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

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Gissing: The Reluctant Prophet

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A major theme underlying Gissing’s *In the Year of Jubilee* is what David Thomson, the noted historian, calls the “march of democracy.”¹ While the novel may be approached in several ways to show how Gissing’s mind works and how the issues he seeks to represent in his society are undergoing change, it is the author as a reluctant prophet in an age of great prophetic voices that is most striking to a modern reader.

The publication of *In the Year of Jubilee* in 1894 comes almost midway between the two great

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years of celebration 1887 and 1897, marking the apex of the Victorian age. The achievements of this great epoch in English history, the industrial growth, the technological advances and scientific discoveries, accompanied by political, social and economic changes, are well documented. Likewise, the problems of materialism, of insuperable industrial growth and mechanization, of social conflicts, health, public welfare and urbanization problems resulting from these achievements,

are equally obvious. These remain some of the continuing problems that stem from the industrial and scientific advances of the Victorian era.

Along with the progressive forces during the Victorian era, there emerges a groundswell of democratic influences. Again, as Thomson says, the “man-in-the-street came into his own” at the end of the nineteenth century and entered the twentieth century “re-christened” the “common man.” It is the forging ahead of this creature, the common man, that Gissing most fears.² This democratic spirit therefore is one of the more significant aspects of *Jubilee*. But unlike Gissing’s previous novels of the lower classes, *Jubilee* shows remarkable restraint – or is it resignation to the inevitable? – as Gissing reluctantly acknowledges that the “march of democracy” cannot be stopped.

In *Jubilee*, Gissing divides his readers’ interest. Even though he makes an effort to pull together various threads in the novel, wherein the major and minor plot elements interact, his effort is not artistically a total success. The love story involving Nancy Lord and Lionel Tarrant is the major plot, and centers around changing attitudes on courtship and marriage. As such, it necessarily has a degree of interest; but had the book concerned itself with this alone, or even with such minor episodes as the Horace Lord-Fanny French romance, or with characters such as Samuel Barmby and Jessica Morgan, and the issue of shallow intellectualism and miseducation, the novel would not be memorable, necessarily. The interesting but really irrelevant subplot of Ada and Arthur Peachey’s domestic problems, which functions, more or less, as a personal inset, can be disregarded. The more

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intriguing situation, for readers today interested in the historical development of an actual modern phenomenon, is the Beatrice French and Luckworth Crewe segments.

Beatrice French and Luckworth Crewe are probably meant to be satirical portrayals of an age gone corrupt. Neither from Gissing’s point of view is noble nor particularly admirable. Each is from the lower classes of English society, and each embodies the attitudes and exhibits the behavior consistent with these strata of society. But the informing characteristic in the novel is that the representatives of the better classes are themselves ignoble despite their backgrounds. Lionel Tarrant, for example, is the most useless of the novel’s cast of characters. His cultured upper-middle-class background is anachronistic, and he lacks the means to sustain his profligate way of life apart from the democratic stream of events sweeping his kind into oblivion.

As the major spokesman opposed to the democratic tide going on around him, the irony of Tarrant’s position and his seemingly useless education makes his carping against democracy appear little more than petulance:

“Now, before the triumph of glorious Democracy, only those women kept servants who were capable of rule – who had by birth the instinct of authority. They knew themselves the natural superiors of their domestics, and went through an education fitting them to rule. Things worked very well; no servant-difficulty existed. Now-a-days, every woman who can afford it must have another woman to wait upon her, no matter how silly, or vulgar, or depraved she may be; the result, of course, is a spirit of rebellion in the kitchen. Who could have expected anything else?”

He continues in the same conversation:

“The servants have learnt that splendid doctrine that every one is as good as

everybody else. [...]And this kind of thing is going on in numberless houses –

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an utterly incompetent mistress and a democratic maid in spirited revolt. The incompetents, being in so vast a majority, will sooner or later spoil all the servants in the country. (p. 53)³

This speech alludes specifically to particular persons in the novel. But what makes Tarrant's view of democracy appear ludicrous is that, as the occasional mouthpiece for the author, his general behavior is a caricature that incriminates Gissing's judgment in making him his spokesman. Late in the novel, for instance, Tarrant returns to England after a disastrous venture in the Americas, a failure in self-promotion, in business and in decency. A friend says to him, that, "One sees that you have been breathed upon by democracy." Tarrant replies: "I loathe the word and the thing even more than I did, which is saying a good deal." (p. 335). Tarrant is a gentleman *déclassé*, unlike Wyvern, the philosophic minister, or Hubert Eldon, the upper-middle-class scion, both appearing in *Demos*, whose effectiveness as spokespersons against the democratic spirit – or menace, as Gissing sees it – is strong because each of these persons has a place in the existing social order. In the same scene referred to above, his friend says to Tarrant, that, "I always thought you a very fine specimen of the man born to do nothing." Tarrant, only half in jest, answers, "And you were quite right. [...] I am a born artist in indolence." Indeed Tarrant (the name itself, like most of Gissing's names, is ironic) is in limbo, a man without a place, a representative of an order nearly extinct.

From another perspective, one may say this is what Gissing intends to illustrate. For example, Tarrant's widowed grandmother, an aged aristocrat, is prompted by greed to unscrupulous speculations with the family fortune; this culminates in her family's ruin and Tarrant's poverty. In its way, too, this old woman's caprice serves as the author's comment on the weakness and disintegration of a cultural heritage in the face of the stronger but demoralizing influences of the

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new materialism.

Along with the new materialism, there is the sham education and shallow middle-class culture of the Lord and Barmby families. These families represent the middle row between the Tarrants and the Frenches and Crewes. Yet they are not gentility. They are businessmen, part of a merchant class, dealing in goods whose profits and merchandize pass from one family member to another. They adumbrate the future world we find in the novels of Galsworthy, for example. Property and money are the sole means of acquiring social position and culture. Barmby, the younger, is a bitterly satirical dandy, Dickensian in his mannered buffoonery and egoism. His veneer is penetrated with devastating irony. While speaking of the 1887 Jubilee, Samuel Barmby identifies himself with the visible progressive materialism of the period, but lacks any true understanding of the historical processes that brought England its prosperity:

"I shall make this [the Jubilee year] the subject of a paper ... the Age of Progress.... Only think now, of the difference between our newspapers, all our periodicals of to-day, and those fifty years ago...." He laughed, a high, chuckling, crowing laugh; the laugh of triumphant optimism...." (p. 57)

Barmby's "modernism" is equated with the sensationalism that passes for knowledge in the

news of the day – what we now call “current events.” Barmby, for instance, comments on the contrast between the forwardness of the Victorian world and the backwardness of other parts of the world, which reinforces his ignorance rather than enlightens his intelligence:

“By the bye, Miss Lord, are you aware that the Chinese Empire, with four *hundred* MILLION inhabitants, has only *ten* daily papers....”

“How do you know?” asked Nancy.

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“I saw it stated in a paper. That helps one to *grasp* the difference between civilization and barbarism....” (Itals. and Caps. his; p. 58)

Barmby is a foolish character, a possible prototype of the decadence to come in the 1890s. But his clownish behavior is balanced by Stephen Lord, the elder, the disillusioned member of the propertied-business middle-class he shares with the Barmbys. He once had hopes of creating a family dynasty that would rise in the hierarchy of English society. But the world in which he has made his money is the very world that has helped to destroy those cultural prerogatives he desires to emulate. He nevertheless remains a believer in the old value systems of class and social elitism. While he is neither an aristocrat nor a democrat, he stands firm on being an autocrat. And he believes in a useful life of hard work for his son, Horace, and a suitable education for his daughter, Nancy. In both young people he is disappointed; he fails to see how the influences of the new age works on young men of means who think of themselves as gentlemen of leisure, and young ladies of similar background whose educations prepare them to enter society, but who are denied the social connections necessary for acceptance by the old and exclusive gentry. His death, like that of Tarrant’s grandmother, represents the end of a type who no longer fits into the new order.

With the passing of the society that nurtured the Tarrantes and the Lords, the remnants of that old order, such as the Barmbys, become parasites in the progressive world opening up, whereas, the Beatrice Frenches and the Luckworth Crewes emerge as the contributors. These last two are the purveyors of high-powered sales pitches and innovative commercial advertising techniques that evolved from the new technology and productive industrialism.

Tindall in her comments on Beatrice French and Luckworth Crewe shows a judicious caution in her explication of Gissing’s feelings toward them. She recognizes in Crewe a “kind of Spirit of the Age,” a man who “Comes from nowhere,” and whom Gissing treats less harshly than one might

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expect.⁴ Both Crewe and Beatrice are “totally representative of the new order.”⁵ They are doers, and as such they are innovators, as well as survivors. In their view of the world neither has anything to lose and much to gain. They are opportunists, rugged individualists, whose experiences in life have taught them (Tarrant notwithstanding), that no one is born any better than anyone else, only luckier.

But are they to be castigated for feeling about the world as they do? Tindall believes not. She says that Gissing is less harsh toward Beatrice and Crewe because they are merely exponents, albeit crude, of an “Evil Principle.” The “Evil Principle” in this case is London, with its blatant commercialism, its technical and mechanical projections that make the city a “vast, inhuman metropolis.”⁶ The importance of Beatrice and Crewe, however, is how they stand in relation to history in their position as entrepreneurs and initiators of conglomerates in the world to come. If Gissing treats them less harshly, it is because he foresaw in them a kind of force and power that is

both mystifying, repellent and, strangely, attractive. In short, Gissing does not understand them even as he reluctantly admires them.

Beatrice French is a relative, a chip, maybe, off the block of Rhoda Nunn, one of Gissing's odd women of the 1880s. In some ways she is potentially greater than Rhoda, for she possesses a hardness not to be softened by the latent sentimentality and, therefore the hypocrisy that Rhoda exhibits. While this may appear unfair to Rhoda in that she is more fully developed, this suggestion in favor of Beatrice is made from an historical perspective. Rhoda Nunn really has no instinctive grasp of her age. She is a zealot out of frustration and personal hatred against circumstances as they affect her. She primarily is out to prove something in terms of a cause, not to make money or to show she is as good as anybody else. If this were so she would imbibe an important principle of the democratic ethic – everyone for himself. Rhoda indeed knows she is better than others. Her independence stems from the more complex egocentric motives of altruism. Her innate self-reliant

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individuality is ironically dependent on others' approval. Her self-love emanates from frustration and failure in an effort to find acceptance among social peers. None of these afflictions, if you will, are evident in Beatrice. Her biggest fault is jealousy, a woman's jealousy against another of her sex who poses a possible threat to her plans for success as a career woman.

For the most part Beatrice is clear-headed. She has no illusions about life; she has no particular ideals. She does not pretend to be what she is not to further some altruistic aim. She is not frustrated or weighted down with self-hatred. She knows who she is, where she comes from and projects a plan as to where she intends to go. She is a user, true, but of others whose interests coincide with her own. She shows contempt for maudlin weaknesses, as exhibited by her sisters, her sister's husband, and Horace Lord. But she is capable of compassion and forgiveness of petty grudges, as she shows toward Nancy, as long as she is not threatened by those whom she believes can or may take advantage of her from what she feels is an unfair position – whether of station or class.

Beatrice's attitude toward Nancy Lord is not one of envy; it is based strictly on the protection of her own interests. She does not need Nancy's approval either to feel important or to succeed. Ironically, it is Nancy who needs the worldly wisdom of Beatrice, who dotes on her independence – living alone in a flat, sleeping alone, preparing her own meals, and smoking cigarettes. These are all images of self-confidence. For Gissing they are pictures of grossness and vulgarity, but they are images, too, that he grudgingly admires in the “modern” woman.

Beatrice, however, while seeing in independence a chance to exercise her privileges as a businesswoman, shows that she is not intent on living alone forever, as a martyr in the cause of woman's rights to “prove” her apartness from men, as Rhoda Nunn does. She is a calculator, and a

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huntress, as well as a businesswoman. She knows the kind of man who will complement her, and she will eventually have him. He is Luckworth Crewe, shrewd in business but indiscriminate where women are concerned. How else can it be explained that Beatrice, as manipulative in business as is Crewe, defends her interest in him as he foolishly drools after Nancy Lord, a woman who never would suit him in any way and who would despise him for lacking social sophistication? Similarly, Beatrice defends her interest in Crewe against the wily manipulations of the parasitic female animal, Mrs. Damerel, a society fringe-liver, whose appetite for luxury is as voracious as Beatrice's and Crewe's is for making money.

Although Luckworth Crewe is English, his personality is so open that he reminds one of a

character from an early twentieth century American novel. He is a fresh image befitting the new democratic spirit of the time. His coming from nowhere, in the sense that he becomes identified with the English techno-industrial transition period, is accurate in so far as he does not represent the old traditional classes of the past. He is as modern as the inventiveness he exercises in the changing world.

“Luckworth Crewe” is an assumed name, changed to fit the conditions of a neo-pioneering age of opportunity in England. He tells Nancy Lord that he has “no right to either of his names.” He has been a foundling who was adopted. He kept the family name of Crewe from his adopted parents, but rejected the Christian name “Tom” after he had met a man later in life whose name was “Luckworth” and “who was as kind as a father” to him. This act of choice indicates Crewe’s self-confidence and willingness to face the world on its own terms. No family name, monied heritage or prestige is there to support him. Neither is there any such cavalcade of class honorifics such as Lord, Sir, or Excellency, to which he is accountable. “I’m not the kind of man to knuckle under,” he tells Nancy. “I think myself just as good as anybody else. I’ll knock the man down that

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sneers at me, and I won’t thank anybody for pitying me.... And I’m going to have a big fortune one of these days. It’s down in the books” (p. 73). This is the kind of braggadocio one might expect from a man like Crewe. Still he is the man of the hour and the man of the future.

Like many men of lowly origins, Crewe finds all life a challenge. Fortune brings with it prestige and power, as well as money. It also corrupts, and the seeds of corruption in Luckworth Crewe are as incipient as they become in his American descendants, Frank Cowperwood in Dreiser’s *The Financier* and Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. There is little doubt that the new power and wealth in Crewe’s future will fortify his ego and enable him to “buy” culture and the ornaments that go with it, the beautiful but useless women. While Beatrice is a worthy partner for Crewe, Nancy Lord and Mrs. Damerel will remain his ideal – the unattainable vision that will always be just out of reach because he fails to see their imperfections, their unsuitability to his grasping opportunistic need to have the best of everything.

As Beatrice is the true “new” woman, who is not about to change her sex, that is, to be mannish, to reach her goal, Crewe, despite his business acumen, his sharp eye for what people crave and his willingness to give it to them for a profit, remains true to the age-old spirit of male supremacy. He is not as autocratic as Tarrant, but his sense of superiority over the female is not to be gainsaid. Beatrice to him is different, but she is his partner in business, not in humanity. She is “old fellow” and “old chap” where their business relationship is mutual. And, paradoxically, while Beatrice may eventually win Crewe as a husband, she will never succeed in getting him to see her as a woman, desirable for herself. This then will be her greatest sacrifice to her career – a life of spiritual loneliness. The exchange, for example, the two have over Nancy and her brother’s

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involvement with Beatrice’s sister Fanny hints at the difficulty Beatrice will have as her feelings for Crewe develop:

“Just answer me a plain question, old chap. Come, there’s no nonsense between us; we know each other – eh?”

“Oh yes, we know each other,” Miss French answered, her lips puckering a little.

Crewe is seeking information about Nancy with whom he fancies himself in love. Beatrice tells him:

“I know just as little about her as I care.”
“You care a good deal more than you’ll confess. I wouldn’t be up to women’s tricks, if I were you.”
She revolted.
“After all, I suppose I *am* a woman?”
“Well, I suppose so.” Crewe grinned good-naturedly, “But that isn’t in the terms of our partnership, you remember. You can be a reasonable fellow enough, when you like.” (Ital. his; p. 256)

This exchange shows Gissing’s subtle use of irony. Crewe acknowledges Beatrice as a business partner, in other words, shrewd and self-serving, like himself; but, also, she is an inferior kind of man, something less than Nancy Lord. The fact that Beatrice has to remind him that she is a woman comes to Crewe as an afterthought, something beside the point.

In the same passage their confrontation continues, as if they were partners in marriage, again not unlike a business relationship, each maintaining a cautious mistrust of the other’s motives. Their rivalry for mastery becomes so intense that Beatrice is the first to break:

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They exchanged fierce glances, but could not meet each other’s eyes steadily. Crewe, mastering his irritation, said with a careless laugh:
“All right, I believe you. Didn’t mean to offend you, old chap.”
“I won’t be called that!” She was trembling with stormy emotion. “You shall treat me decently.”
“Very well. Old girl, then.”
“I’m a good deal younger than you are. And I’m a good deal better than you, in every way. I’m a lady, at all events, and you can’t pretend to be a gentleman. You’re a rough, common fellow —” [...]
He was startled, and in some degree abashed; his eyes, travelling to the door, indicated a fear that this singular business-colloquy might be overheard. But Beatrice went on, without subduing her voice, and, having delivered herself of much plain language, walked from the room leaving the door open behind her. (p. 257)

This, in microcosm, is the male-female relationship of the future. It is a picture of democratic egalitarianism that Gissing loathed and feared; but it shows prescience for all that.

Beatrice and Crewe and the world they represent save the novel from falling into possible oblivion. There is an occasion when Nancy herself is on the way to magnificence, as she rails in righteous indignation against Tarrant for his desertion of her. Still, we know that she will succumb to Tarrant – as she does – since she has much more to lose, and is not constitutionally or mentally

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equipped to cope with the challenge of the new era as is Beatrice. In fact, one suspects that had

Gissing seen fit to de-idealize Nancy, she ultimately would have been a failure in life, and – to force a presumption by looking forward to another American writer at the turn of the century – perhaps, ended a suicide in the manner of Lily Bart in Wharton’s *House of Mirth*.

To conclude, *In the Year of Jubilee* is one of Gissing’s more interesting novels, not only for issues not discussed in this essay, such as its treatment of the marriage theme as it relates to Lionel Tarrant and Nancy Lord, not only for its nostalgic longing for an idealized servant-master relationship, as shown between Stephen Lord and his housekeeper, not only for its concern with the misuses of money and the misapplication of education, as shown in the depiction of the French sisters and Jessica Morgan; but for its keen awareness of the inchoate changes in a whole social order and its concomitant vision of a different reality that was to dominate the character and the scope of human relationships in the twentieth century. It is for this last reason, therefore, that Gissing presents a guarded, uncertain and reluctant prophetic vision of the future in one of his better novels.

¹David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (1950; rept. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Inc., 1972), pp. 171-72.

²Jacob Korg, “The Main Source of ‘The Ryecroft Papers,’” in *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), pp. 177-78.

³*In the Year of Jubilee* (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1978). All references and quotes are from this edition.

⁴Gillian Tindall, Introduction, *In the Year of Jubilee*, p. xv.

⁵Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing* (London: Temple Smith Ltd., 1978), pp. 256-57.

⁶Gillian Tindall, Introduction, p. xx.

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Will Warburton: Deletions from the Manuscript

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The manuscript of *Will Warburton* held by the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library consists of 102 pages in Gissing’s minute hand. It is inscribed with the place and time of composition – St. Jean de Luz, Winter 1902-03. On the title page, in Gabrielle Fleury’s hand, are the words: “son dernier roman achevé.” In accordance with his later custom when preparing a work for publication, Gissing sent the manuscript for typing; this was in March 1903, and he corrected the typescript through late March and April before despatching it to his literary agent James B. Pinker. The typescript has not survived and it is assumed that differences between the manuscript and published text result from Gissing’s revisions of the typescript.

The alterations range from the minor to the structural and make *Will Warburton* one of the most interesting of all Gissing’s manuscripts. Among the minor alterations on the manuscript are the name changes from Mrs. Robson to Mrs. Cross, and from May Robson to Bertha Cross. (Gissing, in general, lacked Dickens’ rich facility for delineating a character by a name). Various clauses and sentences which add little to the narrative but are conventional devices for achieving narrative continuity are deleted from the published text. A characteristic instance is when Godfrey Sherwood makes his enthusiastic, but fateful, invitation for Will to join him in business. The manuscript reads: “‘I don’t mind,’ replied Will after reflecting a moment.” In the published text Will’s reply is deleted – but his acceptance is adequately conveyed by the sentence that follows in

the manuscript and which is retained in the text: "And so the thing came about" (p. 20). There is a gain in both verbal economy and dramatic concreteness. A similar touch is evident in concluding the first paragraph of Chapter V. After recounting Norbert Franks' borrowing to journey to Bath,

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the paragraph ends: "After all, quoth Norbert, what was the use of petty economies? His only hope lay in the success of a great picture, which at a stroke would fill his pockets." The deleted sentences are unnecessary reinforcement because Norbert's interest in Rosamund, his social ambitions, and his casual attitude to money have all been clearly established.

Of greater interest are the deletions of whole episodes from the original manuscript. Many sentences and phrases in these paragraphs, especially in dialogue, show tired or trite writing; Gissing's judgment was accurate in making the deletions; but rather than rework or recast particular weak sentences or phrases, the method of revision was to remove the entire sequence in which they occurred. The published novel is, therefore, more episodic in its effects than the manuscript version. Perhaps most surprising is the fact that its continuity does not suffer far more from the deletions; but Gissing's professional narrative skill makes adroit brief transitions so that the original existence of the withdrawn sequences is neatly concealed.

The deletions may be considered under the following categories:

Descriptive Landscape: These passages are conventional in subject, perspective and tone. Those dealing with the streets of London convey Warburton's (and Gissing's) love of the city and the satisfaction that a person may derive from his awareness of belonging to a particular environment. Warburton's commitment to London has replaced the earlier sense of his rootedness in St. Neots where his mother and sister have continued to live. As a young man he had left his native village to experience several miserable years in the British West Indies; while sweltering beneath the tropic sun of St. Kitts he had dreamed of St. Neots' "old church tower, of the rows of cottages, washed in buff or salmon colours, of the high-walled gardens, of those green pastures by the winding Ouse. Simple as it all was, homely and quiet and dull under a shimmering grey sky, for Warburton it had

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beauty not to be found elsewhere" (Chapter IX).

Adjusting in later years to the unromantic life of a Fulham Road grocer, Will suffers alternately from sleeplessness and nightmares. The images of horror suffusing his nocturnal loneliness derive from the West Indian experience; as a young exile he had "agonized in a desire" (Chapter XXXVII) to quit his job in the alien environment. Now, exiled from his class as a London retailer, a similar urge propels him to abandon his distasteful livelihood; when he more fully realizes what is involved in a lifetime of retailing groceries his sensitive nature rebels; in this nightmare crisis of surviving in an alien class environment the voice of his assistant Allchin offers a soothing encouragement: "You *must* attend to business, sir, you really must" (Chapter XXXVII). Allchin's voice dispels the horrifying images of exile in a foreign environment.

His disequilibrium becomes more painfully acute as a consequence of his desire for Rosamund Elvan. When he pursues her, as he falsely imagines, to the South of France, the foreignness of the French landscape assaults his sensitive introverted nature. The views around St. Jean de Luz are splendid and satisfying, but the sun is too brilliant, its heat too intense; Will's persistent desire is for an English garden in the English countryside – such a garden as Ralph Pomfret had cultivated through his long life. He thinks – a ray of objectivity penetrating his passion – "Why had not

Rosamund contented herself with fleeing to Ashtead?" Then he need not have endured the bitter-sweet experience of seeing the "noble expanse of sea and shore, with little St. Jean de Luz lying low at the edge of the yellow sands" (Chapter XXXVII).

Subsidiary Characters: The original manuscript gives fuller outlines to several peripheral characters.

Ralph Pomfret: Ralph Pomfret is revealed as a person who dreamed, when young, of becoming a painter. As a child he had been fascinated with a volume of Vasari and had determined

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he would learn to paint. "If ever a lad had the artist spirit, it was I. I lived art, I dreamed art. If I could have been taught, would it have come to anything? Who knows?" (Chapter XXVI). Instead he worked in a railway office, married, and settled in his book-lined cottage amid the Southern English countryside. With passing years he lost the dream of artistic achievement, but retained a genial, independent, critical frame of mind. Consequently his remarks about Norbert Franks retained in the text – "A painter without enthusiasm for art" (p. 177) – have an added piquancy and irony in the light of his own frustrated artistic aspirations.

Mr. Coppinger: When Will is wandering, desperate and unhappy in the environs of St. Jean de Luz, he meets Mr. Coppinger. He soon shows himself through his conversation to be an eccentric English expatriate. Although a resident in Southern France for many years, he shares Will's discomfort with the environment and discloses an additional concern:

"Ah, it's pleasant, pleasant; pretty enough; nothing to make a fuss about, it seems to me. But you can't get anything to eat. I import everything I can from England." (Chapter XXXVII)

He invites Will to share an English breakfast with him the next morning – a chop, bacon and kippers rather than merely coffee, bread and butter. In Mr. Coppinger's company Will finds a temporary solace from the discomfitures of passion and alien landscape.

Mr. Applegarth: In the manuscript Applegarth serves, like Coppinger, as a person embodying a comfortable settled philosophy who contrasts with Will's pressing distress of the moment. In the published text the only discussion between the two men relates to Sherwood. In the deleted dialogue, however, Applegarth ruminates on the joys of bachelorhood. His reflections delineate his character

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and counterpoint Will's uncertainty about making emotional commitments. Like Coppinger, Applegarth represents an extreme: his eccentricity, revealed in the comfort of his country home, serves to emphasize the pleasurable freedom of a bachelor's life. Deliberately he places his muddied boots on the sofa and remarks for Will's instruction:

"No married man can do *that* ... I know a married man who tried to," the other went on. "He said he could be master in his own house. He is now the most distressingly nervous man I know; starts at shadows, hears voices – especially

his wife's. A complete wreck." (Chapter XIII)

Will, however, is shrewd enough to perceive that although Applegarth has no financial problems and owns a pleasant house in a delightful part of the country, he "had less home-comfort than became a man in such easy circumstances." (Chapter XIII)

Warburton's Relations with Social Subordinates: The novel outlines the sharply defined grades of the late-Victorian class structure. Will's descent from a position of middle-class security into the system's lower echelons is one of the major points of dramatic focus. Presenting Will's relations with people having less education than himself leads Gissing into several attempts at Dickensian comic portraiture. But pathos, rather than humour, tends to predominate in these scenes and possibly induced him to delete them.

Mrs. Hopper's character had been early established by her continual whining over family misfortunes. When, however, Will tries to explain his own misfortune and descent on the social hierarchy, she has difficulty in understanding his situation. She assures him she will "get accustomed to the thought" of thinking of him as a mere grocer. Then, in a delightful interchange she asks:

"Shall you wear a *haperon*, sir?"

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Will burst out laughing.

"Why, I never thought of it. Of course I shall wear an apron, like every other grocer. Will you make me half a dozen?" (Chapter XVIII)

Will becomes utterly dependent upon the practical expertise of Mrs. Hopper's brother-in-law, Allchin. This genial, blustering working-class figure, whom Will employs as his assistant, is first presented as "pigheaded and pugnacious" (p.121); but under Will's benign influence he loses his partiality for violence and, in a deleted sequence, remarks on one occasion:

"It's a queer thing, sir ... but since we opened, I haven't once lost my temper – not once. And I don't mean with you, sir; of course there's no fear of me doing that, in no case; but I mean as I haven't once felt disposed to up with my fists at any fellow." (Chapter XXII)

Working beside Will in a newly established business that must be ruthlessly competitive to survive, he exerts himself tirelessly. Sensitive to Will's inexperience and class constraints when dealing with the poor, he acts to conceal his master's incapacities. His zeal and fellow-feeling contribute to a new dignity in labour:

He had a pride in every part of his work, whether in cleaning a window or in the swiftly accurate weighing of goods. Few men could tie up a parcel so quickly and neatly, still fewer could handle crates and hogsheads with his contemptuous ease. (Chapter XXII)

However, neither self-esteem nor indispensability permit him to entertain illusions beyond his

social rank. When, in the course of the novel, Will's business prospers and he employs a second helper, Allchin is somewhat perturbed, in the published text his concern is dismissed in a few sentences. However, in the original conception, these few sentences introduced an episode in which

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Will firmly explained to Allchin the extent of his social position.

With the arrival of Mr. Goff, the newcomer, "Allchin was inclined to adopt an imperious manner" (p. 299). When questioned about this, Allchin complained that the new employee showed him no respect. Will responds:

"Respect? But why should he show you respect? As far as I've noticed he speaks to you quite civilly, why should you look for anything more?"

Will shows little understanding of Allchin's surprise or vexation at his words. He continues in a tone of uncharacteristic admonition:

"I must remind you, Allchin, that your share in this business can at any time come to an end.... Your position is superior to Mr. Goff's, I admit, but you and Mr. Goff are both in my employment, and I can't risk the annoyance of having to look for someone else just because you make things unpleasant for him. Come, Allchin, a little good sense...." (Chapter XLIII)

The educated middle-class man prevails over the forthright blustering working-man. Allchin's function has been to train Will in the unfamiliar ways of retailing; his efforts have been successful. Will and the business have survived. In the resulting atmosphere of modest prosperity Will comes close to losing his image of genial and affectionate patronage, as he asserts with regained self-assurance, the unbridgeable gaps that separate the social ranks. Perhaps because this blunt harshness is untypical of the man Gissing deleted the episode.

However, Will's most tumultuous outburst against any person is directed, in another deleted sequence, against his landlady Mrs. Wick. She is one of the most formidable of seedy lower-class landladies in Gissing's long portrait-gallery of such figures. The sensitive reclusive Warburton has

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to summon all his energies to confront her domestic inefficiency and petty dishonesty. One morning, outraged by the raw bacon, broken eggs, finger-marked bread, and unclean cutlery he rings the bell in stern wrath. He directly accuses the woman of dishonesty and demands improved service. "The rooms are filthy; if I am to stay, they must be properly cleaned at once, and kept clean for the future. I shall go and get my breakfast somewhere else." (Chapter XXXIII). He storms from the house. When he returns later in the day, Mrs. Wick is apologetic and draws his attention to her inexperience in renting rooms. Will in turn softens his severity; he admits he should have discussed the matter with her previously rather than allow secret resentment against her to accumulate.

Thus an episode that began by evoking wrath and developed by dramatizing hostility ends with the expression of mutual regrets and the making of a compromise.

Modifications in Warburton's Character: The deleted sequences in which Will confronts Allchin

and Mrs. Wick are acute in their psychological insights, but they may have suggested inconsistencies in Will's temperament and behaviour to a contemporary reader. Perhaps they were excised for this reason. They dramatize the tensions endured by an excessively private person who is forced, by accident, into the savage competitiveness of the market-place. His self-assurance is diminished, his tolerance tested, his geniality scarred. Inevitably, as a consequence of such experience, an acerbic quality of feeling, thinking and speaking manifests itself. At various points in the published text Gissing asserts that this is Warburton's essential experience. But he then chose to underplay scenes in which Warburton's anguish and exasperation would achieve expression; this is most notable in Will's treatment of his friend and betrayer Godfrey Sherwood. In addition to this deliberate underplaying, crucial sequences in which Will was shown to be forceful, assertive and

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self-righteous are deleted. Gissing seemed determined to preserve the general impression of Will's tolerant geniality; the blows he endures are thus borne inwardly with minimal external expression of their effect. By maintaining this consistency of response on Will's part, Gissing produced a sympathetic hero – one who was, on the evidence of published reviews, superficially attractive to contemporary novel readers; but, as a consequence of the dramatic underplaying and deleted sequences, his presentation of Will offers a less profound psychological analysis of social adversity suffered in loneliness than Gissing's insights could have achieved.

Mrs. Cross and Bertha Cross (Mrs. Robson and May Robson). If the deleted episodes preserve Will as a character of extensive tolerance, the deleted sequences featuring Mrs. Cross reveal her as a person of irreducible snobbery. Even Will on one occasion wonders how so charming a girl as Bertha could have so stupid a woman as Mrs. Cross for a mother. He can only attribute Bertha's admirable qualities to her dead father.

Mrs. Cross is incapable of learning from any calamity. Spoilt by a generous and overindulgent husband who had been a writer of comic journalism, she is a widow who glories by domineering over her under-paid and underfed servant. In deleted sequences Bertha discusses this unpleasant attitude with her mother. She urges that having no servant would be preferable to the usual crisis-ridden household situation and offers to undertake domestic duties herself. But Mrs. Cross remains incapable of understanding Bertha's comments and criticism. When her daughter's remarks become too frank, she silences her with a few brief words of parental authority. In this crisis Bertha reveals a psychological structure that is similar to Will's. She retreats into herself tending to re-examine her own values in order to assure herself that the criticism she has made of another person is fully justified. Might she not be expressing only querulousness or nervous irritability? In

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her painful self-examination she wonders if she has the strength either to accept additional domestic duties or, if need be, to leave home. She resolves the contradiction of initial outward assertion followed by inward retreat in a manner similar to Will's: she decides that further retreat could cause further harm to others, such as servants subject to her mother's authority, and might also distort her own emergent character. There are times, she decides, when one must advance and resist an imperious authority.

The very sense that it would cost her a great and a painful effort made an

argument for the decision. She knew that her mother's defects of character, some so aggressive, had their origin to a great extent in mere weakness, and had grown worse owing to the lack of vigorous opposition in those who suffered under them. Something of the same weakness threatened trouble ... in her own existence. (Chapter XLI)

In the final chapters of the manuscript, deleted sequences dramatize the crisis developing between mother and daughter. Bertha feels impelled to leave home and experience life alone rather than submit further to the blind assertiveness of an arrogant woman. In the published text little of this domestic crisis remains. Consequently, parallels between the psychological structure of Will and Bertha are lost; the young woman's determination to leave her mother and establish herself in lodgings is eliminated and with it any implication that Will is a Prince Charming appearing with his proposal at the fortuitous moment to rescue Bertha from an intolerable domestic situation. Thus, in the published text, the couple's decision to marry appears based on their commonsense management of life rather than on the negative desire, by either of them, to escape from uncongenial circumstances.

Conclusion: In the original manuscript both Will and Bertha stand out more clearly as sensitive

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middle-class embodiments of commonsense rationality. Although Will is temporarily overwhelmed by passionate illusions about Rosamund and by an accompanying enthusiasm for the poetry of Shelley, sober judgement and calm sobriety are his abiding qualities. Bertha shows a similar commonsense rationality. Having considered the possibility of leaving home for humbler accommodation, she easily accepts Will's lowly social rank as a Fulham Road grocer; she is more concerned with assessing her own strengths as a young woman of independent spirit than pondering the subtleties of social gradation.

Rosamund Elvan and Norbert Franks, on the other hand, tend – in contrast to Will and Bertha – to represent extremes of self-interest. Rosamund, in a deleted passage, appears to Will a self-centred person; her weaknesses have been enhanced by the “incense” of adoration that Norbert has offered to her image. Norbert, in deleted episodes, appears more fully as a hard-working artist seeking to apply his techniques to commercial and social success; he is more fascinated by knowing influential people than by commitment to abstract ideals. Self-centredness characterizes the actions and ambitions of both Rosamund and Norbert. There is a certain ironic justice that two people manifesting a commonsense awareness that tends to altruism should marry; and also that two self-centred ambitious personalities should choose each other as partners. Both manuscript and published text reveal this ironic unfolding; but the deletions tend to blur the contrast between the couples. The omitted episodes remove some of the starkest dramatic encounters and soften relationships in the published text into series of hazy amiable compromises. Will's nightmares of anguish at the fall of social status are lessened to make him a figure of entrepreneurial rationality whose renewed efforts result in modest personal, social and commercial success. The deletions remove any material that might remotely offend the middle-class Edwardian reading public so that

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the published text unambiguously stands to praise prudence and effort as means for restoring lost status and private dignity.

(A new edition of *Will Warburton*, edited by Colin Partridge, will be published by the Harvester Press in the coming months. It will contain the passages deleted from the manuscript which is quoted here with the kind permission of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.)

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Obituary

Mme Denise Le Mallier

It is with regret that we have to announce the death, on Christmas Eve, of Denise Le Mallier, of Château du Chasnay, Fourchambault, Nevers. Her mother was Gabrielle Fleury-Gissing's cousin, and for many years after Gissing's death Gabrielle stayed – one might almost say lived – at Le Chasnay, for long periods at a time. She bequeathed her collection of Gissing books and photographs to the Le Malliers at Le Chasnay where they remain to this day.

Articles by Denise Le Mallier have appeared in the *Gissing Newsletter*, and she was a keen critic of everything that appeared in it. She and her husband Maurice (who pre-deceased her) attended the opening of the Gissing Exhibition at the National Book League in London, where many of the exhibits were on loan from her. She was also largely instrumental in getting the plaque erected on the Paris house where Gissing had lived, but greatly regretted that her health prevented her from being present at the unveiling of the London plaque four years ago, where she would certainly have been an honoured guest and would have met many old friends who would have

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welcomed her. She always expressed admiration for Professor Coustillas and his work, and particularly regretted not having heard his speech on that occasion. I myself had to give her an exact description of everything that had happened, when we met later that summer, and gave her such photographs as I had been able to take of the unveiling.

She was always ready to receive genuine Gissing admirers at all times. I recall the occasion when a young Oxford student missed her way on a pilgrimage to Le Chasnay and arrived late at night, only to be immediately entertained with a scratch supper in the kitchen. She was much loved and will be very greatly missed by countless Gissing scholars.

E. M. Eleanor Wood

Gillian Tindall, the novelist, author of *The Born Exile: George Gissing*, contributes the following reminiscences:

My first contact with Denise Le Mallier was, I think, in 1972 when, with Pierre Coustillas' encouragement, I wrote to ask her if she had a photograph of Gabrielle Fleury which I might borrow. I received in return a charming picture reproduced in *The Born Exile*, the one showing Gabrielle in widow's clothes and holding the dog Bijou on her arm, coupled with an invitation to visit Le Chasnay with my husband and son if we were ever in that part of France. By a fortunate chance we were just at that period beginning to take our family holidays in the Indre, a department which adjoins the Nièvre, and what started as one ceremonial visit to meet Gabrielle Fleury's surviving relation developed into a regular pattern of calling at Le Chasnay at least twice a year in the few years that remained to her. I wish they had been more. I wish I had met her earlier. We all so

enjoyed her alert, sympathetic, intelligent company, and the – to us – fairy-tale atmosphere of the nineteenth-century country house where she lived, surrounded by mementoes of her family’s past.

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They had been wealthy iron-masters on the banks of the Loire, and had inter-married with the Crawshays of South Wales. Denise Le Mallier had published privately a book about her ancestors, *Le Roman des Dufaud*, and the original picture of two children in costumes of the Napoleonic era, which appeared on the cover of that book, hung in her drawing-room. Alongside it were pictures and mementoes of her husband’s family: he was a regular army officer by profession, a painter by choice and a descendant of Saint-Simon.

On our first few visits Maurice Le Mallier himself was alive. His English was not quite as good as his wife’s, but he was capable of reading aloud and being read aloud to in that language – one of their favourite evening occupations. I cherish a memory of us discussing Gabrielle round the lunch table: she was known to them as “Cousine Edith,” confusingly to us but logically, since Edith was, of her three Christian names, that used by her family. (It was Gissing who asked her if he might use her first Christian name, “Gabrielle,” since Edith was also the name of his estranged second wife). Denise Le Mallier was talking with a certain amusement about her own mother, who was apparently apt to say at intervals over the long years of Gabrielle’s common-law “widowhood,” “You know it is rather *funny* that dear Edith kept so very quiet about her wedding and never even invited us or anything...” “Did she never realise no actual marriage had taken place?” I asked. “Apparently not,” said Denise. “Rubbish,” put in Maurice sardonically, “They all knew perfectly well really. They just did not think it nice to talk about it!”

On later visits other subjects and interests we all had in common tended to oust Gissing – if I may admit it in these pages – from our conversation. Denise was always generous with interest and enthusiasm for my own novels, which I used to send to her, though her reading was curtailed in the last two years of her life because she developed cataracts, a trial which she bore with her usual quiet

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fortitude. The last letter she wrote to me – not that either of us suspected that it was to be the last, for she had seemed well and energetic on our previous meeting – begins characteristically “I am deep in *The Intruder* –”

A couple of times after she was widowed I visited her on my own and stayed the night. I only wish now I had found the time to take her up on her suggestion that I should stay longer and do some quiet writing – there in that Gissing room at the top of the house. On one of those brief occasions I was tired after lunch, having had an early start travelling cross-country by bus; I went to lie down on my bed in the spare room, which was full of a golden autumn light and valuable relics of the past lying casually about. I remember particularly a *laissez-passer* for a Le Mallier ancestor signed by Maréchal Ney. I dozed, and woke to a sense of enchantment as if I had been in another dimension. A red squirrel had climbed the wisteria outside the window (*la glycine fleurie* in French, known in the household as “la Gissing-Fleury”), it was watching me from the sill. These rare and vulnerable little creatures survive in the overgrown *parc* of Le Chasnay, protected by its encircling walls from predators both animal and human.

We always knew that this Sleeping Beauty park, with its great tall trees, its overgrown lawns and its vestiges of the older manor-farm that had once stood on its site, was itself vulnerable to assault and change and that we were privileged to be seeing it in the few years that remained to it before it would surely be swept away. Expanding industrial Nevers is perilously near, building land

is valuable, while rambling Second Empire châteaux themselves have outlived their usefulness, a nightmare to heat and maintain. The nearby château de Tazières, which used to belong to the same family and where Gissing and Gabrielle also stayed in the summer of 1900 after spending a week at Le Chasnay, is currently used for little but furniture storage: the open ground in front of it which

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commands a view of the Loire is tactlessly occupied by the local *décharge publique*.

All things pass, and those whose own lives overlapped, even by a year or two, with Gissing's own are now a dwindling band. I know that Denise Le Mallier appreciated the interest that Pierre Coustillas, myself and several other people known to her took in her family's famous literary "connection" and in her own efforts to preserve his memory. She felt her own life had, through "Cousine Edith," been enriched by Gissing: I feel in turn that my life is the richer for having known her. I do hope she knew it.

Pierre Coustillas, who knew Denise Le Mallier for some twenty years, also wishes to contribute some recollections:

Recording the death of a friend is a melancholy task but in the case of Denise Le Mallier, however sad one may be, calling up one's memories is a simple duty one would be sorry to neglect. I was acquainted with her for twenty years and I am fully aware that, over that period, my work on Gissing would not have progressed in quite the way it did had not chance been so kind on a certain day in the spring of 1960. In the course of years she was on many occasions closely associated with my work in a manner which is echoed far too feebly, in acknowledgments and footnotes, but I should not like to give anyone the impression that she remained exclusively connected in my mind with my scholarly inquiries.

I first met her under circumstances which show how small is the world we live in. I was then teaching in a Paris *lycée* and one day when I happened to mention Gissing to a colleague in the staff-room, this colleague told me that she knew Mme Lannes, the owner of the villa in which Gissing had lived at Ciboure in 1902-03 and that Mme Lannes was a friend of Gabrielle Fleury's cousin, Mme Le Mallier, whose name was new to me. A visit to the latter promptly followed: it

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proved a landmark in more ways than one. Never before had I been personally in touch with a writer's relatives, and it was a remarkable experience to be shown many relics that had once been Gissing's and Gabrielle's possessions. From that day, we often saw each other and I was shown and lent a wealth of documents which proved particularly useful when I edited Gissing's correspondence with Gabrielle and remained valuable sources for subsequent work. Among the most memorable visits are two when I was accompanied by Shigeru Koike in 1964 and by Jacob Korg two years later. I also have pleasant memories of a trip we took on a bright summer day to Saint-Honoré-les-Bains and Autun in search of the houses Gissing had rented in the summers of 1900 and 1901. After she left Paris with her husband to settle in her ancestral home at Le Chasnay, by which time I had moved with my family first to Madagascar then to Lille, distance made visits less frequent, but this was compensated for by more regular correspondence. I shall treasure all these letters and postcards which came from familiar addresses because I find in them the expression of a personality which was always dear to me.

Denise Le Mallier, as could be testified by the many scholars who were at some time or other

in touch with her, was ever ready to help people – to answer questions, to lend photographs, to write down her recollections of this or that friend or relative about whom one wished to have some information – ever willing to look for some elusive document in her family archive the moment she knew that a correspondent or visitor would make a fair use of it. She was invariably modest and patient, humorous and generous. I never heard her censure anybody harshly, and if she happened to disapprove of someone’s doings or to deplore a situation in her own world, she did so in a way which was so tolerant that one wished one could always be as quiet and understanding as she was. Whatever subject was under discussion, she would voice a truly personal point of view which

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commanded sympathy and comprehension. Her moderation and leniency were by no means incompatible with enthusiasm for and eager interest in any project she thought worth while, whether literary, historical or artistic. But there was one thing she would not do – try to convince her correspondent or visitor that she was right and that he was mistaken. Her culture, kindness and geniality were to me a permanent source of refreshment and unalterable respect and esteem. The world needs many more people possessed of such shining virtues. Gissing scholars have lost one of their best friends – she was to the very end a discriminating admirer and staunch supporter of Gissing, but she will live on in many memories.

* * * * *

Book Reviews

Michael Collie, *The Alien Art: A Critical Study of George Gissing’s Novels*, Folkestone, Kent: William Dawson & Sons; Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, the Shoe String Press, 1979.

Whatever the shortcomings of Professor Collie’s earlier bibliography and his biography on Gissing, thoroughgoing students of the novelist will have to read *The Alien Art*. Although Collie fails to provide a coherent overview of George Gissing’s work, the critic does make some provocative suggestions about the novelist’s methods of writing and revision. The most valuable parts of the book deal with specific differences between the published novels and “the dozen or so” surviving manuscripts – a form of genetic textual criticism. For example, Collie’s very best chapter – on *Workers in the Dawn* – draws upon the manuscript at the University of Texas to reveal that, originally, Lizzie Clinkscales stood as Helen Norman’s chief rival for Arthur Golding’s affection.

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From this and other evidence, the critic argues convincingly that the introduction of Carrie Mitchell as Arthur’s prostitute wife came as a late afterthought in the writing of the novel. Such use of unexplored manuscript material constitutes the strength of Collie’s book.

Nevertheless, this critic’s notions about how one should choose between rival texts sometimes appear simplistic. For example, he argues that, because Gissing had to write his novels quickly, he did not take time for careful revision until later editions. In fact, Gissing also tended to rush through later revisions because of the same Grub Street pressures that had caused him to hurry in the first place. Consequently, his revisions may improve a novel or may also weaken it. We cannot judge the question a priori as Collie at times seems to do. Thus, in his discussion of the cut-down version of *New Grub Street* that Gissing made for Mlle Fleury’s French translation, Collie extols the major

surgery that eliminated details about the lives of struggling writers in order to emphasize the book's "domestic drama." But his praise of this truncated text suggests that he does not fully understand the greatness of the original version, in which the characters' literary struggles mesh so convincingly with their domestic lives. Collie's discussion of *Born in Exile* also seems to rest on the same assumption that Gissing's revisions always improved his fiction, though in this case he put things in instead of taking them out. According to the evidence of the fair copy manuscript at the Huntington Library, Gissing inserted, into his earlier draft before publication, scenes involving Sidwell and Buckland Warricombe and also Christian and Marcella Moxey. Collie considers all these additions splendid. But I, for one, find such a judgment odd. The strength of *Born in Exile* lies in its brilliant depiction of the intelligent yet self-tormented Peak. Indeed, the novel would have probably achieved a more consistent strength if the narration had stuck closer to Peak throughout. Such secondary characters as Christian Moxey, Earwaker, and Malkin serve as rather feeble

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counterparts of Peak. They seem particularly weak compared, for example, to the Yules and Whelpdales of *New Grub Street* – a novel more successful than *Born in Exile* at using a large cast of characters as counterpoint to an overriding theme. Yet whatever my disagreements with Collie's specific judgments, I must thank him for raising these questions of textual genesis. In doing so, he has performed a useful service for students of Gissing's fiction.

The second aspect of *The Alien Art* – an attempt at straight literary analysis – seems less successful and also less useful than Collie's textual criticism. As a literary critic, he takes an approach best epitomized by E. D. H. Johnson's *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry*, which Collie, however, does not mention. In Professor Collie's view, we have, on the one hand, the true Gissing – a despairing nihilist with a Continental outlook, a rebel against the restraints of Victorian fiction – and, on the other hand, the fake Gissing – a producer of timidly conventional novels aimed at winning acceptance from publishers and British readers. This simple dichotomy between the writer's inner self and his environment does not describe adequately the complex relationship of Gissing to late-Victorian culture. Though he sometimes removed or cleaned up passages because editors told him to do so, he also assimilated into his mind and art many basic restraints from his era's culture and literature. For all of his intermittent rebelliousness, Gissing in his lesser works often wrote as though the kingdom of Mrs. Grundy lay within him. When he broke relatively free in such works as *New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile*, he liberated himself from himself as well as from outside censorship.

Apart from the oversimplification of Collie's general thesis, he arrives at some strange evaluations of individual novels. For example, he dismisses the admittedly flawed *Isabel Clarendon* and *A Life's Morning* as mere "potboilers" – surely the wrong term. The first novel presents its male protagonist as an anguished neurotic, and the second describes the pathetic and squalid suicide of

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the heroine's father – hardly appropriate materials in works supposedly dashed off for mere profit. And Professor Collie calls the tone of *The Nether World* – Gissing's portrait of urban hell – "neutral, low-key, lacking in passion," although the tone, in fact, often conveys remarkable intensity of anguish. Then, too, Collie regards *The Crown of Life* as a "strong" novel – that embarrassingly sentimental late work which Gissing wrote, not to please the publisher or the public, but to convince himself and Gabrielle Fleury that he had the "genius of love." Collie does have some sensible things to say about Gissing's relationships to such Continental writers as Turgenev, Ibsen, and Zola. Yet

even here the analysis at times falters because of the critic's unwillingness to define his terms clearly. For example, he often uses *nihilism* as a synonym for *determinism* and thus fails to distinguish between these related but distinct doctrines in analyzing their use in Gissing's novels.

One unattractive element in *The Alien Art* could easily have been remedied by a little editorial blue-pencilling. Collie has a habit of flinging gratuitous insults at his fellow critics and scholars. I have jotted down a few of his contemptuous dismissals of others who have worked on Gissing: "foolishness," "particularly stupefying," "a person of sensibility may be chilled by [this] ... description of the novels," "a parish magazine element to these publications." Collie takes some particularly unfair shots at Jacob Korg's fine *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* for being too biographical in its approach – a complaint rather like censuring fish for swimming. *The Alien Art* would impress one far more favorably without these annotated incivilities.

Robert L. Selig, Purdue University Calumet.

Walter F. Greiner and Fritz Kemmler, eds. *Realismus-theorien in England (1692-1912): Texte zur historischen Dimension der englischen Realismusdebatte*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979, pp. xlvii + 222.

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In the preface to their remarkable anthology, which comprises essential documents of the literary "realism-debate," the editors formulate eight theses:

- 1 - The "realism-debate" is not a specific concern of nineteenth-century criticism: it has gone on for over two centuries, and is marked by a long tradition of persistent keywords: *life*, *observe*, *real*, *reality* and *truth*. It may be traced back to the old dichotomy *romance* vs. *novel*.
- 2 - The term *realism* is "inclusive" rather than "exclusive": it covers a large set of different approaches.
- 3 - The reception of French Naturalism marks no turning-point in the history of British "realism." The "naturalism-debate" is an integral part of the "realism-debate."
- 4 - The critics engaged in the "realism-debate" claim the social function of the novel: they want the realistic novel to have an effect on the state of society.
- 5 - The "realism-debate" centres upon Man as a social being and as a contemporary (cf. Honoré Daumier's saying "il faut être de son temps").
- 6 - The realistic novel can only act on the state of society if it confronts the reader with "truth": hence the importance of key-words such as *truth*, *reality* and *sincerity*.
- 7 - Attacks on "idealizing" and "sentimentalizing" conventions do not exclude the "heroic" and the "ideal" from realistic fiction.
- 8 - The presentation of truth is conditioned by a special point of view (cf. Thackeray's saying "I cannot help telling the truth as I view it").

The preface is followed by a well-chosen annotated anthology of documents: prefaces and introductions to novels, essays, reviews and articles in encyclopedias; they are given in chronological order from William Congreve's preface to *Incognita: or, Love and Duty Reconcil'd*

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(1692) to A. C. Benson's essay "Realism in Fiction" (1912). If the "promiscuous" reader of late

Victorian literature welcomes Arthur Morrison's "Preface to the Third Edition" of *A Child of the Jago* (1897), an excerpt from George Moore's *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals* (1885), Thomas Hardy's preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1892) and his essay "Candour in Fiction" (1890), the "monogamous" Gissing lover is glad to see the author's letter "To the Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 Dec. 1884, p. 2), his essay "The Place of Realism in Fiction" (*The Humanitarian*, July 1895, pp. 14-16) and Frederic William Farrar's review of *The Nether World* (*The Contemporary Review*, Sept. 1889, pp. 370-80). In his letter to the editor Gissing refutes Moore's attack on "Mudie's Circulating Library." He blames the novelist rather than the circulators of books:

English novels are miserable stuff for a very miserable reason, simply because English novelists fear to do their best lest they should damage their popularity, and consequently their income.

One of the best definitions of "realism" may be found in Gissing's "The Place of Realism in Fiction"

Realism ... signifies nothing more than artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life; it merely contrasts with the habit of mind which assumes that a novel is written "to please people," that disagreeable facts must always be kept out of sight, that human nature must be systematically flattered, that the book must have a "plot," that the story should end on a cheerful note, and all the rest of it.

The anthology is followed by a selective bibliography in three sections: the "realism-debate" in

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general, the "realism-debate" in England, various authors engaged in the "realism-debate." The book ends on a very useful index of terms covering the abundant vocabulary of the "realism-debate."

Werner Bies, Trier University

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A Gissing Exhibition in Wakefield

An exhibition, entitled "George Gissing in Wakefield: the novelist at home," is to be held in the Balne Lane Library in association with the Wakefield M.D.C. Service from July 12 to August 9, 1980. This exhibition, which is organized by the Gissing Trust, will coincide with and will be held as part of Wakefield Festival 1980.

The preliminary outline of contents comprises five sections: Section One: the family and its background; Section Two: Gissing as a boy; Section Three: Gissing homes and associations; Section Four: Later Associations; Section Five: Literary Associations – *A Life's Morning*. Among the many documents on show will be photographs of all the members of the family, and its various homes, of friends of T. W. Gissing, drawings, watercolours, books that once belonged to the family and miscellaneous material concerning the activities of the Gissings in Wakefield – in particular Thomas Gissing's educational, literary and scientific interests. A presentation copy of *A Life's*

Morning to Gissing's maternal aunt, Elizabeth Bedford Edmonds, which is mentioned in his diary, as well as a substantial batch of letters in which Gissing refers to Wakefield people and Wakefield matters, will contribute to make this exhibition a major Gissing event. A catalogue will be available.

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Notes and News

Mr. Kikuo Oku, who is an associate professor of English at Toho Gakuen Junior College in Nagoya City, Japan, has written and published a number of essays on Gissing in the last twelve years or so. The latest one appears under "Recent Publications": it is a carefully researched enquiry into a subject which has so far only been touched upon. It would be worth translating into English for the benefit of Gissing readers whose knowledge of Japanese is decidedly inferior to Shakespeare's admittedly inadequate knowledge of Greek. Mr. Oku demonstrates that though Gissing was "no botanist," his interest in and knowledge of plants were uncommon: they give his writings a special flavour. Plants play a significant part in *Henry Ryecroft*: they also appear in the writer's diary and other published works.

Here is a list of Mr. Oku's other articles:

- "Four Seasons of Pastoral Life' and 'Life in the Woods,'" *Akahagi* (periodical of Toho Gakuen, Nagoya), VIII, 1968, pp. 57-72. Offers a comparison of Gissing's *Ryecroft* and Thoreau's *Walden*.
- "Gissing and Books," *Toho* (periodical of Toho Gakuen, Nagoya), X, 1968, pp. 20-28. Takes up their relationship through his life, and depicts Gissing as a bibliophile.
- "A Family Trip," *Akahagi*, X, 1969, pp. 29-38. Translation of "One Way of Happiness" with an analysis of Gissing's Short Stories.
- "On *Workers in the Dawn*," *Akahagi*, XI, 1970, pp. 31-36. Treats its defects, socialism, autobiographical elements.

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- "Ryecroft and Gissing – *Hoc erat in votis*," *Toho School Bulletin*, II, 1975, pp. 62-65.
- "A Study of George Gissing's Short Stories," *Toho Gakuen Junior College Bulletin*, VIII, 1977, pp. 113-21.

Reviews of books on Orwell often contain allusions to Gissing for whom he cared more than any writer of his generation, though William Plomer was another keen admirer. Anthony Powell, in a review of *Orwell: the Transformation*, by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams (*Daily Telegraph*, November 15, 1979) reminds us that *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* have definite Gissing-like overtones. Indeed the heroine of the former book reads *The Odd Women* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is in many ways an ironical updated version of *New Grub Street*.

Mrs. Ernesta Spencer Mills, some of whose activities were reported in the January number, sends two other press cuttings (also from the *Daily Telegraph*), in which Gissing appears. On January 12, p. 15, Barbara Wace observed that the villages of Calabria described in *By the Ionian Sea* have hardly changed. Two weeks later (January 26, p. 11), David Holloway passed some comment on Gissing's remark in *The Nether World* that the foul language of that section of society had "never yet been exhibited by typography, and presumably never will."

Mr. Clifford Brook lectured on "Gissing in Wakefield" on January 9, 1980. The lecture was organized by the Wakefield Historic and Civic Societies.

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The Times for February 16, 1980 contained an article by Ian Bradley on John Spiers and the Harvester Press, whose maiden publication ten years ago was the reprint of *Isabel Clarendon*. Twelve other Gissing novels have since been reprinted by the same firm but *Isabel Clarendon* and *Demos* are out of print. The thirteenth title, announced in both hardback and paperback, will be *The Odd Women*.

Dr. Francesco Badolato's collection of Gissing short stories, *The Salt of the Earth* (Brescia: La Scuola) is now in its second edition.

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Recent Publications

- John Goode, "Woman and the Literary Text," in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, Edited and introduced by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, Penguin Books, 1976, reprinted 1977 and 1979, pp. 217-55. *The Odd Women* is discussed on pp. 247-51.
- John Lucas, "From Naturalism to Symbolism," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* (University of Nottingham), XXI, 1977, pp. 124-39. This essay is partly devoted to Gissing.
- Herbert J. Rosengarten, *English Studies in Canada*, Fall 1978, pp. 373-78. Review of Michael Collie's *George Gissing: A Bibliography*.
- Mario Curreli and Alberto Martino (eds.), *Critical Dimensions: English, German and Comparative*

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Literature Essays in Honour of Aurelio Zanco, Saste, 1978. Contains an essay by P. F. Kirby on "Norman Douglas, Gissing and Lenormant," pp. 397-418.

- John Halperin, *Modern Language Quarterly*, September 1979, pp. 322-23. Review of John Goode's *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*.
- Kathleen Blake, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, September 1979, pp. 228-32. Reviews of Gissing's *Diary* and Michael Collie's biography.

- Francesco Badolato, "Per il 'George Gissing Centre,'" *Italia Intellettuale*, April-September 1979, pp. 3-4.
- Francesco Badolato, "Scrittori vittoriani: Urbs in Rure," *Il Corriere di Roma*, October 7, 1979, p. 3. Review of *Victorian Writers and the City*.
- Karl Kroeber, "Recent Studies in the Nineteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Autumn 1979, pp. 739-40. Review of John Goode's *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*.
- Phyllis Grosskurth, *Victorian Studies*, Autumn 1979, p. 121. Review of Michael Collie's *George Gissing: A Biography*.
- Malcolm Cowley, "The Books that Made Writers," *New York Times*, November 25, 1979, p. 84. Mentions Gissing and *New Grub Street*.
- Kikuo Oku, "Gissing to Shokubutsu (Gissing and Plants - from his childhood to *Ryecroft*)," *Toho*

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Gakuen Junior College Bulletin (Nagoya), X, 1979, pp. 57-69.

- James T. Boulton (ed.), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. I, September 1901-May 1913, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Contains seven references to Gissing and his work.
- William Haley, "Gissing's storytelling," *Books and Bookmen*, January 1980, p. 54. Review of the three latest Harvester reprints: *Born in Exile*, *Denzil Quarrier*, *The Crown of Life*.
- Richard Gilman, "Reading, Writing and Riches," *The Nation* (New York), February 23, 1980, pp. 213-18. Discusses *New Grub Street*.
- Anon., "Gissing Letters Shed New Light," (Wakefield) *Express*, February 29, 1980.
- Anon., "In Brief," *The Guardian*, March 27, 1980, p. 17. A paragraph on the Harvester *Born in Exile* and *Denzil Quarrier*.
- William Haley, "T.L.S.," *The American Scholar*, Spring 1980, p. 230. A short passage on Gissing.