and Samuel Barmby?

²³TWG must have acquired one or more volumes of Linton's poetry. When in 1887 the Gissings decided to split up TWG's library, George Gissing wrote to his brother Algernon: "With regard to the division, I was serious in what I said. For instance, I should like all those minor modern poets, (Woolner, Linton, Gray &c) for which I am sure none of you would greatly care." (*Collected Letters of George Gissing*, eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Coustillas, vol. III, Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1992), p. 75.

²⁴John Murdoch, "Linton, William James (1812-1897)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16745>, accessed 25 Sep 2009].

²⁵National Library of Australia, MS 1698, Papers of William James Linton, Folder 2, items 84 (from T. W. Gissing, 29/5/1866) and 85 (from T. W. Gissing, 11/6/1866).

²⁶Elizabeth Lynn Linton, *The Lake Country*, with a map and one hundred illustrations drawn and engraved by W. J. Linton (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1864).

²⁷In 1858 Linton married his third wife Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898), the successful Victorian journalist and novelist. They separated in 1867 when Linton went to America. They lived in one of the finest houses of the Lake District, Brantwood on Coniston Water, sold to John Ruskin in 1871.

²⁸W. J. Linton, *The Ferns of the English Lake Country* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1865).

²⁹T. W. Gissing, *The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood*, illustrated by J. E. Sowerby (Wakefield: R. Micklethwaite, 1862).

³⁰See note 15 above.

³¹Cp. W. J. Linton, *Memories* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1895): "More poetic ..., not only in appearance, was Goodwyn Barmby, who in his callow days was a very earnest itinerant all-on-his-own-hook preacher of a sort of socialism; but who, after much well-borne buffeting, settled down as a quiet and respectable Unitarian minister at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, where he married for his second wife the daughter of the Governor of the Gaol. We were always friendly, and he came across the country to visit me at Brantwood, and to show how little he had changed except in outer clerical appearance. He offered me the use of his pulpit; but I never had the opportunity of accepting his offer."

³²*The Phytologist: a Popular Botanical Miscellany*, vol. IV (London: John van Voorst, 1853), pp. 975-76.

³³ How actively the Worcester members pursued the aims of the club becomes clear from the following letter accompanying a box of dried plants sent in the autumn of 1854 by TWG to the London headquarters of the Phytological Club: "We send 1000 specimens this time. It has been our chief object to send as many as we could that were not already in the Herbarium, and out of the 1000 specimens we send 86 *species* not marked in the catalogue of the Herbarium for last year. We hope next year to exert ourselves still further in furnishing plants for the completion of the central Herbarium, that being in our opinion a very important point in our organisation. If possible we intend to make up another parcel before the conclusion of the session. Let it be the first object of our working Members to furnish the central Club with all the plants they possibly can that are not already there, and in two or three years we shall have a complete Herbarium of Reference." (*Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions*, vol. XIV, 1854-55, ed. Jacob Bell [London: John Churchill, 1855], p. 262).

³⁴ *Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions*, second series, vol. VIII (London: John Churchill, 1867), p. 108.

³⁵ *Miscellaneous Poems* by T.W.G. (Framlingham: W. D. Freeman, 1851); *Metrical Compositions* by T.W.G. (Framlingham: W. D. Freeman, 1853); *The Recluse* by T.W.G. (Worcester: J. Stanley, 1854); *Margaret and Other Poems* by an East Anglian (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1855).

³⁶ To give the reader a better idea of TWG's botanical articles we include one of them in Appendix III.

³⁷ See TWG's poem "Brignall Old Church" below. It was published posthumously in the *Wakefield Free Press* for 8 July 1871. Cp. Pierre Coustillas, "In Search of Gissing Memories in Switzerland," *Gissing Newsletter*, Vol. IV, Number 4, December 1968, pp. 4-5.

³⁸ John Stainer J.P. (1831-1904). In the early 1860s he started his own business of dispensing chemist and druggist at 59 Sandgate Road, Folkestone. His son, John Ward Stainer J.P. (1866-), the author of this article, followed in his father's footsteps, moving the shop to new premises at 71 Sandgate Road. He sold the business in 1931 when he was elected Mayor of Folkestone (1931-33). His name was on everybody's lips when the inventor of television, John Logie Baird, who had a shop in Guildhall Street, made the first television transmissions to Stainer's shop in Sandgate Road in the 20s.

Cp. the entry for *Sund. Dec. 26. [1897]* in *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas: "Wrote to a Mr. J. Stainer (Folkestone) who has written to me, saying that he was assistant to Father in the year of my birth." (p. 477).

Gissing, who is known to have read Landor's *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), is sure to have approved of this passage from letter CLXXII: "Peace is at all times a blessing; and war, even the most prosperous, a curse. In war extremely few of men's desires are gratified, and those the most hateful; in peace many, and those of the kindest. Were it possible to limit the duration of hostilities, the most adverse nations, in the enjoyment of a long security, would find time enough for the cultivation of the social affections, and for the interchange of hospitality and other friendly office."

George Gissing and Rupert Hart-Davis

GEORGE GORNIAK
Grayswood, Surrey

“It is time that Gissing and his books are reconsidered. He has devoted readers today, but they are too few, for his books have not been easy to get, and his life has still to be written. He has been too much ignored, neglected or misjudged.”

The above quotation is from William Plomer’s introduction to the 1947 edition of *A Life’s Morning*.¹ It is a pleasing essay, which covers most of Gissing’s life and work in a positive manner. It was reprinted in a 1978 compilation of Plomer’s essays, short stories and poems chosen and introduced by Rupert Hart-Davis.² Students of Gissing will be familiar with the name of Rupert Hart-Davis as the publisher of the correspondence between George Gissing and H. G. Wells.³ This 1961 book can be regarded as one of the “triumvirate” of works which heralded the awakening of scholarly interest in Gissing in the early 1960s: the other two publications being George Orwell’s essay, “George Gissing” published in 1960 but written in 1949⁴ and the 1961 volume of *Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz*.⁵ As the editor of the letters between Gissing and Wells, Royal Gettmann was well known as a distinguished academic, writer, compiler and editor. As the publisher of the letters, Rupert Hart-Davis was equally well known. However Hart-Davis was much more than a publisher. Unlike many publishers of the day he was personally involved in choosing and then scrupulously editing many of the manuscripts for his firm. In addition he wrote a highly regarded biography of Hugh Walpole and compiled and edited many collections of letters, notably those of Oscar Wilde, Max Beerbohm, George Moore and Siegfried Sassoon. An exceptionally well-read individual—but with occasionally old-fashioned ideas and ironically, in the context of this essay, also in his views on George Gissing.

The 2004 biography of Hart-Davis by Philip Ziegler has cast some further light on his personality and career.⁶ Rupert Hart-Davis was born in Kensington, London in 1907 into an upper-class family. His father was a successful stockbroker and his mother, Sybil, was the daughter of Sir Alfred Cooper and Lady Agnes Duff. Sybil’s brother, Duff Cooper became well known as a successful biographer, government minister and indiscreet diarist. Hart-Davis attended Eton and later Balliol College,

Oxford, which he left after one year, following the death of his mother. After studying acting at the Old Vic for a few months he joined the publishers Heinemann as a junior reader and editor. Even in these early days Hart-Davis had strong opinions and was not afraid to voice them. During a literary dinner, the already influential Cyril Connolly was lamenting the absence of any good poetry outside France since the mid-nineteenth century: “Have you read Meredith’s ‘Modern love’?” demanded Rupert. Connolly professed he had not. “Then you’ve no business to make such pronouncements.”⁷ His choice of Meredith was also an early indication of his personal preference in literature. After two years with the firm and seeing little prospect for advancement he resigned in June 1931. By the end of the year and on the recommendation of J. B. Priestley he became manager of the Book Society, the premier book club of its day. Each month five judges selected a “Book Society Choice” for their members with recommendations for around half a dozen other books. Hart-Davis’s tenure at the post increased his contacts with many eminent writers of the day enabling him a year later to join the publishers Jonathan Cape as a director. Over the next seven years he recruited many fine authors for the company, including Peter Fleming, Duff Cooper, Arthur Koestler and the poets Edmund Blunden and Robert Frost.

During the war he served as a Guard’s Officer, training recruits, although still keeping in touch with events at Cape’s. Shortly after he was decommissioned in 1945 he fell out with Jonathan Cape and together with David Garnett, the novelist, and the book designer Edward Young decided to form his own company—modestly naming it after himself! With financial assistance from many of his friends, including Arthur Ransome, Peter Fleming, Eric Linklater and H. E. Bates, the fledgling company set up in 1946. The first book to be published was an obscure early essay by the poet Rupert Brooke, *Democracy and the Arts*. On the title page it was dated optimistically as 1946 but did not in fact appear till the following year. It was not a big seller and in a way set the tone for many future volumes. *Democracy and the Arts* was followed by *Fourteen Stories* by Henry James and then by the company’s first success, *Sealskin Trousers and other Stories* by Eric Linklater, illustrated with attractive wood-engravings by Joan Hassall. Hart-Davis took great care with the choice and editing of manuscripts and he also cared for the quality and appearance of the finished publication. However the company was underfunded from the start and faced a number of financial crises over the years. Hart-Davis was never a

great businessman; he preferred quality to quantity and quite often turned down a manuscript that other publishers later turned into bestsellers. The books he preferred to publish appealed mostly to a small band of scholars and enthusiasts. However amongst the titles he published there were a few bestsellers—including popular books by the naturalist Gerald Durrell, Ray Bradbury, the science fiction writer, the novelist Eric Linklater and the first published work of Gavin Maxwell, *Harpoon at a Venture* (1952). The single biggest seller in his list was Heinrich Harrer's *Seven Years in Tibet*. This book was published in 1953 and went on to sell over 200,000 copies. Unfortunately such bestsellers were a rare event and too few to ensure the company's future. In addition Hart-Davis's extra-curricular activities did not help the company; these included a hectic social life, dining out frequently, visits to the theatre, the five years it took him to research and write the biography of Hugh Walpole, and in 1956, burdening himself with the Chairmanship of the London Library. He also contributed a regular monthly column on crime novels for *Time and Tide* until its demise in 1960.

The company struggled on and after a few mergers was finally bought out by Granada in 1963. Although the company's name was retained for another decade, at this point Hart-Davis effectively moved into semi-retirement to the village of Marske, in North Yorkshire. Here he continued to edit and write a variety of books until his death in 1999 at the age of 92. Reminiscing in later years about his company he conceded that his choice of books could not have expected great financial success: "I usually found that the sales of the books I published were in inverse ratio to my opinion of them. That's why I established some sort of reputation without making any money."⁸ In the 17 years under his guidance, from 1946 through to 1963, Rupert Hart-Davis Limited produced 637 books.⁹ Among the many highlights were the magisterial five-part biography of Henry James by Leon Edel, the first part appearing in 1953 under the title *Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870*. Penguin published the complete life in two volumes in 1977 totalling a monumental 1700 pages. In the biography Edel recounts Henry James' fascination with Gissing and disapproval of his relationships with women, lamenting to H. G. Wells: "why will he do these things?"¹⁰ Other literary highlights from Rupert Hart-Davis Limited included the twelve-volume *Complete Tales of Henry James*, again edited by Leon Edel, *W. B. Yeats: The Letters* edited by Allan Wade, Janet Adam Smith's *Collected Poems* of Robert Louis Stevenson and the highly regarded Soho Bibliographies, including those of Yeats, Ezra Pound, Henry

James and Virginia Woolf. In 1950 Hart-Davis commissioned the Dickens scholar Humphry House to compile and edit Dickens's letters, a task taken over by his widow Madeline, after his sudden death in 1955 at the age of 46. After the sale to Granada, the Dickens *Letters* were passed to Oxford University Press who published the first volume in 1965.

A chance meeting between Hart-Davis and his old Eton English tutor, George Lyttelton, in 1955, led to the start of a correspondence that lasted until the death of the latter in 1962. This weekly correspondence continued unbroken for over six years and realised a total of 600 letters. These letters were edited later by Hart-Davis and published by John Murray in six volumes between 1978 and 1984.¹¹ These books became an unexpected success, receiving fulsome praise from the critics. The *Observer* critic wrote of their "compulsive readability" while Brian Masters described the first volume as "one of the most profoundly satisfying books of a lifetime, a book to cherish, to keep one company and to revitalise one's spirit." Richard Holmes was perhaps more judicious in his comments when he described them as "crusty, bookish and splendidly prejudiced." The books were reprinted over the next few years with later paperback editions. A one volume abridged version of the books was published in 2001.

These letters cast some light on the background to the Wells-Gissing correspondence and the complete three volume series that included the correspondence of Wells and Henry James and Wells and Arnold Bennett. The first mention of this projected series is found in a letter dated 22 July 1956 by Hart-Davis, *apropos* of a discussion concerning Henry James:

I too wonder whether any man was ever completely at his ease with Henry James, though clearly he could turn on massive charm at will. Some day I'd like to edit and publish all his surviving letters to H. W. [Hugh Walpole]. Did I tell you that the surviving correspondence between H. J. and H.G.W. [H. G. Wells] is being edited, and I hope to publish it next year. Later perhaps also the surviving Shaw-Wells letters. (vol. 1, pp. 164-165)

The Wells-James correspondence was published in early 1958 and a copy was duly sent to Lyttelton. In a letter dated 6 March 1958 Lyttelton records his thoughts on the book:

Last night I began the James-Wells book. What a little *cad* H.G.W. became when his temper was lost, and how easily he lost it – in the most literal sense, because everything he then said or wrote was untempered. (vol. 3, p. 28)

The next mention of the series comes in a letter from Hart-Davis dated 27 September 1959 and includes the first mention of the Gissing letters:

I have just finished reading Gissing's surviving letters to H. G. Wells. I suppose I shall publish them, but truly they're very dull – which I fear is the epithet that fits all Gissing's work. Have you read any of his novels? (vol. 4, p. 134)

This unflattering reference to Gissing is echoed in Lyttelton's reply, dated 1 October 1959:

Gissing I read quite a lot of fifty years ago. Dreary stuff I seem to remember, except – *what* was that book called he wrote when at last he wasn't starving? I then thought it rather beautiful, but haven't seen it for years. (vol. 4, p. 136)

In a footnote, Hart-Davis suggests that the book Lyttelton couldn't remember was probably *By the Ionian Sea*. However, since Lyttelton does not mention it as a travel book he could have been referring to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. No further mention of Gissing occurs till this short sentence a year later in a letter from Hart-Davis dated 25 September 1960: "Now I must finish correcting the proofs of the Gissing-Wells letters" (vol. 5, p. 146).

A few weeks later in a letter dated 13 October, Lyttelton asks about the letters:

Is the Wells-Gissing correspondence any good – or was G. too gloomy – admittedly with pretty good reason for most of his life? (vol. 5, p. 155)

Hart-Davis responds in his characteristically negative tones, in a letter dated 15 October:

The Wells-Gissing correspondence is pretty small beer, but you shall have it as soon as it's ready, sometime early next year. And I must chase the man who is supposed to be editing the Shaw-Wells volume: it should be the best of the four, but I haven't seen any of it yet. (vol. 5, p. 156)

This is the second mention of a possible fourth volume for the series. For whatever reason it never appeared under the Rupert Hart-Davis imprint.¹² Interestingly, the second book in the series, the Wells-Bennett correspondence, published in June 1960, receives no mention in the letters. Either Hart-Davis forgot to send Lyttelton a copy, or both correspondents did not think it interesting enough to mention. The Wells-Gissing correspondence duly appeared in May 1961 and a copy was sent to Lyttelton. In his letter dated 14 June Lyttelton praises the book, but not unexpectedly, rather one-sidedly:

I am enjoying Wells and Gissing – especially the former. I think I have read every book he wrote, and enjoyed them all. But how furious he always was when people

asked for more *Polly* and less *Clissold*. But he could be unpardonable e.g. the way he treated old Henry James. (vol. 6, p. 70)

Lyttelton continues in the same vein over a month later in a letter dated 25 July:

I am enjoying Gissing and Wells of an evening. What a kindly picture H. G. W. makes in his letters. I suppose he knew that *qua* success and reputation G. couldn't hold a candle to him. (vol. 6, p. 89)

So ends the last unfavourable mention of Gissing in the letters—as they started—as an underachieving and easily dismissible writer. Hart-Davis and Lyttelton continued their correspondence till the latter's death from cancer in May 1962. It is clear from the correspondence that the Gissing letters were only published (and then rather reluctantly) because of his more famous correspondent. This is ironic in view of the status of the Wells-Gissing book as part of the revival of Gissing interest in the 1960s. However, the Lyttelton/Hart-Davis correspondence does illuminate the side of the Gissing critics who could never appreciate his work. Both correspondents were exceptionally well read and should have appreciated the quality of Gissing's writing even if they found some of the subject matter un congenial. In view of their background it is interesting to speculate on their antipathy to Gissing.

George Lyttelton was born in 1883 and was 24 years older than Rupert Hart-Davis. Like Hart-Davis he was born into the upper rank of society and had a very successful Eton career. This was followed by study at Trinity College, Cambridge where he graduated with a Classical Tripos. He returned to Eton as a Classics Master in 1908. He later taught English Literature very successfully in an optional course where his pupils included future luminaries such as Aldous Huxley, George Orwell and Cyril Connolly. His age would have allowed him to be familiar with some of Gissing's novels during the author's lifetime. Gissing's realistic depiction of the poverty of the underclass would probably not have been appealing to someone with the background of Lyttelton. In that sense he was part of the majority of upper-class readers who found Gissing's subject matter uncomfortable. Where Dickens leavened his descriptions of poverty with humour, making them more palatable to his readers, Gissing rarely resorted to such a literary panacea.

The best-known Gissing dissenter is probably Frank Swinnerton whose 1912 *Critical Study* is familiar to Gissing scholars.¹³ Swinnerton was almost contemporary with Lyttelton but came from a lower class. In addi-

tion he was born in London, lived in poverty for many years and therefore should have better understood and appreciated Gissing's writings. The critic Thomas Seccombe memorably described the Critical Study as "Mr. Swinnerton's able depreciation."¹⁴ It was not to be Swinnerton's only able depreciation. Barely two years later he produced a similar critical study on R. L. Stevenson.¹⁵ There is little doubt that Stevenson had been overpraised in his lifetime and some correction was perhaps required. However Swinnerton's book was part of a list of critical works that helped demolish Stevenson's literary reputation, relegating him to the rank of children's author for the next 50 years. These early critical studies of Swinnerton are the more surprising when one considers his later work in this area. *The Georgian Literary Scene* (1935) is a survey of all the well-known authors of the period c. 1910-1935. The book is exemplified by judicious pen portraits of each author and remarkably even-handed summaries of their works and literary attributes. Perhaps the author was more circumspect here as most of the authors he was writing about were still alive. Whatever the reasons few critics found fault with the book and it was reprinted over the years and included in the prestigious Everyman's Library in 1938. It remains as a standard text for the period. His later series of literary reminiscences are equally perceptive and informative accounts of the period.

As the pre-eminent bookman, Swinnerton knew just about everyone in the book world. He was a close friend of Hugh Walpole and was later friendly with Hart-Davis. His views on Gissing undoubtedly influenced many readers and writers, including Walpole. For example, Hart-Davis in his biography of Hugh Walpole, included extracts of his journal that graded fellow novelists into different classes. First Class included authors of the stature of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Jane Austen; Second Class, Gogol, George Eliot and Arnold Bennett, while Third Class included Gaskell, Gissing and Maugham.¹⁶ Walpole positioned himself modestly in the third class—although alongside Gissing and Gaskell it remains a notably high class!

Interestingly, it was a publication by Rupert Hart-Davis that helped rescue R. L. Stevenson's reputation from the literary wastelands. Published in 1948, Janet Adam Smith's scholarly work on the friendship and correspondence of Henry James and R. L. Stevenson highlighted the mutual respect between the novelists and rehabilitated Stevenson as a writer worthy of the attention of a novelist of James's calibre.¹⁷ Later, Rupert Hart-Davis's 1961 publication of the correspondence between Wells and

Gissing also helped restore some of Gissing's reputation. However the later publication of the Lyttelton/Hart-Davis letters may well have resurrected some of the old prejudices against Gissing. It would be good to think that when he came to read William Plomer's views on Gissing for the 1978 book of essays Rupert Hart-Davis may finally have modified his views.

¹William Plomer, "Introduction" from George Gissing, *A Life's Morning*, London: Home and Van Thal, 1947, pp. 5-21.

²William Plomer, *Electric Delights*, Selected and Introduced by Rupert Hart-Davis, London: Jonathan Cape, 1978.

³Royal A. Gettmann (ed.), *George Gissing and H. G. Wells: A Record of their Friendship and Correspondence*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1961. Later research by the editors of the *Collected Letters* uncovered some minor editing errors in the published Gissing letters and also a misunderstanding on Gettmann's part concerning the relationship of George Gissing and his brother Algernon with the literary agent James B. Pinker. This incomplete collection has been superseded by the nine volume *Collected Letters of George Gissing* edited by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, Ohio University Press, 1990-96. The fully annotated correspondence of Gissing and Wells can be found in vols. VI to IX.

⁴George Orwell, "George Gissing" in *London Magazine*, June 1960, pp. 36-43.

⁵Arthur C. Young (ed.), *Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz 1887-1903*, London: Constable, 1961.

⁶Philip Ziegler, *Rupert Hart-Davis: Man of Letters*, London: Chatto and Windus, 2004.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹Richard Garnett, *Rupert Hart-Davis Limited: A Brief History with a Checklist of Publications*, London: The British Library, 2004.

¹⁰Leon Edel, *The Life of Henry James*, vol. 2, London: Penguin Books, 1977, p. 433.

¹¹Rupert Hart-Davis (ed.), *The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters: Correspondence of George Lyttelton and Rupert Hart-Davis*, Six Vols., London: John Murray, 1978-1984.

¹²The Wells-Shaw letters were eventually published under the imprint of the University of Toronto Press in 1995, under the title, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells*, edited by J. Percy Smith.

¹³Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study*, London: Martin Secker, 1912.

¹⁴Frank Swinnerton, *Background with Chorus: A Footnote to Changes in English Literary Fashion Between 1901 and 1917*, London: Hutchinson, 1956, p. 134.

¹⁵Frank Swinnerton, *R. L. Stevenson: A Critical Study*, London: Martin Secker, 1914.

¹⁶Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography*, London: Macmillan, 1952, p. 378.

¹⁷Janet Adam Smith (ed.), *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1948.

Gissing and Vesuvius

VINCENZO PEPE
Università Popolare Nocera Inferiore

During all his Neapolitan stays (1888-89; 1889-90; 1897) hardly ever did Gissing lose sight of Vesuvius, as is documented by many of his diary entries, some of his letters, and even by a few passages of *The Emancipated* whose first part, as is well known, is set in Naples. But, whether looming in the background, or rising in the foreground, the presence of the volcano is never decorative, and it rather seems to share the mythical, almost meta-physical, dimension in which the writer inscribed his journey to the South, in general, and in particular to Naples, which in the geography of his soul acts like a magnetic pole. “I chanced to hear some one speak of Naples,” his alter ego Henry Ryecroft remarks, “and only death would have held me back.” And perhaps it is precisely for this magic attraction, this sort of inevitability, that his friend and biographer Morley Roberts imagined “that in some previous incarnation [...] he must have been an Italian writer of the South he loved so well.”

The spell of the mountain is felt from afar, the moment Gissing catches the first glimpse of the Neapolitan shoreline from the ship which is taking him to Naples. In his diary entry for 30 October, he interprets both direction and colour of the smoke rising from the volcano as an omen of fine weather:

“12.30 Vesuvius becomes very dimly visible. Dark summit just to be distinguished, mist below. The smoke blows towards Capri, a sign of fine weather. It is not black, the smoke, but like an ordinary rose-tinted cloud”.

Words that are also to be found in a letter to his sister Ellen of the same date, with slight but meaningful alterations on the connotative level:

“12.45. *Vesuvius at last!* Misty, but a great form, looming out, with a pillar of smoke rising; not black smoke, but tinted *pink* like a cloud. A similar line of smoke lies along above top of mountain [...] Smoke of Vesuvius is blowing towards Ischia, a sign of fine weather.”

That same afternoon, during the landing operations, amid the bedlam of “boatmen roaring out the name of hotels they represented,” and noisy travellers thronging at the custom house, the writer is busy with the “terrible job of keeping an eye” on the luggage, but such is the beauty of the first natural painting which presents itself to his eyes, and which is

created by the reddening effect of the light of the setting sun against the backdrop of Vesuvius, that he can't help getting distracted:

“As we pulled towards the custom house, the sun was setting, and I never saw anything so glorious as Vesuvius; the sails in the harbour were red.”

On the following day the volcano is still in front of the writer, who faces it from his boarding house at Vico Brancaccio, but the point of view is changed of course, and along with it the overall chromatic effect of the picture. This time it is “the early sun” which “tints” the smoke of the volcano, as Gissing does not fail to inform his brother Algernon: “Vesuvius in front of my window as I write,—the usual smoke issuing, splendidly tinted by the early sun.”

By 10 November, in the diary entry for that day, the scene is that of a breezy afternoon, so beautiful and so typically Neapolitan. As the reader will note, the writer's perceptivity, always on the alert, is here particularly responsive to the play of prospects and colours, from the red-brown of Somma to the deep black of the cone, to the white of the smoke, which, with its reference to “a great train of snow” introduces into the scene a delicate touch of melancholy:

“In the afternoon a marvellous view of Vesuvius and all the Sorrento promontory. The east wind seemed to have cleared the air in that direction; the mountains were indescribably near, so that they looked much smaller than usual. Somma, with its cut, jagged ridge, was of red-brown colour, up to the top. Vesuvius had its deep black cone. But strangest of all was the way in which the wind blew the smoke; it *lay* all down the side of the mountain, to Torre del Greco, perfectly white in colour, almost like a great train of snow, and only at the bottom broke away into flying mist.”

A final, and slightly disquieting, allusion to the mist which this time is “ghostly” concludes also the earlier entry for 5 November, which describes Vesuvius at twilight:

“Fine sunset. Vesuvius crowned with enormous clouds of glorious colour. Ten minutes after sunset, these clouds had dispersed, the peak was clear, and below it wreathed a ghostly grey mist”.

The charge of magic of Vesuvius is by no means connected with daylight, since the fire of the volcano makes the looming presence of the mountain even more impressive at night-time, as documented by the entry of 2 November : “Last night my first view of the fire of Vesuvius [...] The fire was like a red leaping beacon, very small, without reflex on the smoke”; and by the following passage from a letter to Ellen of 9 November:

“The first two nights that I was here, Vesuvius was enveloped in clouds; the third night I looked in that direction, and there I saw a light like that of a great red bonfire up in the sky,—very strange and impressive. The mountain has two summits,—the lower called Somma. Its slopes are one vast garden, the richest region of the world, wonderful to look at from a height, so infinite does the space seem, so indescribable are the colours”.

If we reflect on the passage just quoted, it must be agreed that Gissing might here have in mind some of the requisites traditionally and canonically ascribed to the idea of the sublime: the landscape admired from “a height” conveys a sense of infinity (“so infinite does the space seem”) and of ineffability (“so indescribable are the colours”). But this does not mean that he is utilizing a literary *topos*. The fact that his diary entries are interspersed with sketches and drawings of the volcano made from different points (from the Vomero hill, from the sea, from the Sorrento promontory) clearly shows that his sense of the ineffable beauty of the mountain is sincere, and that he wants to reinforce the communicative effectiveness of his words through images.

A few days later, on 21 November, the writer at last makes the acquaintance of the mountain he has so far admired and described only from afar. As a matter of fact the pleasure of the ascent is spoiled by some bruising and abrading due to the uncomfortable means of transport (horseback) and the “needless nonsense” of his two guides, who “insisted on lugging me up the steep parts, by means of a cord.” But on the whole climbing to the top of Vesuvius turns out to be worth experiencing, as we learn from his diary entry of that same day, from a letter to Bertz of 6 December, and from a letter to his sister-in-law Catherine of 28 November, where he also alludes to the sense of disorientation (the combined effect of the height and of the beauty of the scenery?) whereby he “kept mistaking the sea for the sky, and Capri for a great dark cloud.”

But be it as it may, the ascent must have reinforced in the writer that feeling of the volcano as a *genius loci*. In this respect it is perhaps not amiss to remember the twofold function the mountain seems to reveal in *The Emancipated*, the novel that Gissing wrote soon after his return to England, and whose first part, as is well known, is set in Naples and its environs. In this section of the novel the mountain still preserves its denotative function of a catalyst of beauty, as is clear from the following passage:

“The landscape was still visible in all its main details, still softly suffused with warm colours from the west. About the cone of Vesuvius a darkly purple cloud was

gathering; the twin height of Somma stood clear and of a rich brown. Naples, the many-coloured, was seen in profile.”¹

Or from this:

“It was a keen morning: the tramontana blew blusterously, causing the smoke of Vesuvius to lie all down its long slope, a dense white cloud, or a vast turbid torrent, breaking at the foot into foam and spray. The clearness of the air was marvellous. Distance seemed to have no power to dim the details of the landscape.”²

But it also continues to exploit its potential of a mysterious, formidable presence, meaningfully connotated with human attributes. This “pathetic fallacy,” according to me, is present in the beautiful scene set in Pompeii:

“A divine evening, softly warm, dim-glimmering. The dusty road ran on between white trunks of plane-trees; when the station and the houses near it were left behind, no other building came in view. To the left of the road, hidden behind its long earth-rampart, lay the dead city; far beyond rose the dark shape of Vesuvius crested with beacon-glow, a small red fire, now angry, now murky, now for a time extinguished.”³

Or again in the passage where one character ironically comments on the puritanical cast of Miriam, the protagonist, attributing to her sympathetic feelings towards Vesuvius:

“Whenever I see her looking at old Vesuvius[...] I feel sure that she muses on the possibility of another tremendous outbreak. She regards him in a friendly way; he is the minister of vengeance.”⁴

From what I have been saying so far, the reason why at the very outset of these considerations I stressed the non-decorative nature of Vesuvius in Gissing’s horizon should be clear. The novelist never indulges the attitude which led (but alas still leads) generations of travellers and tourists to look at Vesuvius as an inevitable detail in a *gouache*, or to mention it as an example of the exotic or the picturesque in which the identity of Naples should allegedly consist. He was too sensitive and intelligent not to perceive that the beauty and the charm of Vesuvius were of a too complex kind to be trivialized or spoilt by the oleographic taste. He did feel that the mystery of that mountain led to the profound recess of human conscience, where our ideas of the beautiful spring forth pure and immaculate. No doubt he would have included Vesuvius among the places of memory he so much misses, and which, “untouched as yet by the fury of modern life” enable him “to get so near to Nature.”⁵ In Gissing’s view Vesuvius seems to confirm the validity of an aesthetic distinction between what is naturally beautiful and what is made beautiful by art. The point, according to me, is

made clear in a letter of 12 October 1903 to his friend H. G. Wells who had presented him with a copy of his book *Mankind in the Making*. In this work, as we know, Wells tried to demystify the idealizing tendency to consider mountains and volcanoes as tokens of natural beauty. In his opinion, between the spectacle of the fireshot nightfalls of the Five Towns, and that of the natural night effects of an active volcano there was no substantial difference. For Gissing this view is untenable, as the two experiences cannot be compared in any way. Here is how he marks the distinction:

“Surely there is a good deal of difference between a cinder-heap made by man in the pursuit of money, and a glorious mountain made by Nature in the pursuit of nothing we know of? Some of my deepest emotions have been touched, day or night, by the sight of Vesuvius. Emotions, too, I have had in the Black Country (vid. “Eve’s Ransom”); but they were of another order, much as I admired the sombre beauty of what I saw.”

The beauty of what man makes in “pursuit of money” may strike the eye; the beauty of what is made by Nature touches the very heart of man (“my deepest emotions”).

The beauty of Vesuvius has the essence of divinity. Gissing, the lay artist, has had a religious experience; he has penetrated the mysterious and sacred essence of that mountain (“made by Nature in the pursuit of nothing we know of”). Meaningfully, when the writer came to Naples again in 1897 and found that a funicular railway had been built on the slopes of his “dear old Vesuvius,” he felt that profanation had been committed, as he informed H. H. Sturmer in a postcard of 11 November 1897:

“I have a delightful room here, with old Vesuvius smoking across the bay. He has got a second chimney going, since I was here last; but at night it is defiled by the lights of the accursed funicular railway—a monstrous sacrilege.”

If local politicians and administrators alike had had only half the ecological awareness that inflamed Gissing the foreigner at the end of the nineteenth century, many of the problems nowadays impending on the destiny of the whole Vesuvian area would have been avoided.

The truth is that the knowledge Gissing had of Vesuvius was nourished by the love and enthusiasm typical of those endowed with a very fine sensitivity. Gissing was in Naples for relatively short periods, but his perceptivity and enthusiasm were such as to make up for all temporal drawbacks and cultural distances. This in my opinion explains the sense of familiarity, even of confidentiality, the mountain seems to arouse in him, especially during his second stay (made possible by the advance he received for *The*

Emancipated). In the diary entries of this period, in fact, Vesuvius is alluded to as a kind of old acquaintance. He knows it so well by now, that during his visit to the museum on 12 January 1890, in the background of the picture of “Masaniello’s Revolt in the Mercato,” by Micco Spadaro, he can identify a shape of the volcano “quite different from present.” A little earlier, in a letter to his friend Bertz of 23 December, because of the pervasive presence of its smoke, Vesuvius is called an “old rascal,” and the familiar appellation cannot but recall to our mind a passage from a letter to his sister Ellen of 7 January, which, apart from the specific reference to the volcano is perhaps worth quoting in full for its beauty:

“Last night was full moon; a cloudless deep-blue sky, and deep-blue sea,—scarcely the sound of a breaker to be heard. I walked for a long time by the sea-wall, (which extends for some three miles) and felt glad to be here. It is probable that the fine weather will continue. Old Vesuvius shows that the scirocco has ceased to blow.”

Vesuvius as a kind of litmus paper, too, then: the sharper its outline, the better the weather. Along with the mystery of the sacred mountain, the short Neapolitan stays were also sufficient for Gissing to penetrate another intriguing mystery: that of the Neapolitan spirit, prone to look for “signs” everywhere. Only by adopting this peculiarly Neapolitan attitude, could he have realized that the destiny of the town was inextricably connected, at least symbolically, with the activity of the volcano. It cannot be unwittingly that, in another letter to Bertz, that of 8 January 1890, he included the extinction of the volcano among the other sad signs testifying to the vanishing of “the old Naples”:

“When I wake in the morning, I raise my head, and there is sunshine making everything a rich gold; in the sky not a cloud. These, too, are nights of full moon. After dinner, I walk along the bay; the sea and the sky are both a profound blue. [...] I hear every night ‘Santa Lucia’, and ‘Addio bella Napoli.’ But I miss the organs sadly. Naples, the old Naples, is vanishing day by day; I notice the process even in a year’s time—the next thing will be that Vesuvius will become extinct!”

When Gissing returned to Naples for the last time, in 1897, he found that the transformations it was undergoing, some even more macroscopic than those he had noticed in his earlier stays, made the town almost unrecognizable. But his enthusiasm and rapture in front of the beauty of Vesuvius are the same as ever. “Once more I am in Naples,” he writes to his son Walter on 11 November, “and when I look out of my window, I see Vesuvius smoking across the Bay. It is a wonderful, wonderful place!” And

the same note of enthusiasm rings in the following words from his letter to H. G. Wells of 13 November:

“Vesuvius a fine sight after dark; about a mile of lava glows red from a small crater at the foot of the cone. How I am glorying in Naples—it is my third visit. The most interesting town (modern interest) in the world!”

Three days later Gissing left Naples never to return. As is well known he was bound for Calabria, in search of the vestiges of Magna Græcia he longed to behold, and that he would celebrate in *By the Ionian Sea*. Before putting out to sea, his ship lay at Torre Annunziata for three hours taking cargo. The Bay of Naples was visible in all its splendour, but meaningfully Gissing reserves his last glance for the “peak of Vesuvius, [...] covered with sulphur, which in sunshine has a bright lemon colour.” It is just a small detail, but how important! In its contrast with “the filthy smoke from factory chimneys at Torre Annunziata,” tiny as it is, it seems to be stressing again the difference between what is made by man and what is made by Nature. But as one of the last mentions of light (the others being “the lights of Capri Marina, and a high revolving lighthouse”), it is also one of the last visible landmarks before the sea is shrouded in darkness, leaving Naples an indistinct spot “glimmering through the dark, far off”.

¹*The Emancipated*, The Echo Library, 2007, p. 9.

²*Ibid.*, p. 65.

³*Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵Cf. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Summer, I, II.

Notes and News

Off and on, that is several times a year, J. C. writes a few paragraphs on Gissing for his gossip columns in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The latest example will be found in the number for 27 November 2009. James Campbell, the man whose contributions are usually signed J. C., regrets that Gissing’s books are so uncommon in secondhand bookshops. The reason is that people who buy a Gissing book usually know very well what they are doing. The following are J. C.’s friendly remarks on the 152nd anniversary of the novelist’s birth:

We’ll buy almost any book by George Gissing, including titles long ago read and shelved. Apart from a few works—*New Grub Street*, *The Odd*

Women, The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft—novels by the great nineteenth-century novelist are hard to obtain. Even ancient editions turn up in second-hand shops infrequently. *The Crown of Life, In the Year of Jubilee, Eve's Ransom, Will Warburton*—all absorbing narratives, with fascinating documentary detail, often concerning the social standing of women; yet ask for them in a retail bookshop and your enquiry will be met with puzzlement.

For that reason, we were pleased to chance on a 1985 Chatto [a mistake for Hogarth] edition of Gissing's study of untrammelled will, *Born in Exile* (1892), even though it is offset from a nineteenth-century text, has an unsuitable picture on the cover, and a perfunctory introduction. When we come to reread the story of Godwin Peak, a proto-Nietzschean "outsider," we will stick to our pocket-size Nelson's Library copy (undated; circa 1930) but there is always room for another Gissing on the shelf.

J. C. tells us that he picked up *Born in Exile* in Books for Amnesty for £2. Lucky man! If he wishes to find a great variety of Gissing titles for sale, he should visit the Idle Booksellers near Bradford, but he would be unreasonable if he expected to find most titles available for a song. We venture to tell him that the Nelson edition of which he owns a copy was first published in 1910, in the wake of *The Odd Women* (1907). The two titles brought some much needed money to Gissing's descendants.

J. C. should also bear in mind that next year will see the publication of some volumes of interest to Gissing's admirers. Most welcome will be the new edition of *Workers in the Dawn* edited by Debbie Harrison, a new landmark after the Doubleday and Doran edition (1935) and the Harvester edition (1985). Grayswood Press, which reissued the three Gissing/Dickens volumes a few years ago, will reissue *Isabel Clarendon* in one reset volume with an updated critical apparatus in mid-2010 and six months later, in a reset edition in one volume, the three novellas of the mid-1895 which marked Gissing's liberation from three-decker thralldom, *Eve's Ransom, Sleeping Fires* and *The Paying Guest*. Like *Isabel Clarendon* this volume will be edited by the editor of the *Gissing Journal*.

We are sorry to announce the death of Mabel Collins Donnelly, whose book on Gissing was published as long ago as 1954. The information has come to us from both England and the States. An obituary of her appeared in the *Hartford Courant* on 3 September. Born in 1923, she was the daughter of James T. Collins, who was long associated with the Liveright Publishing Company. She studied German and French at Queens College,

N.Y., took her master's degree at Columbia University in 1945, then obtained her doctorate from Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. in 1950. She went to London on a fellowship to learn more about Gissing, and her study of him, *George Gissing: Grave Comedian*, appeared four years later, at a time when his reputation was at its lowest. She taught at the University of Connecticut and St. Joseph College for Women and continued doing scholarly research, at least until her last book, *The American Victorian Woman: The Myth and the Reality* (1986). She is remembered locally as a very active and articulate woman.

Analysts of *Eve's Ransom* will be grateful to Maria Teresa Chialant when her collection of essays on the novel is available from her Roman publisher, Aracne. She has sent us the table of contents, which reads:

1. Carlo Pagetti, "'To interpret Eve': Gissing e i limiti del realismo"
2. Arlene D. Young, "Money and Manhood: Gissing's Ransoming of Lower-Middle-Class Man"
3. Francesco Marroni, "*Eve's Ransom* and the Rhetoric of Photography"
4. Patrick Parrinder, "Gissing's Eve: Fair Lady or Ungentle Reader?"
5. Paola d'Ercole, "Dall'East End al West End: le 'due mezze Londra' di *The Nether World* e *Eve's Ransom*"
6. Constance Harsh, "Fantasies of Recuperation in *Eve's Ransom*"
7. Emanuela Ettorre, "Gissing and the Trial of Sex: a Darwinian Reading of *Eve's Ransom*"
8. Tom Ue, "How is she to blame?": The Woman Question and Narrative in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and George Gissing's *Eve's Ransom*"
9. Maria Teresa Chialant, "Tipologie della New Woman nella Londra *fin de siècle*: Eva e le altre"
10. Laura di Michele, "La modernità di *Eve's Ransom*"

Professor Chialant, the editor, has written an introduction and a preface besides the ninth essay.

Markus Neacey, whose research on the internet has proved fruitful on so many occasions, reports that he has discovered a hitherto unknown notice of the film which was made from *Demos*. The text, entitled "A British Triumph," reads: "Demos," an ideal British film, based on the late George Gissing's powerful story of the passions which seethe below great industrial troubles, reveals some extraordinarily fine acting by Mr. Milton

Rosmer, Miss Evelyn Brent, and others. It is shown until Wednesday next at the Stoll Picture Theatre. (*Daily Express*, 10 October 1921, p. 2)

Another piece of information Mr. Neacey has found concerns Arthur Morrison. It appears that an Arthur Morrison Society has been formed at Loughton, in Essex, and a short biography written, *Arthur Morrison*, by Stan Newens, the former Labour MP (The Alderton Press, 2008). It is obtainable for £4.50 from the Loughton and District Historical Society at the following website address:

<http://www.theydon.org.uk/lhs/lhs%20pages/recent%20books.htm>

The least expected item listed under “Recent Publications” is certainly the new edition of Gissing’s 1882 essay “The Hope of Pessimism,” which until it was included in *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1970) remained practically inaccessible to scholars unless they knew about the existence of untapped Gissing material in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library. A few friends of Bouwe Postmus were aware of his intention of translating “The Hope of Pessimism” into Dutch and making it available if a publisher could be found. The idea has brilliantly fructified and we can now read Gissing’s rejection of Auguste Comte’s philosophy for the benefit of Schopenhauer’s in both English and Dutch. A five-page introduction in Dutch situates Gissing’s philosophical essay in his early career. The volume is no. 65 in a series entitled Flanorreeks.

Among our forthcoming publications are an article by Anthony Petyt about the last years of Edith Gissing, another by Markus Neacey on Gissing’s Lindow Grove friend Arthur Bowes, and yet another by the editor on the correspondence exchanged in the 1930s by William Gissing Stannard and Alfred Gissing.

Frederick Nesta, Lingnan University Librarian in Hong Kong, who has contributed to this journal on several occasions, has found an article entitled “Implications of the ‘Train’ in *New Grub Street*” by YIN Qi-ping in the *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages* (Faculty of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang University), Volume 26, no. 1, January 2003, pp. 82-85. As the article is in Chinese, we can only assume that the author’s comments bear on the various movements of the characters and some

symbolical scenes, notably one early in the book where Jasper Milvain and Marian Yule watch a train rush by from the top of a bridge in chapter 3.

The governess continues to be a character of great interest to historians of the Victorian age. The latest book on the subject seems to be *The Lives and Times of the Real Jane Eyres (Other People's Daughters: The Life and Times of the Governess in the U.K.)*, by Ruth Brandon. Malcolm Allen, who reviewed the book in *Magill's Literary Annual: Books of 2008* (Pasadena, CA: Salem 2009, 1, pp. 320-324), has sent us the following comments: "That these [exceptional] women suffered is not denied, but many a pallid provincial governess would have savored their experiences and their lives, notwithstanding the miseries, failures, and agonies. Late Victorian English novelist George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893)—'odd' in the sense of 'superfluous'—tells of the Maddens, impoverished but genteel sisters who form part of the demographic discussed in Brandon's book, middle-class women who are unable to find suitable husbands and who lack fathers or brothers in whose houses they can live. The occupations available to them without loss of caste can be counted on the fingers of one hand. They look for means of living without breaking into their capital and lament, among other things, that 'the [governess's] place at Plymouth' involves '[f]ive children and not a penny of salary. It was a shameless proposal.' *The Odd Women* is a grainy, realistic, quotidian portrait of the plight of tens of thousands of women." Readers of Gissing's *Collected Letters* will recollect some painful passages about his elder sister Margaret's depressing experiences.

Martha Vogeler has sent us a long review of her book *Austin Harrison and the English Review in Joseph Conrad Today* (vol. XXXIV, no. 2, Fall 2009, pp. 8-10). The author, Ruth Wood of the University of Wisconsin, has remarkably little to say about Austin Harrison and Conrad and she ignores Gissing altogether. This rather stodgy review from a grumpy pen might have been written, if we judge by its tone, by Rebecca West in one of her bad days, but she is extremely knowledgeable and has a remarkable talent for finding negative things to say about everyone and everything. She is kinder to Frederic than to Austin.

Robin Friedman has done, she tells us, a good deal of reviewing for Amazon and she has paid commendable attention to Gissing. The list of her

reviews includes assessments of *Henry Ryecroft*, *Eve's Ransom*, *The Paying Guest*, *Sleeping Fires*, *Will Warburton*, *By the Ionian Sea*, *Human Odds and Ends*, *The House of Cobwebs* and Lewis Moore's study of *The Fiction of George Gissing*. She has promised to review James Haydock's novel based on Gissing's life, *Beacon's River*. On Amazon, she is reviewer no. 29.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *The Hope of Pessimism*. Bilingual Dutch-English edition, translated and edited by Bouwe Postmus. Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Flanor, 2009. €17.50. The front cover shows the author as he was in the summer of 1884.

George Gissing. The five volumes currently available from O.U.P. and Penguin, namely *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* under the first imprint, *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* under the second imprint, have again been reprinted with their recent new covers. The three O.U.P. volumes are said to be in the second impression. According to the publishers, the Penguin *New Grub Street* currently available is the 30th impression, the Penguin *Odd Women* the 17th impression. The five volumes were produced in 2009.

Articles, reviews, etc.

David L. Pike, "Book Reviews," *Victorian Studies*, Spring 2009, pp. 569-72. Review of Richard Dennis's *Cities in Modernity*.

Clotilde de Stasio, "Comptes rendus," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, no. 69, April 2009, pp. 296-98. Review of *Spellbound*, ed. Christine Huguet, published by the Dutch firm Equilibris in 2008.

Eric Hunter, "Unsound," *London Review of Books*, 27 August 2009, p. 5. An interesting letter to the editor which contradicts Rosemarie Bodenheimer about some opinions she expressed in her review article on Paul

Delany's biography of Gissing in LRB of 9 July. Eric Hunter wrote: "Rosemarie Bodenheimer observes our perplexity that Gissing could twice marry obviously unsuitable women ('unsuitable' for the reasons she accurately adduces), and concludes that one wonders about Gissing's 'soundness of mind' in repeating such self-destructive practices in romantic relationships (LRB, 9 July). Surely there are enough examples, far and near, ancient and modern, among the educated as well as the less so, of serial mismatching in personal relationships to encourage us to be a little more temperate in our judgment. Gissing was a real individual in several ways—some unfortunate—but in this matter I doubt he can be classified as uniquely unsound in mind or action."

Vincenzo Pepe, "Gissing e Napoli," *L'Acropoli* (a bimonthly magazine), September 2009, pp. 477-83.

Susan E. Cook, "Envisioning Reform in Gissing's *The Nether World*," *English Literature in Transition*, Volume 52 (2009), no. 4, pp. 458-75. In the previous number an article by Laurence Raimy entitled "From the Fallen Woman to the Fallen Typist" contains an allusion to "Gissing's masterpiece, *The Odd Women*."

Tailpiece

Extract from William Plomer's Introduction to *A Life's Morning* (1947)

Peace was a condition of the leisure which Gissing advocated for others and himself longed for, since it would have enabled him to be what he thought he wanted to be, instead of a novelist writing hard for his living. It would have meant the chance to write what he would most have liked to write, books doubtless nearer to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, *By the Ionian Sea*, and *Veranilda* than to the rest of his work—books of travel or meditation, or of escape into the classical past of Greece and Rome. Gissing's wistful image of himself as a refined scholar living in freedom and comfort, a mild hedonist, a fastidious quietist—his escape-dream—was the creation of a man of independent mind, energetic and talented, strongly sexed and greatly overworked, and it may have been necessary to sustain him; it must have helped him to react strongly and continuously against what seemed to him the ugliness of his surroundings, and to 'plan revenge' in the name of Art for Art's sake. It is by no means to be condemned; it was the formula from

which he built up, in his copious and powerful writing, his protest on behalf of what he believed to be civilized values.

The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, which has been the most popular of Gissing's books, is by no means the least revealing; it is a blend of autobiography, rumination, and the escape-dream. Ryecroft, if you like, is an ostrich who buries his head in the nice warm sand because he doesn't like the look of the weather; or he is the sage—of modestly independent means—who chooses detachment and simple pleasures. The book has been many times reprinted. I think it became popular because, like FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam*, it appealed to a combined fatalism and love of pleasure which is deeply set in the English character but has been strongly repressed by Puritanism and industrialization. Those whose consciences were drilled by a severe sense of moral duty, those whose daily lives were half strangled by the necessity of hard work in more or less drab surroundings, were able to enjoy by proxy in both these books—one with its 'Oriental' glamour, the other with a familiar English setting—the pleasures of reverie and self-indulgence; moreover, they could understand much of what they were reading and could at the same time congratulate themselves on reading 'good literature.' When I was in Japan, I found that *Ryecroft* had been much read there in the twenty-five years after its publication. Its theme of withdrawal from the hurly-burly much appealed to the intelligentsia of a country caught up in an exceptionally rapid and intensive process of industrialization, a country which had a long tradition, inherited from China, of the charms of reclusiveness. In the late nineteen-twenties it was banned by the Japanese authorities as a propagator of 'dangerous thoughts.' How pleased, how wryly pleased, Gissing would have been by this act!

If we are justified in taking Henry Ryecroft as his author's mouthpiece—and it is evident that the 'private papers' are to some extent autobiographical—Gissing was worried about more than the way things were going; he was worried about the sorry scheme of things entire. History, says Ryecroft, is a long moan of anguish, a long record of injustice; but unlike Hardy, who questioned Providence, Gissing questions mankind itself about its follies and miseries. In his novels he enters into them and displays them, for, just as a touch of madness is necessary to a poet, so a novelist must be able to lose himself in common follies: directly the novelist stands aside from his fellow-beings and says, 'But they're acting like lunatics,' he is in danger of ceasing to be a novelist and becoming a philosopher. [...]

If one were asked which is Gissing's best novel, one might reply that he cannot be judged by any single novel [...]. A fair estimate of his achievement as a novelist could be formed by reading, besides *A Life's Morning*, at least the two great 'proletarian' novels, *Demos* and *The Nether World*; the tender *Thyrza*; *New Grub Street*, so true to its title; *Born in Exile*; *The Odd Women* and *In the Year of Jubilee*, if only for their portraits of women; *The Whirlpool*, which a little fore-shadows *Howards End*; and *The Crown of Life*.

