

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

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

Volume XVII, Number 3
July, 1981

-- 1 --

Gissing’s Mimic Man

Patricia Alden
St. Lawrence University
Canton, New York

Recent critics interested in the relationship between literature and ideology have contributed to the current reassessment of Gissing’s work. The view that Gissing offers sociologically significant, objective studies of the working class has been displaced by a recognition that whatever his subject matter, Gissing approaches it not as a neutral observer but as a writer conditioned by an ultra-conservative ideology. Alan Swingewood, for instance, claims that Gissing produced thesis

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Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor:
10, rue Gay-Lussac, 59110-La Madeleine, France,
and all other correspondence to: C. C. KOHLER,
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Subscriptions

Private Subscribers: £3.00 per annum
Libraries: £5.00 per annum

-- 2 --

novels aimed at demonstrating the inalterability of the social structure. (1) In his work reform is undesirable or impossible, the masses are debased beyond redemption, class is generally a reliable index of character, and culture, properly the attribute of a privileged few, must be defended by a rigid social hierarchy. In novel after novel the efforts of a good-hearted reformer are shown to be misguided or worse, and all attempts to cross class barriers, to join the poor or to raise them up, are defeated.

What is intriguing is why Gissing, the son of a lower-middle-class chemist, should have viewed the project of social mobility in such a reactionary light. As a talented, ambitious youth, coming of age in the last third of the nineteenth century, he was in a position to benefit substantially from liberalizing and democratizing currents in English society. However, the general social transformation which promoted social mobility was also destroying the cultural values which made social ascendance meaningful, and destroying too the hierarchy which had heretofore maintained those values.

In this fluid society the lower middle class was under especial pressure. Given the changing educational and career possibilities, upward mobility was newly possible, true, but also newly imperative. Failure to rise in a society in which many were rising was tantamount to being absorbed by the working class. Gissing, like others from his class, was under considerable pressure to rise, but in rising would want to distinguish himself from other participants in a social revolution which threatened culture and hierarchy. It is scarcely surprising that in this situation, Gissing and many others should feel obscurely compromised by what Thomas Hardy called "the modern vice of unrest." Moreover, the admiration which a lower-middle-class youth might have for an educated *haute bourgeoisie* competed with other emotions: envy, a sense of grievance over one's original exclusion from the desired social group, a sense of shame in belonging to an inferior class, and guilt

-- 3 --

for feeling that shame. In short, upward mobility for the lower-middle-class youth constituted a double-bind: he was damned if he succeeded, damned if he failed.

Given these circumstances, what did Gissing do? He was both industrious and ambitious enough to win scholarships to Owens College, Manchester, only to be expelled four years later for stealing money to support a young prostitute. His virtually assured career as a distinguished, socially secure scholar was thus dramatically aborted. After some years of intense poverty, Gissing lived as a working writer on the fringes of the lower middle class, in exile intellectually, socially, and psychologically from the establishment for whom he wrote – an establishment which he might once have joined.

The ultra-conservative ideological stance which Gissing adopts in much of his fiction thus belies the complexity of his attitude to class. In only one novel, the semi-autobiographical *Born in Exile* (1892), does he fully explore the contradictions involved in his commitment to conservative values. To do this, he had to create a new kind of protagonist in whom he combined for the first time two antithetical character types which he had used before in his fiction: the crass materialist and the alienated intellectual, represented in such pairs as Milvain and Reardon in *New Grub Street* or Mutimer and Eldon in *Demos*. The Milvains and Mutimers are demagogues, attracted to the urban jungle and willing to compromise themselves for success and material gain. The Eldons and Reardons are elitists who have an almost effete horror of "the masses." Excluded (in one case only temporarily) from upper-middle-class culture and society, they nevertheless hold to their ideals before the rising tide of vulgar materialism and maintain their integrity even in defeat. Godwin Peak, of *Born in Exile*, combines the pride, sensibility, and conservative values of the latter type with the lack of integrity of a Milvain or Mutimer. Through this new figure Gissing could explore the psychological double-bind of the ambitious lower-middle-class man.

-- 4 --

Godwin Peak, named for the libertarian philosopher, is an aggressively independent youth bent on rising by his own merits from the shopkeeping class he despises. He wins a scholarship to a

provincial college where he excels but is shamed into leaving without a degree when his cockney uncle sets up “Peak’s Dinin’ and Refreshment Rooms” across from the college gates. Ten years pass before we next see Godwin, beaten down by his years in a London chemical factory. His contempt for the lower middle and working class is even more intense, and he now argues that a rigid class structure alone can preserve culture – that culture from which he is still largely excluded, that culture which is rooted in Christian tradition which Peak, still a free-thinker, despises intellectually. He desires passionately to marry “a lady,” but despairs of any opportunity to realize this ambition or to find a more fitting channel for his talent and ambition in England.

A chance encounter with an old school friend gives Peak his opportunity. He visits the Warricombes at their country house and pretends to be a religious conservative studying for the ministry. This role, adopted on a momentary impulse, is so effective that Peak determines to play the conscious hypocrite and actually to enter the Church, a career he abhors intellectually but which is profoundly in harmony with his social convictions. He maintains his entrée with the Warricombes and eventually wins the love of their beautiful devout daughter; unmasked at the very moment of his declaration, Peak is hounded out of England to die as he was born – in exile from the only society which he feels would have nurtured his sensibility and talent. We close the novel uncertain how to judge Peak. Is he a talented man driven by society to desperate stratagems, or a repulsive interloper, a flunkey who proves that, irrespective of brains, birth and class tell? Does his fate affirm the stability of the social hierarchy or suggest that something is desperately wrong with the class system? The narrator preserves a coldly neutral, detached tone in analyzing Peak and thus fails to give us the necessary guidance.

In order better to grasp Peak’s peculiar situation and character, it may help to view him in

-- 5 --

terms of the distinction Lionel Trilling develops in *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Drawing on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trilling distinguishes between two kinds of selfhood: that of the “honest soul” and that of the “base self,” characterized by a “disintegrated consciousness.” The “honest soul,” a noble, cultivated figure, moves in a world of “affluent decorum,” a world which poses no obstacles to his harmonious development. This “honest soul,” Hegel says, exists “in a wholly harmonious relation to the external power of society, to the point of being identified with it. . . . In its consciousness there is no division, it is at one with itself. It is not shaped by its beneficent intentions towards others; its intention is wholly towards itself.” (2) This noble ideal of untroubled self-cultivation and integrity, with centuries of tradition behind it, dominates Peak’s imagination and is embodied, for him, in a bourgeoisified version, in the Warricombes.

By contrast, the “base self” is, historically, a man of low station, a *vilain* in the French, who becomes conscious that he resents a wealth and power structure which denies him material advantages. In order to develop, the “base self” must usurp the “honest soul,” or in an intermediate phase, must ingratiate himself with flattery. He is obliged to reject an harmonious relation to the external order and to begin, covertly and shamefully, “to carry out self-serving purposes beyond the limits appropriate to his station.” In short, to develop his “self” and to realize in himself the ideal of the “honest soul,” the “base self” is obliged to dissimulate and to pretend to be what he is not. Hegel argues that this process of self-estrangement which alienates the “base self” from the world is a step forward in the development of “spirit,” a step which frees the man from his unthinking bondage to material conditions.

This description of the development of the “base self” through alienation and disintegration provides a paradigm for Peak, although Gissing by no means shares Hegel’s enthusiasm for this line of development. To become one of the simple, integrated, refined souls who embody his aristocratic

ideal, Peak must basely compromise himself and play the hypocrite. He cannot succeed without such self-betrayal, but if he betrays himself, he is not worthy of success. This double-bind at the core of the novel – the impossibility of succeeding in the project of upward mobility – appears to confirm the reactionary view that the social structure is inalterable, and even desirably so, since thereby the integrity of the establishment is assured. But despite Gissing's (and Peak's) professed admiration for the "honest soul" and for the world of affluent decorum, Peak's disintegrated consciousness claims our attention as a more strenuous (or authentic) mode of being. And in the reader's mind his double-bind situation renders absurd (and thereby delegitimizes) both the inalterability of the social structure and the ideal of integrity by capturing both ideas within a paradox which cannot be resolved.

Let me briefly try to capture the flavor of Peak's development, that is, of his progressive estrangement and disintegration, and to indicate the nature of his appeal. Book One, which covers Peak's youth and college years, explores the agonizing self-consciousness of a youth of high intellectual ability and aspiration. His urgent wish to become a "self" is tied to his loathing of the commonness and vulgarity which surround him. To become what he believes he is (an "aristocrat of nature's own making") (3) he has to alienate himself from his lower-middle-class world; thus his snobbery is part of a desperate effort to create an identity apart from material and social circumstances. At the same time, Peak feels alienated in the upper-middle-class world of college and patrons. Among these he has to act the gentleman, a situation which substantially aggravates his self-consciousness. The narrator comments neutrally on Peak's position, remarking that all "intelligent young men in society" are obliged to cultivate a "double consciousness," to "learn to act a part ... whilst the intellect is spending its sincere energy on subjects unavowed" (p. 77). He concludes by observing, again neutrally, that "the perfectly graceful man will always be he who has

no strong apprehension either of his own personality or of that of others..." (p. 77).

This social and psychological background prepares us for the crucial scene in which Peak unexpectedly finds himself lunching at the Warricombes' and is overwhelmed by the luxury of an English country house. "Merely to step upon the carpet fluttered his senses; merely to breathe the air was a purification" (p. 181). He is filled with contradictory emotions: scorn for the family, for he feels himself to be their intellectual superior, and envy at their possessions and cultivation. At the same time he feels such a strong identification with this social situation that without any forethought he shapes himself into someone who belongs here. His hypocrisy about studying for the ministry begins as a verbal slip, not Freudian exactly but one which reveals a dual personality, the "double consciousness" of one obliged to *act* a gentleman. And by acting Peak feels that he has called forth a new self, one wholly in harmony with his surroundings. When the Warricombes drive him to a prospect later in the afternoon, tears fill Peak's eyes: a sign to him that he is fully able to appreciate this world and thus "deserves" it. Yet he is equally conscious that his tears manipulate the feelings of the Warricombes; throughout the day and following weeks, he incessantly examines any spontaneous emotion or thought as he struggles to maintain his disguise and to justify his hypocrisy to himself. Unable to sound himself, he argues: "Honest? Honest? Who is or can be honest? Who truly declares himself?" His motto is "*Foris ut moris, intus ut libet*" (On the outside, as custom would have it; inwardly as it pleases you), but inwardly Peak experiences "a tormenting metaphysical doubt of his own identity" (210-11, 272).

Throughout his career Peak serves as a mirror of society reflecting the class-consciousness, the

hypocrisy, the compromises and insincerities essential to its continuance. The sophistry Peak practices on himself is only an extreme form of the sort of intellectual compromise practiced by

-- 8 --

each of the Warricombes as they attempt to hold fast to Christian dogma and to their social prerogatives largely by refusing to examine the grounds of their convictions. Sidwell, the Warricombes' daughter, eventually recognizes that Peak's hypocrisy is of a piece with society's, but in the end she too is compromised when she chooses, in her own words, "comfort" and "respectability" rather than the passionate love she feels for Peak.

By the time Peak proposes to Sidwell, his consciousness is thoroughly disintegrated. His whole scheme has been part of his plot to marry "a lady," but now he has, in some sense, truly fallen in love with Sidwell. To his disgust, even in proposing marriage, Peak is conscious of "acting a part." He tells Sidwell that he "wants her to know him," yet he is still unwilling to reveal his hypocrisy. He then mentally accuses her of stupidity in failing to see through him; a desire to punish the "utterly unsuspecting" girl spurs him on to propose. In doing so, Peak makes an unwitting allusion to her dowry, and he is overwhelmed with shame, thinking that Sidwell will believe he is after her money. Peak then has to justify himself in his own eyes: "Would not the curse of poverty have suggested [the concern about money] to any man?" (395). Class-consciousness intensifies his divisive self-consciousness to a point which no acceptance by an "honest soul" can possibly heal.

In their final interview, after Sidwell's brother has brutally unmasked Peak, he offers in his defense a new definition of sincerity in which "self-examination" replaces the old-fashioned "freedom from falsification and dissimulation." He begins by speaking in the terms of the "noble world," wondering how Sidwell could love him when he is so "unlovable," so lacking in "the gift of pleasing – moral grace", and then tries to describe his character.

My strongest emotions seem to be absorbed in revolt; for once that I feel tenderly, I have a hundred fierce, resentful, tempestuous moods. To be suave and

-- 9 --

smiling in common intercourse costs me an effort. I have to act the part, and this habit makes me sceptical, whenever I am really prompted to gentleness. I criticise myself ceaselessly; expose without mercy all those characteristics which another man would keep out of sight. Yes, and for this very reason, just because I think myself unlovable – the gift of love means far more to me than to other men. If you could conceive the passion of gratitude which possessed me for hours after I left you the other day!...

In comparison with this sincerity, what becomes of the pretence you blame in me? If you knew how paltry it seems – that accusation of dishonesty! (p. 437)

This has something of the tone and method of argument of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* – something, too, of his perversity. Peak's sense of self, acute but disintegrated, compels him to probe, to analyze, to expose what other men keep hidden. Unpleasant and resentful as he is, he stands in positive contrast to the "honest self" whose failure to know itself has made it bland and flabby when it is not actually corrupt. While Peak's hypocrisy has occasioned a continual self-examination, society's is a cultivated blindness. The intensity of Peak's self-consciousness, which destroys the possibility of sincerity, pushes him towards a distinct experience of selfhood achieved not in spite

of, but because of, his self-division, self-contempt, and resentment.

Although Gissing expects his readers to deplore Peak's attempt to enter the Warricombes' world by devious means, the only moral vantage point from which we can criticize is that of the "honest soul," which by the end of the novel has been exposed in its simplicity by a "disintegrated consciousness" which dominates our imagination not because of what Peak values but because of what he has dared to violate. The only possibility for spiritual growth lies not in the country house

-- 10 --

from which Peak is excluded but in the disintegrative process which he undergoes.

In summary, by creating in Peak a new type of character, a corrupt advocate of conservative values, Gissing was able to reveal covertly his own double-bind situation in which upward mobility, though much desired, is felt to be inevitably compromising. The wish to transform the class structure is expressed in a necessarily distorted way, as the psychological obsession of his character, which Gissing is then free to condemn. We are made to feel that Peak's "exile" is due to his personality and moral character rather than to his class; in this way Gissing hides from himself and his reader the typicality of Peak's situation and the social contradictions exposed in the story.

The ideology which informs *Born in Exile* is unstable. By making Peak a spokesman for conservative values which Gissing elsewhere affirmed, Gissing offers, unintentionally, a critical perspective on those values. The world of affluent decorum is illuminated not from within but through the envious admiration of an outsider whose yearning to enter that world seems base and odious. Peak's mimicry of Tory attitudes, as on the occasion when he sheds tears over a rural prospect with the Warricombes, unwittingly exposes the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of his (and Gissing's) ideal. We may even suggest that Peak's dissembling reveals an unconscious, hostile intention to destroy the world of the "honest soul."

I do not argue that Gissing's criticism of conservatism is consciously intended but rather that it necessarily emerges from the form of the novel – from the new character he had created and from his choice to view the world of affluent decorum from a distance and through an outsider. The novel is *in toto* an example of what Fredric Jameson has elsewhere called "blank irony, a state in which judgment is called for but indefinitely withheld." (4) Even in correcting proofs for the novel, Gissing debated whether to change the spelling of Peak's name to "Peek" as if to underline his

-- 11 --

baseness, to judge him once and for all by the norms of the "honest soul." (5) We find, as Gissing must have found, that Peak and the novel resist such judgment.

- 1 - Alan Swingewood, *The Novel and Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 124-130.
- 2 - Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 37.
- 3 - George Gissing, *Born in Exile* (London: Thomas Nelson, n.d., p. 43. All further references to this work appear in the text.
- 4 - Fredric Jameson, "Authentic *Ressentiment*: The 'Experimental' Novels of Gissing," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 31, No. 2. (Sept., 1976), p. 145.
- 5 - Jacob Korg, "The Spiritual Theme of *Born in Exile*," in *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), p. 140.

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References to Wakefield in *Denzil Quarrier*

Clifford Brook
Wakefield

W. J. West in his booklet *George Gissing in Exeter* has made a convincing case for identifying Polterham with that town. I am proposing that as there are so many items in *Denzil Quarrier* linking it with Wakefield then at least it can be said that Gissing was using his memories of his home-town as well as what he could see around him whilst he was writing the novel in Exeter.

“In those days (1859) the traveller descending the slope of the Banwell Hills sought out the

-- 12 --

slim spire of Polterham parish church amid a tract of woodland, mead and, tillage.” (1) In *A Life's Morning* when describing Dunfield, or Wakefield, he had written “Dunfield offered no prominent features save the chimneys of its factories and its fine church, the spire of which rose high above surrounding buildings.” The tower and spire of Wakefield Parish Church, now Wakefield Cathedral, rises to 240 feet and according to *The Cathedral Church of Wakefield* by J. W. Walker “is the highest spire in Yorkshire and there are only nine taller in England.”

“Now the site of the thriving little borough was but too distinctly marked by trails of smoke from several gaunt chimneys – that of Messrs. Dimes & Nevison's blanket-factory, that of Quarrier & Son's sugar-refinery, and, higher still (said, indeed, to be one of the tallest chimneys in England), that of Thomas & Liversedge's soap-works.” If Wakefield had no sugar-refinery it had several blanket-making mills and the chimney of Hodgson & Simpson's soap works was renowned for its height. An article on it was published in the *Wakefield Express* in the 1930s and updated by R. Pearson for the *Wakefield Historical Society Journal* of 1976. Originally titled “Thornes Old Soapworks: A Monster Chimney,” it begins: “This monster chimney at Thornes (a district of Wakefield) which was built for the Calder Soap Works belonging to Messrs. Hodgson & Simpson is the tallest, neatest and most substantial chimney in the neighbourhood of Wakefield. Probably it is the tallest in the West Riding of Yorkshire.” It would have been well known to Gissing because it was erected in the twelve months from 19 September, 1870 to “late in the evening of” 19 September 1871. Its height was reduced in 1970 and the buildings are now used in wire-rope manufacture.

By comparison, and I am indebted to the Devon Public Library service for the information, trade directories for the area over the years 1850, '56, '66, '73, '78, '83, '85 & '89 show that Exeter had neither a soap-works nor any blanket-factories, and even the substantial sugar-refinery of

-- 13 --

Quarrier & Son seems much superior to what were, with one exception, classified as “sugar boilers”:

1878 John Pope, 77 Paris St.
 John Rowe, 2 King St.
 Samuel Snow, Rack St.

and obviously the same business as:

1885, sugar boiler Mrs. M. Snow, 7 Rack St.

1883 sugar refiner Thomas Saunders, 26 King Street.

but note:

1885 sugar boilers Thomas Saunders
 Joseph Stamp, 50 South St.

More pointed than these connections are the parallels between Wakefield Mechanics' Institution and Polterham Literary Institute. Readers will know that Gissing drew on his knowledge of Mechanics' Institutions on several occasions, and it is worth mentioning that the name does not give a true guide to the many activities carried on under its roof in Wakefield – lectures, library, newsroom, classes and a savings bank. George attended lectures and used the library, his father (1868-70) and later his brother Algernon (1884-85) were its honorary librarian and his sister Ellen sang at a concert that was one of the Monday night meetings.

“The Polterham Literary Institute was a hot-bed of Radicalism.” Even as late as 1882, by which time the partisanship of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution was becoming less marked, the *Tory Wakefield Herald* of 11 November had the following report of one of its lectures: “Hitherto notwithstanding a Radical tinge has been observable there we have looked upon it as a non-political educational organisation but after that evening's exposé we may fairly regard it as a Radical agency”.

“At the founding of the [Polterham] institute no such thing had been foreseen.” The Rules of

-- 14 --

the Mechanics' Institution adopted on 17 July 1843, eighteen months after the Institution was formed (there had been an earlier one which existed until about 1835), carefully specified “no political or religious subject shall be introduced at any of the Society's Meetings,” but these rules were in preparation at the same time that there were differences being expressed at meetings of its executive committee over the letting of the lecture hall (called the Music Saloon) for an Anti-Corn Law meeting, and that political campaign was a plank of the Liberal Party's programme. On 3 March 1843 a motion “that the Room be let for no political party or Religious Meetings” was rejected in favour of an amendment “that the Room be let to all purposes.”

“A mere enumeration of the committee sufficed to frighten away all who held by Church, State, and Mr. Welwyn-Baker.... It was clear that the supporters of law and decency must stir themselves to establish a new Society.” In 1845 the Wakefield Church Institution, with strong Church of England connections, was formed as a rival to the Mechanics' Institution and despite their names each became associated with one of the two opposing political parties. For example between 1856 and 1870, the years during which T. W. Gissing belonged to it, every member of the executive committee of the Mechanics' Institution who voted in parliamentary elections voted Liberal (in those days poll books were published after each election showing how individual electors cast their votes); twelve of them were at some period of their lives Liberal members of the Town Council, and two were Members of Parliament supporting that party. I haven't such precise details of the names of the committee of the Church Institute though where I have identified them they were Tories as in general were nearly all the Church of England ministers in Wakefield, different from the non-conformist ministers who voted Liberal. There were exceptions to this political alignment such as Sir John Hay, Tory M.P. for Wakefield from 1862 to 1865, and not a local man. He paid an annual

-- 15 --

subscription to the Mechanics' Institution for those three years. M. B. Hick, from whom T. W. Gissing bought his chemist's business, was a member of the executive committee of the Mechanics' Institution from 1847 to 1849 but did not attend any of its meetings after 25 September 1848. Then, after speaking at the annual general meeting in 1850, he played no part in the Society for many years – by some means he spoke, at a committee meeting in 1860 when he objected to the continuing tenancy of the Wakefield News Room – but significantly he was a Tory town councillor from 1857 to 1860 and was prominent in the Church Institute, being its Secretary from 1852 to 1856. Unexpectedly he reappeared in the records of the Mechanics' Institution in 1883, when he moved a nomination at that year's annual general meeting.

“How could respectable people make use of a library which admitted works of irreligious and immoral tendency? It was an undoubted fact (the *Mercury* made it known) that of late there had been added to the catalogue not only the ‘Essays of David Hume’” etc. This can be matched by a newspaper cutting and a broadsheet printed to rebuff the article, both of which I found stuck into the earliest minute book of the Institution. *Wakefield Journal*, 4 August 1848: “A clergyman of our acquaintance observed in a solicitor's office, at which he happened to call, that Tom Paine's ‘Age of Reason’ was laid on the desk.... [The Clerk] opened the book, and upon the end paper were pasted the rules of the library of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institution of which our friend, the clergyman, was a vice-president.... Here was circulated a book, apparently with the authority of a clergyman of the Established Church, of a most irreligious, and, to young minds, of a most dangerous tendency.” The reply was circulated under the heading “Wakefield Mechanics' Institution” and began: “The Committee reluctantly feel themselves called upon to take notice of some vague insinuations which have appeared in the *Wakefield Journal* imbued evidently with deep ill-will to the Institute as a place of popular education, and calculated to damage it in the view of

-- 16 --

those who believe such accusations without inquiring into their truth or falsehood.... The Mechanics' Institute is of NO PARTY, unless the friends of Popular Education be a party.... The story about Paine's *Age of Reason* being in its Library is simply false. The book is not there and it never was there. *The Rights of Man* in answer to Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution, is, the Committee suppose, ignorantly confounded with a very different work; having been received among books which formed the original nucleus of the Library, but withdrawn some years ago. The same book was at some time found by [the Rev.] Mr. Cameron on the shelves of the Wakefield Subscription Library.”

Gissing wrote (p. 43) that three of the members of the Polterham Literary Institute – and I presume that they were influential ones and were on its executive committee – were a coal-merchant, a draper and a dentist. Of the 34 committee members of the Wakefield Mechanics Institution in 1862 and/or 1868 whose employment I have been able to seek out, there were 5 corn merchants, 4 physicians or surgeons, 4 solicitors or barristers, 2 ministers of religion, 2 worsted spinners, 2 plumbers, and one each of banker, wine-merchant, agent, pawnbroker, gun-maker, cooper, stone merchant, blanket manufacturer, dealer in blankets, chief clerk of the Probate Office, book-binder, schoolmaster, chemist (T. W. Gissing), fruiterer and draper. The last named was Henry Benington whose importance to Gissing studies has recently become more marked as I have realised that not only was he a brother-in-law of James Wood, the Headmaster of Lindow Grove School, Alderley Edge, where George and his brothers were sent after the death of their father, but also the brother of Isobel Binks, whose husband, John, a corn factor, appears to have been one of T. W. Gissing's closest friends. George's diary shows that he visited the then widowed Mrs. Binks

and Henry Benington on successive days – 4 and 5 April 1895 – during a visit to Wakefield.

The Monday evening lectures starting in October each year and occurring weekly over six

-- 17 --

months were immensely popular. I have only one annual report to hand, that for 1885-86, but it is typical, and it says “The attendance at the lectures and entertainments has been very large: in one or two cases the capacity of the saloon was insufficient for the members,” and this would imply some 500 being present. The lectures covered a wide range of topics though I have noticed that over the years they included more that offered light relief. Here are the first few for that session: Amateur Concert; A Journey from Malta to Tripoli, Tunis and Carthage; Cuttlefish, Snails and Oysters; Sketches, Recitals and Songs; Tennyson’s Minor Poems; Britain to Japan, with a Peep at the Japanese at Home; On the Colour of the Sky, Clouds and Sea – Illustrated by Oxy-Hydrogen Lantern; and Flowers and their Guests.

The scenes in *Denzil Quarrier* describing the parliamentary election, and in particular the selection of the Liberal candidate, could have been based on Gissing’s childhood memories – he was then approaching his eighth birthday – or what he learnt from his father of the election campaign in Wakefield in 1865. As will be seen below T. W. Gissing was involved in the inner councils of the Liberal Party’s organisation during that election.

There is an account of these activities in the report of the “House of Commons Select Commission on the Wakefield Election Petition presented Thursday 24 April 1866” (John Goodchild Collection). This Inquiry studied allegations of bribery and corruption committed by supporters of the successful, Liberal candidate. In evidence from witnesses it was stated that ten members of the Liberal Registration Committee – that is to say subscribing members of the Liberal Party – at least eight of whom, including T. W. Gissing, being committee members of the Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution, met and formed themselves into “a committee for conducting the Election” on behalf of the Liberal Party. As in the novel the sitting member, Sir John Hay, was Conservative. This self-appointed committee selected a suitable candidate, and Samuel Bruce and

-- 18 --

Frederick Thompson, two of the members, were delegated to call upon that person, W. H. Leatham. They promised to collect subscriptions to pay his expenses, and Frederick Thompson and R. B. Mackie acted as guarantors up to a maximum liability of £650. Leatham accepted the nomination, was successful and represented Wakefield until 1868.

The central committee rooms for the Liberals were in the Mechanics’ Institution building – a matter made explicit by one of the witnesses for the petitioners who described the relative positions of the clerks’ room, the committee room and the large, so-called Music Saloon. He was attempting to prove that he had been able to see what was going on in the committee room whilst he was sitting in the clerks’ room.

Gissing’s father was not called as a witness but his name occurred in the report on several counts. He was one of the ten members of the committee; he booked the committee room; and he shared the canvas of St. John’s Ward (the St. Luke’s of *A Life’s Morning*) with his friend Samuel Bruce, who was the Party’s election agent. Also during 1865 T. W. Gissing was the Liberal Party’s Overseer of the Electoral Register and that led to acrimonious exchanges in three successive editions of the (Tory) *Wakefield Journal and Examiner* in the October of that year.

As to Revivalist Meetings, they would not be limited to any one town but I have not found any references in local sources to campaigns in Wakefield that caused such domestic problems as to Mr.

Tomkins, who had to lock up his wife in their bedroom. The item quoted below from the *Wakefield Express* of 1 April 1882 seems almost sedate:

“Wakefield Open Air Mission

On Sunday evening last Mr. Rowlinson again conducted a large open air service at the top of Westgate from 6.30 to 8.30. The audience listened to the earnest addresses with unabated interest. The mission harmonium and gospel carriage were brought into requisition.”

-- 19 --

Though no part of my argument, I mention that Liversedge pronounced Liversidge, the name of Quarrier’s brother-in-law, is a hamlet ten miles from Wakefield, and a mile from Cleckheaton where the novelist’s uncle, another George Gissing, was living in 1870 at the time of Thomas Gissing’s death.

1 - The quotations from *Denzil Quarrier*, unless otherwise stated, are all from pp. 38-39 of the Lawrence & Bullen edition (1892) or the 1979 Harvester Press edition, which has the same pagination.

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Notes on *Workers in the Dawn*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the AMS reprint of the 1880 edition published by Remington & Co.]

Volume 1

- p. 22, l. 10.

“... that treasure upon earth which the clergy doubtless prize merely as a type of the heavenly treasure which will one day be theirs.” A reference to: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . .” St. Matthew, VI.19.

- p. 59, l. 16.

“... whom I should have called Benoni rather than Augustus...” A reference to Genesis, XXXV. 18. “Benoni” means “son of my misery.”

- p. 71, l. 23.

“... pointing a moral...” Johnson: *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, l. 230: “To point a moral, or adorn a tale.”

-- 20 --

- p.101, l. 27.

“There is a happy land, far, far away.” From a hymn by Andrew Young, again mentioned on

p.244.

- p. 110, l. 11.
“Not Schecabac at the Barmecide’s table, not Sancho Panza, when Dr. Rizio seemed to bid fair to starve him in his island...” The Barmecide is a reference to the Story of the Barber’s Sixth Brother in the *Arabian Nights*. The episode of Sancho Panza occurs in Part II, ch. 47 of *Don Quixote*. The doctor’s name appears to be Recio.
- p.127, l. 27.
“Foxes has ’oles, an’ the birds o’ the air has nests...” A reference to St. Matthew, VIII.20.
- p. 130, l. 6.
[He] had been in his youth a shining light...” Proverbs, IV.18: “The path of the just is as the shining light.”
- p. 130, l. 27.
“How doth the little busy bee, | Improve each shinin’ hower?” From Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs for Children*, XX, “Against Idleness and Mischief.”
- p. 131, l. 14.
“. . . when I grow’d to be a man.” Mr. Rumball must have thought of I Corinthians, XIII.11: “When I became a man, I put away childish things.”
- p. 132, l. 14.
“She was a notable woman who had, like Dogberry, ‘had losses’...” *Much Ado About Nothing*, IV.ii.90: “A fellow that hath had losses.”
- p. 146, last line.
“... at the first blast of the summoning trumpet...” An allusion to a pamphlet by John Knox:

-- 21 --

The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women.

- p. 148, l. 25.
“... the love of sweetness and light...” A phrase coined by Matthew Arnold and used in the Preface to *Culture and Anarchy*.
- p. 150, last line.
“... there were more things in heaven and earth than his philosophy e’er dreamt of...” *Hamlet*, I. v.166.
- p. 165, l. 3.
“... the still, small voice of conscience...” 1 Kings, XIX.12: “... and after the fire a still, small voice.” Again used on p. 186 in vol. II.
- p. 175, l. 9.
“... these smooth-tongued publicans and sinners?” St. Matthew, IX.11: “Why eateth your

Master with publicans and sinners?”

- p. 178, l. 20.
“For the night cometh, wherein no man can work.” St. John, IX.4 (The Authorized Version has *when* for *wherein*).
- p. 186, l. 17.
“I could sit in sack-cloth and ashes...” A common biblical expression (e.g. *Esther*, IV, 1).
- p. 191, l. 24.
“... the reading, marking, learning, and inward digestion of the poets.” From *The Book of Common Prayer*, Collects. Second Sunday in Advent.
- p. 193, l. 15.
“... the backward abyss of time...” *The Tempest*, I.ii.49: “What seest thou else | In the dark backward and abysm of time?”
- 22 --
- p. 213, l. 8.
“... to lay up out of the reach of moth, rust, and – ” Another reference to St. Matthew, VI.19: “Where moth and rust doth corrupt.”
- p. 224, l. 23.
“... sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.” From St. Matthew, VI.34 (The Authorized Version has *sufficient unto the day*).
- p. 257, l. 22.
“You who are still at the kittenish age of sixteen...” According to this letter Maud is seventeen as against Helen’s sixteen. However, on p. 197 we are told Maud is two years older than Helen.
- p. 277, l. 26.
“... in ‘admired disorder.’” *Macbeth*, III.iv.110: “With most admired disorder.”
- p. 294, l. 10.
“... of the earth earthy.” *1 Corinthians*, XV. 47: “The first man is of the earth, earthy.”
- p. 298, l. 1.
“... obstinate questionings...” Wordsworth, *Ode, Intimations of Immortality*, IX.
- p. 317, l. 16.
“... a veritable daughter of the Philistines.” From 2 Samuel, I.20.
- p. 319, l. 30.
“as the hart panteth for the water brooks.” Psalm XLII.1. (The Authorized Version has “after the water brooks.”)
- p. 351, l. 21.

“A man’s a man for a’ that.” Robert Burns: “For a’ that and a’ that.”

-- 23 --

- p. 377, l.30.

“... I hold with the old philosophers that no man should desert his post till Fate calls him from it.” Pythagoras appears to have said that “we ought not to quit our post without the permission of Him who commands.”

Volume II

- p. 2, l.3.

“Let us then be up and doing...” From Longfellow: “A Psalm of Life.”

- p. 13, l. 23.

“... even if deceived seventy times seven...” A biblical phrase (St. Matthew, XVIII.22).

- p. 39, chapter heading “Many-coloured life.”

From Johnson: *Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane* (“Each change of many-colour’d life he drew”).

- p. 42, l. 31.

“Beauty is truth...” Keats: “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”

- p. 77, l. 29.

“Lecture me soundly, and with as little remorse as if I were the fool in the Proverbs.” Probably a reference to Proverbs, XXVII.22: “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.”

- p. 86, l. 25.

“... the Scarlet Woman of Babylon...” A reference to Revelations, XVII.4: “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour.”

-- 24 --

- p. 87, l. 15.

“... Miss Lydia Rake-at-Heart...” Perhaps a reference to Pope: *Moral Essays*, Ep. II, To Mrs. M. Blount, l. 216 (“But every woman is at heart a rake”).

- p. 87, l. 29.

“Glory to God in the Highest!” St. Luke, II.14.

- p. 90, l. 19 .

“a coign of vantage...” *Macbeth*, I.vi.7.

- p. 128, l. 29.

“As good almost kill a man as kill a good book.” Milton: *Areopagitica*.

- p. 152, chapter heading “The Shadow of Death.” Job, X.21.
- p. 179, l. 18.
 “I should be sorry to see you, or such as you, suffer for the faults of your fathers...”
The Book of Common Prayer (Holy Communion. Response to Commandments) refers to “the sins of the fathers.”
- p. 184, l. 16.
 “a cry of players.” *Hamlet*, III.ii.294.
- p. 187, l. 18.
 “What was Helen Norman to him, or he to Helen Norman?” Echoing *Hamlet*, II.ii.593: “What’s Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba.”
- p. 215, l. 2.
 “... the momentary sickness of hope deferred...” Proverbs, XIII.12: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”
- 25 --
- p. 232, last line.
 “... those who are going the broad way...” St. Matthew, VII.13: “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”
- p. 235, l. 6.
 “Most of them appeared to be between sixteen and seventeen years old...” Surely a strange way of expressing the age of Helen’s pupils.
- p. 259, l. 16.
 “... to read the signs of the times...”
 St. Matthew, XVI.3: “Can ye not discern the signs of the times?”
- p. 301, l. 28.
 “The mirth was resumed, and sped on fast and furious.” Robert Burns: “Tam o’ Shanter,” I, 143,
 “The mirth and fun grew fast and furious.”
- p. 381, l. 13.
 “The leopard can’t change his spots, you know.” Jeremiah, XIII.23: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?”
- p. 397, l. 6.
 “... anyone who lightens the darkness of his perverted soul...” From *The Book of Common Prayer*. Evening Prayer. Third Collect: “Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord”.

Volume III

- p. 35, l. 6.
 “a being of such large discourse, looking before and after.” *Hamlet*, IV.iv.36: “Sure he that

made us with such large discourse, / Looking before and after....”

-- 26 --

p. 56, l. 17.

“... fair as the land of Beulah...” A reference to Isaiah, LXII, 4 and also to *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

- p. 71, first line.

“He acquired the habit of talking aloud to himself...” In *New Grub Street* (ch. XXV) Reardon recites aloud in the street, also during a period of unhappiness.

- p. 81, l. 8.

[Arthur remembers a translation of the *Odyssey*] “... he could not help connecting the vari-coloured smoke before him with his imagination of the smoke rising from the Greek altar in some sea-girdled isle made beautiful under an Ionian sunset”. Probably a reference to an episode in Book X of the *Odyssey*, translated as follows by S. O. Andrew:

“An island I saw, ring'd round by the limitless sea,
The island itself lying low, and there in the midst,
Behold! There was smoke going up through the forest of trees.
And quickly I climbed to a lofty crag that there was
And saw the smoke that arose from the wide-way'd earth
Through the thick woodland, where Circe had fire in her halls.”

- p. 83, l. 30.

“... the very valley of the shadow of death.” Psalm XXIII.4.

- p. 102, l. 22.

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Isaiah, XXII.13 (The Authorized Version says “to-morrow we *shall* die”).

-- 27 --

p. 192, l. 10.

“Like the lump of leaven in the old parable, it ultimately leavens the whole mass.” The quotation is slightly confused. In 1 Corinthians, V.6 we find: “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

- p. 200, l. 9.

“Smales”.

The name was again used for a vulgar character in *The Unclassed*.

- p. 200, l. 32.

“... like Marcellus in the ghost scene.” A reference of course to *Hamlet*, I.i.

- p. 229, first line

“... a rock of offence...” A biblical phrase from Isaiah, VIII.14: “For a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.”

- p. 237, l. 25.

“The rugged rims of thunder brooding low”. The Globe Edition of Tennyson’s Works has “ragged rims”.

- p. 263, l. 3.

“Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof”. St. Matthew, VI.34 (The Authorized Version has “unto the day”).

- p. 275, chapter heading “Whom God hath joined.”

From *The Book of Common Prayer*. Solemnization of Matrimony. The Prayer.

- p. 277, first line.

“... the finger wrote ruin upon the walls...” A reference to Daniel, V.

-- 28 --

- p. 283, l. 5.

“... to harden his heart...” The phrase is of biblical origin: “Harden not your heart,” Psalm XCV.8.

- p. 408, l. 27.

“Those of you who have only just made a beginning.” The use of “who” is of some interest here as it undoubtedly refers to a plural. In his *Commonplace Book* Gissing gives the very doubtful “rule” that “you who” is addressed to only one person.

Reviews

George Gissing, *Eve’s Ransom*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.; London: Constable; Toronto: General Publishing Company.

Eve’s Ransom is something of a special case in Gissing’s fiction. The story was commissioned by C. K. Shorter for the *Illustrated London News*, in which it was serialized from January to March 1895. When Lawrence & Bullen published the novel in April, Gissing noted that it sold better than any of his previous books, a statement which was indeed at once misleading and untrue. Misleading because the sales of a six-shilling novel could not be compared with those of two- or three-deckers, which means that the relative success of *Eve’s Ransom* was only significant in the light of the comparative failure of *Denzil Quarrier*. Untrue because the sales of each of the five Smith, Elder titles had already exceeded what those of *Eve’s Ransom* bade fair to be, but it must be said in Gissing’s defence that Smith, Elder never volunteered any information about titles of which they were the sole copyright owners.

The fact remains, however, that the 2,000 copies printed by Lawrence & Bullen sold out in a

-- 29 --

month and a second printing of 2,000 was ready in May. On the whole the story appealed to readers more than to reviewers, some of whom – the intellectual rear-guard obviously – could not see that the days of the long-winded mid-Victorian narrative had come to an abrupt end the year before. The *Guardian*, which was the organ of the Church of England, admitted with candour: “We don’t like his books,” and called *Eve’s Ransom* “a faithful photograph of a very unpleasant little bit of life.” The *World*, with its upper-class audience, pronounced it “distinctly depressing ... colourless, damp and gloomy, a rather monotonous study in monochrome.” But there were more intelligent responses. The *Academy* praised Gissing’s “realism without nastiness” in “a love-story in the subdued tones of the middle-class life, without any of the misleading glamour of romance.” Young H. G. Wells lauded Gissing’s achievement in the *Saturday Review*, stressing like some other reviewers the author’s hatred of poverty. What disturbed critics most was his new narrative method – they failed to understand his discreet irony because they construed his self-effacement as a sign of dullness. No one saw, as Adeline Tintner showed recently, that *Eve Madeley* was Gissing’s *Mona Lisa*.

The book’s reputation since 1895 has been a little uncertain. Frank Swinnerton praised it in his critical study, because of its modernity and Bertrand Russell, in his *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916), had a kind word to say about it, summing up the action humorously: “The heroine, with various discreditable subterfuges, throws over the poor man whom she loves in order to marry the rich man whose income she loves still better.” Somehow the novel was kept in print until the second world war, with the Sidgwick & Jackson and Ernest Benn editions, dated 1911 and 1929 respectively, but no further attempt to revive the book in England or in America is on record, as the AMS reprint did not aim at the reading public at large. So the present Dover-Constable

-- 30 --

edition is all the more welcome as it is unexpected, nearly as much as reprints of the Russian, French and Dutch translations would be. It is an attractively produced paperback in a rather unusual format which makes the story look shorter than it ever seemed in the previous editions, and it is perhaps in order to add, as the publishers proudly declare on the back cover that “pages are sewn in signatures, in the method traditionally used for the best books, and will not drop out, as often happens with paperbacks held together with glue.” The cover design, in black and grey, is a pen drawing of the Strand in the 1880s. For £1.75 purchasers will have the text of the novel (125 pages) without any critical apparatus. The blurb on the back cover quotes H. G. Wells’s hyperbolic judgment – “the best and least appreciated of his novels” – but readers of *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile* and *The Odd Women*, all of them in print at reasonable prices, know better. Dover should have refrained from pushing the sale of their wares by writing that “the books that made him famous remain obscure, out of print or available in expensive, unscholarly facsimiles.” Let us take the charitable view that such a statement is due to ignorance rather than to a desire to offend some publishers and scholars whose names are tolerably well-known. – Pierre Coustillas

Gisela Argyle, *German Elements in the Fiction of George Eliot, Gissing, and Meredith*. Frankfurt am Main, Bern and Las Vegas: Peter Lang.

“The German elements in Gissing’s fiction” is indeed a fruitful subject. Forty-five years ago Samuel Vogt Gapp tackled a subject of a similar nature in his *George Gissing, Classicist*, so deep on Gissing was the influence of the classics. There would be similar work to do on Gissing’s relationship with France, its people and literature as well as on nineteenth-century Italy. And the list

could be lengthened a little with America and modern Greece, and possibly footnotes on Spain and Switzerland. That Germany has been dealt with first is quite appropriate. If ever a catalogue of what he read is compiled, German literature will be seen to have appealed to Gissing earlier than French literature. Italian literature came third in chronological order and in bulk, and we have no difficulty in ascertaining when he turned to *Don Quixote* in the original and to modern Spanish literature.

In the present book which, like many other publications available from German and Swiss publishers, is a photostat of a typescript, Gisela Argyle has attempted a task which is easy enough to define. The titles of her three chapters on Gissing (pp. 86-146 with some fifteen additional pages of references) speak for themselves: IV. George Gissing's Relation with Germany; V. The German Link in the Double Art; VI. The German Link in the Double Life. She begins with an interesting and useful inventory of Gissing's comments on Germany, its life and literature, which is based on two essential sources – the ageing but still serviceable *Letters to the Family*, and, of course, the *Letters to Eduard Bertz*. The unpublished correspondence contains a good deal more material than is recorded here, but Mrs. Argyle has charted the outlines of a vast terrain in a way which is fully reliable and well-informed. She covers the years from Gissing's stay in America when he asked Algernon in German whether he had read *Daniel Deronda*, then just published, to the short trip to Germany on the way back from Italy in the spring of 1898, when Gissing was so alarmed by what he saw in Bertz's company that he hurried on to Britain. She speculates in passing on the part Heine's writings may have had in the shaping of the *Ryecroft Papers*, and one would like to see her pursue this idea. When Gissing sent his copy of the *Buch der Lieder* to his younger sister in December 1886, he described it as having been for him "the beginning of an epoch of intellectual life." His parting with it did not mean he had outgrown his interest in Heine, simply that having the

four big volumes of the *Sammtliche Werke* (Hamburg, 1876; signed G. R. Gissing May/79), he could as it were indulge in some propaganda.

It is Gisela Argyle's belief that "two prominent features of Gissing's craft are partly associated with the German sources of inspiration and confirmation: the intellectualism of his novels and the development of a Continental type of realism." She connects these aspects of his art with Goethe and Schopenhauer respectively, and she has indeed much more to say on Gissing and Schopenhauer than on the other intellectual relationship: her survey of Schopenhauer's influence should be placed beside C. J. Francis's influential essay first published in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* in 1960. She covers the novels from *Workers in the Dawn* to *The Whirlpool*, concentrating mainly on the early works. That *New Grub Street* is overlooked must surely be due to C. J. Francis's having dealt in detail with this title, but some readers, like the present reviewer, will probably feel that Harold Biffen deserved some kind of attention. He is a striking embodiment of Schopenhauer's views on artistic creation. However, Mrs. Argyle certainly did not intend to deal exhaustively with the Schopenhauerian currents in Gissing's fiction. Her article on *The Whirlpool* to be published in the next number of the *Newsletter* will be no repetition of her comments on the same novel in the book under review. Apparently no one before her has shown that the Ryecroftian definition of art "as a satisfying and abiding expression of the zest for life" is indeed in harmony with the doctrine of the German philosopher; or again pointed out the similarity between the notion of an intellectual aristocracy as a basis for the reconstruction of society aired by Gissing in a letter to Bertz and Schopenhauer's view on the subject.

The survey of the appearances made by Germany in the novels also makes stimulating reading. Here again some omissions are striking. *Ryecroft*, which is considered in another context, may have

-- 33 --

been deliberately disregarded, but what about John Yule at the beginning of *New Grub Street*? Each reader will doubtless be able to add a few minor, though significant, examples. He will also be in a position to read another treatment of the same subject – Gissing and Germany – when the Enitharmon Press publishes Patrick Bridgwater's book. Meanwhile, should a second edition of Mrs. Argyle's book be called for, two small factual errors could be corrected. Kingcote's first name is not Arthur, but Bernard; and Meredith never had to read *A Life's Morning* in his capacity as publisher's reader. This novel was published by Smith, Elder, not by Chapman & Hall.— Pierre Coustillas.

Jean-Pierre Michaux, ed., *George Gissing: Critical Essays*. London: Vision Press Ltd; Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books.

There are several obvious criteria by which to assess such a book as the present critical anthology – are the essays reprinted important and significant enough to justify inclusion? were they so difficult of access that reprinting them was desirable? Is the book properly edited? The publishers' blurb states that "the student of Gissing ... until now has had very little collected criticism at his disposal." Is this true?

The last question has already been answered in the *Newsletter*. There are two volumes in print published by Frank Cass & Co. in 1968 and Routledge in 1972 which offer some 700 pages of critical material as against about 200 in the book under review. But as the essays in the present collection (with the exception of Orwell's posthumous review of *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool*) are not to be found in the other Gissing anthologies, the new volume should be welcome. It is divided into two parts. Part One is about the man and his work. Part Two deals with *New Grub*

-- 34 --

Street. It is a good thing to have here Ellen Gissing's piece "George Gissing, a Character Sketch" (*Nineteenth Century*, September 1926) and Austin Harrison's 1906 influential essay. Not that all Harrison's facts are correct, but his affectionate recollections of his tutor have a flavour which, recaptured in *Frederic Harrison: Thoughts and Memories* (1926), is not easily forgotten. Something of the touching ring of the more personal obituaries lingers in these recollections, and I am inclined to believe that sentiment, if duly controlled, does not fare badly by the side of purely intellectual analysis. Clearly, Ellen Gissing and Austin Harrison strike a pleasant note at the beginning of the book, and it is a fortunate thing that they are followed by the little-known but worthy article which Robert Shafer, the editor of *Workers in the Dawn*, published in the *American Review* in September 1935. Then we take a long jump forward with John Halperin's essay "How to Read Gissing," which is reprinted from *English Literature in Transition* (1977). This is a general article which might well have been placed where it is expected by chronological standards. Next comes a rarely quoted essay by Morley Roberts, "The Exile of George Gissing" (*Albany Magazine*, Christmas 1904), the main idea of it (a debatable one) being that Gissing's best books are those in which he dealt with the theme of social exile. This piece, as those who now read it for the first time will readily understand, somewhat disturbed Gabrielle Fleury and Clara Collet when it appeared. The next articles cover narrower areas of the novelist's work. "Gissing's Characterization: Heredity and Environment," by

C. J. Francis, is a study that broke new ground while Lloyd Fernando's exploration of Gissing's so-called anti-feminism, available in his recent book on the "New Woman," betrays a radical misunderstanding of some aspects of the novelist's personality.

The first four pieces on *New Grub Street* by Angus Wilson, William Trevor, John Goode and a

-- 35 --

T.L.S. commentator were reviews of the Bodley Head edition of the novel published in 1967. The essays by Jerome Buckley, John Peck, James M. Keech and Robert Selig are well-known to readers of this journal, in particular the second one, which appeared in it. The next batch of four – an extract from J. M. Murry's long posthumous essay, Q. D. Leavis's "Gissing and the English Novel," an excerpt from P. J. Keating's booklet on *New Grub Street* and Orwell's essay – are a mixed bag since two are by enthusiasts and two by critics who either praise Gissing's achievement tepidly or fail to give him his due. One wonders what Q. D. Leavis knew of Gissing in 1938. Perhaps one or two of the twenty-odd novels on which, with one exception, she throws cold water. As her incompetence is flagrant, her misleading piece might safely have been left to gather dust in the files of *Scrutiny*.

The last contribution is from the editor's pen and it is about the names of characters in *New Grub Street*. Most of his assertions are reasonable enough, but he occasionally overshoots his mark, as when he connects Jasper with the French *j'aspire*. This is indeed Jean-Pierre Michaux's main contribution to the volume for his one-page foreword gives little evidence that he knows other works of Gissing's than *New Grub Street*. There is in this foreword a disturbing short paragraph beginning as follows: "With Q. D. Leavis we cannot but agree when she speaks of his 'one permanent' contribution to the English novel." The "one permanent contribution" in Mrs. Leavis's essay is *New Grub Street*. In Michaux's paragraph it is simply nothing, and the next sentence – "Gissing's standing among the major Victorian novelists has been growing steadily over the past decade" – shows that the word "one" was mentally skipped or misread as applying to the whole of Gissing's works.

Of editing proper there is none. The references to the essays reprinted are incomplete in three

-- 36 --

cases. Months, sometimes years, are omitted. How will the reader find an article with the following reference: "*The Gissing Newsletter*, pp. 5-7"? But there are more serious things. The index is so selective as to be a questionable guide. Orwell gets one page number when in fact one of his two essays on Gissing is in the book and covers pp. 195-203, and *New Grub Street*, to which half the volume is devoted appears as "123 *passim*." Skilful indexing is no job for improvisers. More important than this is the absence of editorial notes concerning the errors in the articles reprinted and the repetition of old misprints. Thus Crackanthorpe (p. 26, but skipped in the index) is spelt with a central "e" and two crucial mistakes made by Austin Harrison and repeated numberless times since 1906 (Gissing became his tutor in 1880, not in 1882; and he did not go to Germany on his return from America) are like many similar errors blindly reproduced. M. Michaux still has to learn the art of editing in the full sense of the word.

However, the volume will undoubtedly be useful to people who know enough about Gissing not to be hampered by editorial deficiencies. What matters is that, with one or two exceptions, the present anthology does offer some twenty essays that are worth having between the covers of one volume. – Pierre Coustillas.

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-- 37 --

Helmut E. Gerber
(1920-1981)

We regret to announce the death on April 29th of Helmut E. Gerber, the founder and editor of *English Literature in Transition*, whose name appeared frequently in the *Newsletter*. He was an indefatigable worker, a faithful friend and a most reliable scholar, always prepared to help younger colleagues, with whose difficulties he sympathized. It was a sign of his open-mindedness that he sought and cultivated contacts with many foreign academics. Gissing studies were often present in *E.L.T.* under his editorship, from the early days of the journal in 1957 to the very last number he saw published (see Recent Publications). His commitment to scholarship, his constant readiness to support a good cause, his humanity will remain an example. *E.L.T.* will continue under the editorship of Dr. O. M. Brack, Jr. Vol. 25 will be a silver anniversary volume, and an index will appear as a special number early in 1983. Another special silver anniversary issue will be a memorial volume for Hal Gerber containing a dozen essays.

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-- 38 --

Notes and News

The new Harvester catalogue of literature announces the long awaited critical edition of *Will Warburton* (ed. Colin Partridge) for next autumn, and *The Town Traveller* (ed. P. Coustillas) for the autumn of 1982. In between, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, edited by John Stewart Collis, the English country writer, is scheduled for publication in the spring of 1982. Equally welcome is a reprint of Pierre Coustillas's edition of *Demos* which has been out of print for some years. *Isabel Clarendon* is available on microfiche for £16.00.

Among other books announced for the next few months is *George Gissing: A Life in Books* (Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, New York) which is a study of Gissing's works considered from the autobiographical point of view. This volume is not likely to be available until next winter.

In Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis Shrubsall's *W. H. Hudson: Writer and Naturalist* is to be found information on several literary men who were personally acquainted with Gissing, also portraits of Morley Roberts, R. B. Cunninghame Graham and Edward Garnett, three photographs of Hudson and a caricature of him watching birds, and a view of Hudson's London home, Tower House, St. Luke's Road, where Gissing called. Stephen Blackmore, the shepherd known to both writers, is mentioned on p.69. One would like to know a little more about him. Mr. Shrubsall's book makes pleasant reading and offers a likeable image of a man whom Gissing liked and respected. *Birds of a Feather*, a collection of Hudson letters edited by Mr. Shrubsall, is announced by the Moonraker Press for this summer. Another volume of correspondence which is to include Hudson's letters to George Gissing is in preparation.

Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs. A. Spencer Mills, whose main literary interest is English travellers in Calabria, have found a very good anonymous article entitled "Da Swinburne a Gissing" in a Reggio journal, *Brutium* (Anno XXXVII, nos. 5-6), May-June 1958, pp. 1-3. Also worth recovering from oblivion is a piece exhumed by Dr. Badolato, "Il Ritorno di George Gissing," published by Giacomo Antonini in *La Fiera letteraria* (Roma), 10 November 1957, p. 4. Mr. Spencer Mills stood up for Calabria in a piece which appeared in the *Sunday Times* on April 12, p. 19 ("Calabria deserves its Statues") while Mrs. Mills, in a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* (March 29) explained the strange fortune of the surname Paparazzo, which was first mentioned by Gissing in *By the Ionian Sea*. It was popularized by Federico Fellini in his 1959 "La Dolce Vita," two years after the publication of Gissing's book in Italian translation. Fellini gave the name to a minor character, "an indiscreet and persistent photographer. Since then it has become a noun used to depict this type of photographer."

Recent Publications

Volume

George Gissing, *Eve's Ransom*. New York, Dover; London: Constable, 125p. £1.75. Pictorial stiff wrappers.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- John Colmer, *Coleridge to Catch-22: Images of Society*, London: Macmillan, 1978. Contains passages on *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women*.

-- 40 --

- Michael Squires, "Structure and Theme in Gissing's *The Odd Women*," *Modern British Literature*, vol. III, 1978, pp. 3-18.

- Dennis Shrubbsall, *W. H. Hudson: Writer and Naturalist*, Tisbury: The Compton Press, 1978. Contains a number of references to Morley Roberts and Gissing and other persons known to the two novelists, for instance Alfred Hartley, the fourth member of the so-called Quadrilateral.

- George P. Landow, ed., *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979. Avrom Fleishman writes on *Henry Ryecroft* in "Personal Myth: Three Victorian Autobiographers," pp. 228-34.

- Anon., "Great Britain," *Victorian Studies Bulletin*, March 1981, p. 2. Paragraph on the forthcoming Gissing Symposium to be held in Wakefield.

- Anon., "Former Quags boy secures painting for Wakefield," *Wakefield Express*, p.10. The painting represents Westgate in the nineteenth century. The article ends with a few paragraphs on the activities of the Gissing Trust.

- Hilary Bailey, "Children of their Time," *Guardian*, 23 April 1981. Notice of the Dover edition of *Eve's Ransom*.
- David B. Eakin, "The Unmaking of the Artist: Woman and Economics in Gissing's *New Grub Street*," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* (University of Montpellier), No. 13, pp. 43-52.
- Adeline R. Tintner, "AB Obituary Notes: Alfred M. Slotnick, *Antiquarian Bookman*, 4 May 1981, pp.3539-40.

-- 41 --

- C. Glaster, "Un livre par jour: George Gissing, essais critiques," *La Voix du Nord* (Lille daily), 8 May 1981, p. 2. Review of J.-P. Michaux's *George Gissing: Critical Essays*. See also by the same reviewer, "A la découverte de George Gissing ... l'autre Dickens" in the number for 19 May 1981, p. 12.
- William Haley, "Memories," *The Times*, 21 May, 1981, p. 15. Another review of Michaux's book.
- Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. Contains, pp. 185-205, a revised version of "Authentic *Ressentiment*: Generic Discontinuities and Ideologemes in the 'Experimental' Novels of George Gissing," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, September 1976.
- Lowell T. Frye, "An Author at Grass: Ironic Intent in Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*," *English Literature in Transition*, 1981, vol. XXIV, no. 1, pp. 41-51. The same issue contains an announcement of the Gissing Symposium, on p. 5, and vol. XXIV, no. 2, which was published simultaneously, carries a report on Gissing studies by Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing Everywhere," pp. 57-58.
- John Halperin, "Reviews," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. XI, 1981, pp. 339-40. Review of Gissing's *Diary*. In the same volume two books of Gissing interest are reviewed: *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research* and *Le Roman anglais au XIXe siècle*.