

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*.

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An Appreciation of *A Life’s Morning*

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If nothing whatever was known about George Gissing’s private life his works would stand high in the opinion of good judges of English literature because of their own intrinsic merits. Every great writer transforms his own experiences of life into art. Joseph Conrad said that he had not the ability to invent a “sustained and telling lie.” Gissing, in aiming at even more intense realism, found that he had a greater need than other writers to use what he really knew well, what had deeply cut into his own sensibilities, but fortunately his range of experience – personal and literary – was

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exceptionally wide and his novels cover a very large range of the late Victorian life he had observed so often and felt so closely.

*A Life’s Morning* is unique among his novels because while it displays its author’s invariable beauty and clarity of prose style,<sup>1</sup> his acuteness of observation and his subtlety of characterisation, it combines this with an unusually profound self-involvement with its hero and heroine. His sympathy with the latter seems to be so intense that it fired his imagination to an incandescence of feeling he

never displayed again. This gives to the story a level of such realism that his characters seem like living flesh and blood, people one knows better than one's own friends and relatives. The emotional tension in the later chapters of the book is so enormous that purely regarded as only a love story it must be the most gripping in the language.

There are at least sixteen major confrontations in this novel if by this term one means crisis situations in which the author is obliged to give the reader every word of the dialogue between the protagonists and depict every shade of emotion which accompanies this. There are, for example, only two or three of these in *Born in Exile* and two in *Our Friend the Charlatan*. Immense technical resources are essential if a writer is to bring this sort of thing off successfully and the challenge is often shirked – one has only to recall George Moore's strictures upon *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* – but Gissing never fails in this matter and carries them off with a panache which alone would place him in the forefront of any generation of novelists.

This is not to say that there is no objective analysis in addition to the characters in *A Life's Morning*. After the initial shocks to the reader's emotions have been surmounted, constant re-reading shows that such analysis is always embedded in the matrix of the novel. Here, if anywhere, is the ability to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds" or to combine simultaneously that subjectivity and objectivity which is said to be much admired by oriental aestheticists. Further, the book abounds in wise sayings and pertinent observations which are very

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quotable in other contexts.

The book explores a whole world of thought and feeling common to us all yet set in that very particular type of English society which constituted the late Victorian era, where social or class distinctions were graded with the utmost finesse, especially where marriages were concerned. Gissing does subtly imply that this sort of society is due to disintegrate or to be "outgrown" – a true enough prophecy rather more openly announced in another book, *In the Year of Jubilee*. The remnants of this social order and of its psychology are still remembered in England by anyone middle-aged: it took the second world war to finish it completely. To the student of late Victorian England *A Life's Morning*, like the author's other novels, is a mine of information but there is infinitely more to it than this. We find an exploration of the idolatry of youthful love, of the destiny of a heroine who is a sensitive girl and who lives a life of complete sincerity in a world which acts quite differently, who has a love strong as death for her fiancé and who has all the temperament of a Saint but with basically secular convictions; of the contrast between a philosophy based on aesthetics and the other based on religion; of the effects of degrading poverty or servitude on those of fine natures; of the effects of environment on culture; of the finest relations which can exist between father and son, both gentlemen in Newman's sense of the word; of exactly what it feels like to be a man of successful ambition and passion who is thwarted at the very last moment; of those young persons who although not ill-natured are vulgar and empty-headed (and how common they are!); and of the potentially disastrous effects of wishing to do good with the best intentions without being in possession of the true facts of the case.

The motif described by Gillian Tindall of the "guilty secret" so often used in Gissing's novels is here very prominent and is of course Hood's dishonesty. The whole plot turns on it and it is possible to regard this novel as a kind of English version of *Crime and Punishment* with the

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punishment falling on the criminal's daughter. The other device Gissing uses is of course the

declaration of the contents of someone's Will (found in *Born in Exile*, *Demos*, *New Grub Street*, *Our Friend the Charlatan*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and elsewhere), but in *A Life's Morning* it is only glanced at – Wilfrid Athel already has his inheritance. The religious question is however touched upon here very significantly as it is in all Gissing's novels. Darwin's theories were very much in the air in late Victorian England and the quarrel between the scientists and the religious "fundamentalists" was acrimonious and sometimes undignified. G. K. Chesterton said that Darwin was always "talking about the religion he hadn't got" and one has a faint suspicion that Gissing had a tendency that way. Dyce Lashmar has a parson father who is becoming sceptical about his duties: Nancy Lord's father regretted her lack of religion: Godwin Peak cynically poses as a student for the ministry while bitterly critical of the Bruno Chilvers of this world: Totty Nancarrow worships an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a London Church but cannot raise her thoughts to a Deity, while in *A Life's Morning* Emily is made to repudiate the "vulgarity of hysterical piety" and could not discern in herself the "pessimism of corruption" which one supposes theologians would call "original sin." And so it goes on. There seems no doubt that Gissing was an intensely humane man, and by the time he reached the Ryecroft stage his outlook on ethics was almost identical with a sort of churchless Christianity. Severe Puritanism had left a nasty taste in his mouth and the seeming indifference of many of the clergy of the Established Church to the poverty of so many of the working class must have been only too apparent to him. The paradoxes in this world between the claims of devout religious belief and the existence of evil have disturbed men with less sensitive minds than Gissing's. Then there must have been the influence of Edward Gibbon, for whose great work Gissing expresses such admiration. But there is a nearer influence than all these and this is the aftermath of the Oxford Movement. After Newman and his followers had fired the conscience of

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all the University at Oxford and then left for the Catholic Church, the opposition party had it much their own way. Wilfrid Athel, for example, might have resembled a sort of opposite number to W. G. Ward who allied great gifts and personal charm to a devastating ability to argue on the Catholic side. At Oxford there were quite a number of University men on the side of religious scepticism with their thoughts turned, like Wilfrid's, to "other teachers," presumably the German Philosophers and sceptics, well known to Gissing. It is worth noting that in *A Life's Morning* Mrs. Rossall is actually made to consider joining the Roman Church and to read *The Christian Year* – still a well-known Oxford Movement classic. Yet, in spite of all that has been said here up to this point, there is a letter extant from Gissing to his sister relating to *The Emancipated* stating that he has no objection to those who took the Bible literally as many Non-Conformists did at the time! One cannot doubt that his Italian travels must have opened his eyes to a certain devotional art: *By the Ionian Sea* is a sentimental journey if there ever was one. He respected all learning, all classics, and his omnivorous reading must have included Newman. Why then did he seem to "sit on the fence" in religious matters? Mysticism clearly made no appeal to him: his nature was simply not so made and he cannot be blamed for it. His writings with their acknowledged realism deal with concrete facts, sometimes to the extent of reading like newspaper reports of real events. Elusive doctrines inexpressible in clear language were foreign to his mental make-up. Nevertheless, had he lived longer, and had he been able to discard his expressed aversion to authoritarian religion, it is not inconceivable that like T.S. Eliot he would have found his way into the Anglo-Catholic Church. One has to say that body and not the Roman Church because of Gissing's ineradicable Englishness. In ch. XVI and XVII of *A Life's Morning* he came nearer to Christian ideals than he ever did again in any of his books, and openly had to admit that Emily Hood's aesthetic religion failed her at just

such a time as orthodox religion would have helped her. In his preface to *Our Friend the Charlatan* Prof. Coustillas penetratingly points out that Gissing had had experience in his early years of the unedifying spectacle of insincerity. Successful clergy like the Bruno Chilvers so bitterly portrayed in *Born in Exile* may account for some of Gissing's dislike of openly expressed piety. By implication then, its opposite quality – that of sincerity – must have made a very strong appeal to him, and the central theme of *A Life's Morning* is that very virtue. We read that sincerity was the foundation of Emily Hood's being and this radiant quality in her casts a spell over all the characters in the book (except the incorrigible Mrs. Rossall) and also over the reader. A spell so wonderful it lives in the memory for ever. The idyllic purity of tone in the book is partly accounted for by this. Having exhausted this theme here there was no more to be said about it and it is not surprising to find Gissing in his later novels dealing with less attractive material, or sketching his other "good women" like Marian Yule and Adela Waltham so lightly. It is difficult at this stage to avoid commenting on Gissing's gallery of feminine portraits. It has a huge range, from his affectionate delineation of Ida Starr and the magical shadowing forth of Sidwell Warricombe, to that admirable human tigress Clem Peckover whom one suspects of aiming to poison her mother's soup with arsenic, a thing not at all unknown at the period if one reads the Famous British Trials series. Then there is the redoubtable Miss Rodney, the ferocious Lady Ogram (superbly done), the subtly delineated, superficially gifted Alma Frothingham, the mediocre Nancy Lord, the beautifully named Totty Nancarrow (how one remembers her simple cockney ways) and the attractive young firebrand Polly Sparkes, straight out of Dickens at his best.

Emily Hood is George Gissing's supreme creation. She must be every educated man's ideal, although we must remember the sage remark that men do not aim to marry goddesses – they put them on a pedestal to worship. The drama in the novel is that by chance Emily met the one man in the world who reached her ideals or rather, perhaps, she reached his. The astounding thing about her

is that, unlikely as it may seem, and quite unknown to Gissing, there was actually living in France at the very time the novel was written a young woman almost identical with her in temperament, a woman of passionate feeling and ideals, but with the important difference that she was devoted not to Art but to Religion. We know this from her Autobiography which did not see the light of day until 1899, eleven years after *A Life's Morning* was published. That Autobiography is very famous now – none other than that of Thérèse Martin, later to be canonised as St. Thérèse de Lisieux, and of acknowledged genius and beauty. Suffice it here to quote just one phrase from a prayer to this Saint: "O St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, who during thy short life on earth became a mirror of angelic purity, of love strong as death, and of wholehearted abandonment to God. ..." Replace the last four words by "wholehearted abandonment to Wilfrid" (in what he represented) and there you have Emily herself summarised. As said already, the matter does not end here however, because Gissing is an utter realist and an observer of scrupulous honesty. He knows that life is cruel without the consolation of religion and he makes Emily's philosophy fail her at the crucial moment. It is only on rare occasions that the closely guarded secrets of Gissing's mind where spiritual matters are concerned slip out in this self-revealing way when he is writing from the heart. He was careful not to do this again. To return to Emily Hood, everything about her is beautiful. Her silences, her conversation consisting of "few well chosen words," the grace of her every movement, her exquisite courtesy and manners – even to the boorish brute who employs her father – her modesty, her self-command, her love for her dilapidated parents, her sense of duty, her sensitiveness, her quiet

dignity, her fastidious refinement of feeling, her reticent nature “set apart from others,” and all these being so finely integrated into a personality of complete sincerity. Beneath this calm exterior nevertheless runs a strength of feeling so intense as to make her unique in all English literature and

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only paralleled in reality by that sanctity of a martyr born for canonisation. A critic many years ago in noting the absolute consistency of Emily’s conduct throughout the story said that “she speaks and behaves on every occasion exactly as you would expect her to speak and behave: she is created being.”

Her weaknesses are as interesting as her strength. Both the geneticist and the environmentalist could find food for much thought in this girl’s nature. She obviously inherited from her father that “lack of independent vitality” she thought she discerned in herself, together with something of a too sentimental pity for suffering. From her environment her too sensitive aspiring nature suffered a depression due to poverty and squalor. Like many only children, she is self-centred as well as sensitive (Wilfrid has some of the same faults – a subtle touch of the author’s). Accordingly she does not like to speak out about her deepest feelings and her reticence proves fatal to the continuation of her engagement to Wilfrid. Had she informed her parents of that liaison, the story would have come to an abrupt end. Her ethical system is, however unfortunately for her, founded on aesthetics – the comeliness of doing what is right rather than its morality – and is nurtured in “the sheltered purity of her own heart.” Her conscience is a tremendously powerful factor in her character but its origins are not those universally accepted by the allegedly “Christian” society of Western Europe. She simply shrinks from vulgarity or what we call sin with a profound horror. She is passive. Missionary zeal could never form part of her behaviour; the cloistered life of a Carmelite nun is almost unthinkable for her. There is also quite a marked streak of morbid introspection in her nature. One would have thought that on her return home after her engagement to Wilfrid, she could have surmounted the gloom of her Wakefield surroundings more cheerfully, even though she was overwhelmed by what had happened and was in that dream-like state persons of her nature might well be in. The plain fact is that she had now become rather dependent on that luxurious

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environment she had found at “The Firs” because she found it had such a beneficial effect on her mind. Most of us would of course prefer reading Shakespeare or listening to Beethoven in appropriately elevating surroundings, but realise that this is not often possible. Once introduced to that beautiful environment where “wealth had done the bidding of taste” Emily had become beguiled by it. She had by now aimed at a non-viable philosophy of life based on aesthetics and had almost become obsessed by it: Wilfrid Athel’s attentions confirmed her in it to the point of no return. Curiously enough there actually has been a family in twentieth-century England that virtually made a religion of art but this rare achievement occurred among an aristocracy possessing material resources quite beyond Emily’s reach. Being an only child undistracted by siblings, Emily grew up self-reliant and able to adopt that singleness of purpose and concentration on her desires which might have brought her within reach of her goal had not circumstances ordered things otherwise. But it also made her pay the price of intense loneliness (the book contains a particularly profound study of the solitude Gissing had experience of). Let us therefore accept that while Emily had what theologians call a “natural Christian spirit,” whether she knew it or not, this applied to her works of charity and her self-discipline, but not to her philosophical outlook. Probably her creator would have denied any intention on his part to endow her in this way, but he had a good deal of this

quality in himself and cannot have been unaware from his wide reading and profound historical sense of the great European traditions on which, as Prof. Harrold says in his introduction to a volume of Newman's sermons, we still live somewhat parasitically.

The heroine is omnipresent in the novel: it is her detailed biography – almost an autobiography. Gissing is careful to point out that her personality is of sufficient force to show itself even under the disadvantage of complete self-suppression, and one is reminded that most of the women in history who have had a permanent hold over the spirit of man over the centuries have been modest and

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even self-effacing. St. Catherine of Siena, St. Clare of Assisi, St. Thérèse of Lisieux spring to mind at once. With an unerring sense of timing Gissing introduces Emily quietly into the story after three or four pages of detailed biography of the other inmates of "The Firs" and steadily expands her influence until in the third chapter a major climax is reached in the justly famous summerhouse scene. This writer always captures the reader's attention right at the outset of his novels, which often open with an incomparable rapidity (*The Unclassed* is a supreme example of this). The ingredients of the scene in chap. III of *A Life's Morning* of Wilfrid's proposal in the summerhouse on a bright moonlit July night could so easily have degenerated into a sentimental convention in the hands of a less skilful writer; instead, we get an atmosphere of silvery radiance which is pure poetry, written in exquisite prose. The long conversation preceding this in the first chapter where Wilfrid meets Emily in the dell and tells her of his ideals is not without delicate humour: she listens to his fluent talk with polite amusement until quite suddenly she realises that he is making advances to her, and she averts her eyes from him while he appeals to her to meet his gaze. There are so many touches of this sort in the novel that one is reminded of a master portrait painter who, having drawn the main outlines of his sitter, puts in just those tiny details which bring it alive and which a lesser artist would never have thought of adding. Gissing certainly had an appreciation of visual art and occasionally makes explicit references to it although one does not know exactly to what extent it influenced his own work.

One could write at length on the long middle section of the novel in which we see Emily in situation after situation where she is cruelly injured in one way or another, culminating in her being forced to renounce her ideal lover without being in a position to assign him the reason. These chapters are of a kind which alienates many a reader for they must be the saddest ever penned, yet

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any novelist who wished to depict a "good" woman convincingly is obliged to put her under stress and to show her reactions. A kind of grey atmosphere develops in this part of the story contrasting painfully with the sunny opening chapters, ominous though the latter may be. If we regard the book as designed rather like a sonata in music with exposition, development and recapitulation, the last section repeats much of the dream-like state of the first but is profoundly darkened in tone. Another subtle observation of Gissing's concerning Emily is that her intensely sorrowful, morbid passion for self-criticism could not and did not last for ever (ch. XXII): we all of us have some degree of inherent vitality which can and eventually does transcend the sorrow of bereavement, even if it does take a period of years. Gissing had read a certain amount of Biological Science – he was apparently quite a close observer of clinical syndromes in medicine – and never erred in such matters.<sup>2</sup> The beauty of Emily's character reaches its climax in the Hampton Court scenes (here even the weather which affected Gissing so much has to play its part as a sort of backdrop) and with immense skill Wilfrid Athel's impetuosity is drawn into these two chapters. Ch. XXIV contains a marvellous

paragraph of profound insight, where a sort of retrospective beam of light is thrown on Emily's past misery by her feelings when her lover's letter arrives at her lodgings. This tiny episode is almost the very apex or summit of the whole book.

What influences may have helped Gissing write this novel? Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* has been quoted as having some part in its inspiration. Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* seems to have a curious affinity with Emily's aestheticism in trying to imprison "like a fly in amber" the beauty of a passing moment. *Measure for Measure* is quoted at one point, and that play may well have been a favourite of Gissing's. For the rest, one detects traces of Gibbon (even the occasional sideswipe, as when Jessie Cartwright's "education" is castigated), some possible historical readings from the lives of the Saints, an acquaintance with contemporary anti-religious

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writings, memories of various sources of puritanical religious exhortation, and even traces of Jefferies' influence in the description of country scenery. For once, his home town of Wakefield provides an exact local setting, as Clifford Brook has shown, and there is the usual familiarity with London, which Gissing knew so well. But it is to the author's own creative fervour of imagination fired by his own acute observations and marvellous visual memory that most of the power of this book is due. Has the book any descendants? For idyllic purity of tone, none although passages do foreshadow odd moments in *The Crown of Life* and the Ryecroft essays. But it may have stirred ideas in Hardy's mind for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* published in 1891 and also based on putting a "good woman" under stress, and here it is as well to compare the two writers very briefly. Hardy writes tragedy in *Tess* but, dramatic though this quality be, it is difficult after one has become detached from the novel and after one has finished reading it really to believe in a malignant providence hounding a Dorset milkmaid to her death for the fun of the thing.<sup>3</sup> Gissing gives us sadness, not tragedy, because he is a realist, and life is like that. It might be argued that if he had been able to complete *A Life's Morning* as he had planned, this too would have ended as a true tragedy, and this is so: but in general his novels do not aspire to this quality – they deliberately avoid it. Tragedy in literature has been said to exist for the purpose of dignifying sorrow, which it does, but Gissing's method of using factual matter that came to hand in reality is even more effective in his hands. His characters do not suffer because of "fate": they suffer because of inherent weaknesses intrinsic to their natures and adverse environmental forces which they encounter, and in this we recognise our own life's experiences.

Enough has already been said about Oxford University to prove that Wilfrid Athel is a perfectly plausible character. He is one of Gissing's few really likeable heroes, for one cannot care for Godwin Peak or even Osmond Waymark. Both have a certain coldly calculating nature which

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is anything but endearing and neither deserved success in his wooing. It is a measure of Gissing's scrupulous honesty in giving us important male characters who are not conventional heroes, but have streaks of weakness or faults that we again recognise in ourselves and our friends. One does feel that Wilfrid Athel deserved Emily if anyone did, despite Gissing's original intention to make her die on her wedding day at the same time as Beatrice was committed to an institution for mental breakdown, thus depriving the young man of both women at once. Such a retribution on a man whose life up to then had been one of uniform success would have appealed strongly to Gissing, and the adroit alteration he had to make when forced on him by the publisher no doubt accounted for his dislike of the novel which he called "weak." It is anything but that, but would have been

greatly strengthened if he had had his way. Wilfrid's character is most carefully prepared for the reader's understanding in the first chapter of the book. We learn that he is an only child of great intellectual gifts, but had an Italian mother who died when he was a child, and a distinguished father of splendid character who brought him up. From this background it is not difficult to appreciate that impetuosity, passionate imagination, self-centredness and the decencies that made a Victorian gentleman proud of being British were combined together in his make-up. Ch. XVII is infinitely revealing about him. We are not surprised to hear that Wilfrid was "not very good when sacrifice was demanded of him." Around Wilfrid and Emily all the other characters in the novel are perpetually circulating, probing them continuously to expose their deepest feelings. This accounts for the wide spectrum of Victorian life that Gissing quite rightly introduced into the story.

As for Mrs. Rossall, such people were common in England right up to 1920. One can personally remember having observed them even up to 1940. Very self-conscious of their superior social position, they combine some generous looking condescension with a basically cold nature

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which inhibits any outward show of emotion. Ch. XIV displays Mrs. Rossall very well: she was probably drawn from life very easily.

One can only warm to the friendship between Mr. Athel senior and Wilfrid. Rarely can relations between father and son have been better portrayed. Philip Athel represents the best type of Englishman of the late Victorian period, and how English he is, with the faults as well as the virtues of that race at the zenith of its power and respect abroad. It is easy to detect in him a determination to preserve the order of things, yet he has a warm humanity underneath his rather self-conscious dignity. The neatly concentrated biographical details given about him in ch. I are worthy of Gibbon writing at his best. One has only to compare this with the verbose floundering in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, where pages of turgid detail fail to achieve a clear focus on the nature of the characters, to appreciate Gissing's mastery. He solves problems of keeping a brevity of description while conveying the maximum amount of information with sovereign ease. The family conclave in ch. XXV still shows Mr. Athel with exactly the same type of mind as that attributed to him in ch. I. There is a rich vein of humour here in that he is as hopelessly in the dark as to the real nature of events as all the other characters: the reader alone has had all the threads from the beginning of the story, and in some sense there is a sort of high comedy in this which gives a much needed relief to what has preceded it. The Pater Familias had of course much more authority in Victorian times than he has today. It is of the greatest interest to compare Mr. Athel's reception of the announcement of his son's engagement in ch. IV with a parallel scene between Mr. Lord and his son Horace in *In the Year of Jubilee*. Totally different situations are handled in appropriately different ways, each being a triumph of the novelist's technique.

One of Gissing's talents which seems to be seldom observed is his extraordinary ability to portray children, no easy task. The finest piece of work in this direction is Ida Starr in *The*

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*Unclassed*. There is a well-known episode in *Thyrza* too. Emily's childhood is dealt with at some length mostly to show her quick understanding of her parents' troubles, but the most successful vignette is of the identical twins, Minnie and Patty (ch. I).

Turning to the gloomy Wakefield scenes in the story, we find them slightly relieved by the lively, vulgar, Cartwright family, trying to "keep up with their better off neighbours" in a near comical fashion, as is sometimes seen even today in England. The relevance of this depiction of one



facet of Victorian life is yet again to set Emily in another scene of contrasted environment so that we know her even better than we did. The faults of Jessie Cartwright are pitilessly analysed: it is once more a study in the comparison of her insincerity with the opposite quality in Emily.

Of Richard Dagworthy (much admired by many critics as an embryo Gissing hero) this can be said: there were those at that time who could achieve success in the battle of life only by the most ruthless determination to ride roughshod over any opposition: usually there was simply no other route to the top. It stands to reason therefore that such a man would not – and indeed could not – brook defeat in so important a matter as his deep passion for Emily. Atrocious though his conduct was, Gissing is very careful to be generously judicious in the matter, granting him what redeeming features he could. In Richard Dagworthy we also have one of several shrewd portraits of the man of business (sometimes the woman of business) that Gissing seemed to be fond of depicting. One of the most subtle scenes in the novel is to be found in ch. 18, in which the manufacturer acts a sort of cynical charade with Jessie bitterly parodying the true love that he felt ought to have been his. One might say that this brilliant scene out-Freuds Freud.

Emily's parents are, as one might expect, delineated with special care. It is curious how many spineless male characters Gissing depicts in his early novels. Among them one recalls Julian Casti,

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Kingcote, Reardon, and here James Hood, of whom it is penetratingly said that "his manner of speaking almost explained his want of success life." This brief phrase sheds more light on Hood's weakness than pages of laborious description could do. Gentleness does not get anyone far in life, and Hood is shown to possess this virtue to excess and to have handed it on to his daughter. However, Hood's weaknesses excite more sympathy from the reader than do those of the other men named because they are so essential here to the development of the plot of this story. It is a shrewd remark of Gissing's that Hood's scientific interest might have led to something definite if he had been given a better chance in life – that is to say prophetically as it turned out that in our late-twentieth century men like Hood are encouraged to pursue higher education to University level and given the necessary financial assistance to do so. It also gave him a supply of cyanide of potassium.... In stark contrast to such hopes, we see Hood losing his self-respect, one fault leading to another as he relentlessly pursues a rapid downward path. This is also only too true to life: many persons beginning with high moral principles can testify that once they have made the initial concession to temptation, other concessions follow in quick succession. Great ingenuity is shown in accelerating Hood's disastrous course by the introduction of the rather unpleasant down-and-out Cheeseman.

Mrs. Hood, like Mrs. Warricombe, is not worthy to be the mother of such a daughter as she has, but she excites more of our sympathy than Sidwell's mother. Gissing has said elsewhere that a woman married to a violent man may endure it but a weak man is intolerable – it frightens her. Mrs. Hood has had a bitterly disappointing life, but considering everything, she does show a sort of resigned patience. She too, given a better chance in life, would, one feels, have been quite a pleasant sort of person. It is possible that Gissing here is describing a physical ailment he has observed: pituitary cachexia following childbirth was not rare in those days even though not "recognised" as a disease until many years later, and led to great lassitude. Mrs. Hood finally succumbed to some sort

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of dementia, possibly of endocrine origin. Gissing shared with Dickens careful observation of the minutiae of illnesses.

Mrs. Baxendale can be regarded as the conventional “fairy godmother” in the novel, but like one of these ostensibly useful persons (should we ever meet one in real life) she rather fails in her role because she is not in possession of all the facts of the case and is obliged as we all are to do the best with the situation as she sees it at the time. For the rest, she is the good-hearted, healthy, matronly Yorkshirewoman, full of commonsense and fair-minded friendliness that can still be encountered today. Her solid worth contributes much to the stability of the central part of the story, which otherwise threatened to get emotionally out of hand. Women like Mrs. Baxendale and their husbands helped to make England what she was in the great days of Queen Victoria. There were many stolid, unimaginative but worthy men of the type exemplified by Mr. Baxendale.

We are left finally to consider Beatrice Redwing who is portrayed in a manner beyond all praise and worthy to be a heroine in her own right. In fact *A Life's Morning* presents the unusual spectacle of a book with two heroines. Once again its author's astonishing powers of creation are shown here, in that a woman closely resembling Beatrice did actually appear on the public musical scene long after his death. The parallels between the two cases are interesting: both were gifted with a profoundly moving poetical musical talent for the art of singing: both did not take their art up professionally until a disappointing love affair; both seemed to be a rather different sort of person when they had set their music aside for the moment and both had beauty that Gissing describes as “blossoming like a royal flower.” There was however no hint of nervous instability in Kathleen Ferrier and the resemblance ends here, but the coincidences mentioned are, to say the least, remarkable enough. Beatrice is given an excellent biography in ch. II in just a few paragraphs containing not a superfluous word. If there is such a thing as “feminine intuition” she indeed has it

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in abundance. She sees almost at once – by a kind of extrasensory perception in which one can readily believe – that Wilfrid has been irresistibly attracted by Emily and that her own love for him, hitherto carefully concealed, will have to remain so. The delicacy of perception she shows and the wonderful quarrel scene<sup>4</sup> with Wilfrid make the early chapters in the book supremely accomplished writing. Beatrice remains no less remarkable in the closing scenes of the novel, her final interviews with Wilfrid being astoundingly well realised. There remains a suspicion that Beatrice has what is known in psychiatric circles as a “hysterical personality” which gives its possessor remarkable powers to act a part convincingly as required by a situation.<sup>5</sup> If this is so, she has a streak of insincerity, which the author did briefly allude to earlier on in the book, and which therefore continues the theme of the story. The generosity of her self-sacrifice seems convincing – at first: on maturer reflection one has doubts. Beatrice had the gifts of a great actress. Gissing, one notices, is very fond of introducing “the other woman” into his men's affections (Dyce Lashmar gets entangled with three!); she is also found in *Born in Exile*, *New Grub Street*, *The Crown of Life* and elsewhere.

Let us now leave the characters to themselves and consider instead the structure of the novel. Gissing was always most conscientious in designing his literary works and never leaves any loose ends unexplained or not tidied up at the end of the story. It is inconceivable that he could end a book as George Eliot ended *Middlemarch* with an impertinent tradesman's catalogue of “what happened” to each of the characters in the story. Certainly the plot of *A Life's Morning* would seem no better than that of a crude opera libretto if one outlines it in cold blood. It is simply that of Cinderella meeting her Prince Charming and her path being crossed by a designing villain. But just as in opera the libretto is the fragile skeleton on which the composer is expected to drape his best musical ideas (and if unsuccessful is only too clearly exposed as a failure) so Gissing's basic

structure is here clothed in a continuous stream of marvellous invention. His plot is not in fact all that crude, for there are two women in love with one man cleverly dovetailed with two men in love with one woman. The whole drama is played out move by move with all the skill of a master chess player, Gissing having all the threads of the story to come in his fingers from the very first chapter, and never letting any one of them go. Even at the outset when breakfast at "The Firs" is described, the loss of appetite of Emily and Wilfrid for porridge is significant and Mrs. Rossall cannot crack her egg for being distracted by thoughts of relinquishing her mourning and going back into London "society." We are not surprised to hear of her re-marriage later in the book. It is small anticipatory details like this which make the story so convincing; they are of course found elsewhere in this author's works, but never with quite this mastery.

Gissing was an outstanding observer of what can be called "the language of gesture" – things like the drooping of the eyelids, the position of the hands, the posture of a speaker, the pauses in speech and innumerable other details that give such vividness to every scene written into his books, but it is nowhere so poignantly done as in *A Life's Morning*.

With regard to the prose style, in this novel we see our author at his very best. There are many pages of unaffected eloquence, others of the Gibbon style of concentrated precision we have already mentioned, and yet others like the "caressing grace of the language" describing the spiritualised beauty of Emily Hood. There are brief settings of natural scenery which might have been derived from our famous nature essayists: the two scenes in Bushey Park live in the memory equally with that of the drawing-room at "The Firs" and the hollow nearby in the Surrey countryside. Despite one or two minor faults, the dialogue between the characters is also beautifully realised.

What then are the defects of this novel? It is inevitable that such an intense story will have

faults but they are insignificant when compared with the scale of what is attempted and achieved so successfully. From the Englishman's point of view, it was not the "done thing" then – or even now – to reveal one's deepest feelings: Mrs. Rossall's character would have been accepted more readily than the ardent Beatrice Redwing's or that of the spiritualised Emily Hood. Worse than this, Gissing mercilessly revealed to English society the real cruelty of its tolerance of poverty, whereas Dickens in so doing leavened the lump with his deep kindly humour which made his readers feel less guilty about this. Gissing was never forgiven in his lifetime for writing in such a manner, and this alone would account for his lack of popular appeal and commercial success and for his neglect until recent times when these things have faded into oblivion. It is unfair to criticise the intensely sad and depressing mood of *A Life's Morning* and other novels written about the time: the material used necessitated such a mood but it certainly did not help the writer's popularity. Neither did his implied admiration for the aristocratic temperament appeal to those who lacked that quality in themselves. A more serious and valid criticism of Gissing's early work is that he appears to drop lectures and tirades into it concerning abuses which he sees so clearly in the society of the time and it could be said that the novel is not the place for this. Yet most authors from Jane Austen onward take as their theme, at least in part, the clash between the English social classes, and we can hardly blame our author if he makes this more prominent in his works than his predecessors. Nevertheless, there are those who are repelled by this feature, especially when Gissing lectures on the evils of poverty using such a girl as Emily Hood for illustration. Here, however, is a subtle theme. What one may call the "St. George and the Dragon Syndrome" is possibly the basis of many a man's love for a woman, and Wilfrid attempts a gallant rescue act on behalf of a girl beset by the dragon of

poverty,<sup>6</sup> a feat which to some extent disposes of any criticism of *A Life's Morning* as too sentimental. Some say that Gissing's work is too often a mere reflection of himself in distress and that he is too subjective. If this is so, he pretty soon eliminated this method of writing books – one has only to consider *Demos*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *The Whirlpool*, *Our Friend the Charlatan* and other minor works to see the change, and some readers would find these works inferior in sustained power to such a book as *Born in Exile* or *New Grub Street*.

To summarise, *A Life's Morning* exhibits the fine flower of Gissing's creative power in novel writing. It can be read<sup>7</sup> at any number of different levels – as a simple love story, as an account of the late Victorian social order, as a study of the psychology of three “only” children, as a study in the language of gesture, as a study in aesthetic versus religious philosophy, as a complex and highly integrated story (cross indexable)<sup>8</sup>, as an example of beautiful English prose, as an almost Dostoevsky-like example of deep thought/feeling analysis, and finally as a sort of English version of *Crime and Punishment*. There are, as I said, no less than sixteen great confrontations in this novel (ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25). Above all, the book has a certain ethical power. After several readings (and all Gissing's books demand this) when it has yielded up some of its many secrets, one closes it wishing one had been a better sort of person. What more can one ask of any novel?

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Seccombe wrote on *A Life's Morning* the following: “Apart from the idyllic purity of its tone, and its sincere idolatry of youthful love, the caressing grace of the language which describes the spiritualised beauty of Emily Hood and the exquisite charm of her slender hands, and the silvery radiance imparted to the whole scene of the proposal in the summerhouse, give to this most unequal and imperfect book a certain crepuscular fascination of its own. Passages in it,

certainly, are not undeserving that fine description of a style *si tendre qu'il pousse le bonheur à pleurer.*” This could not be put better except for one's disagreement with the terms “unequal and imperfect.”

<sup>2</sup>A word is in order about Emily Hood's illness. In ch. XXII we read that “Wilfrid could observe the great heart throbs which shook her and left her bosom quivering.” This is a quite characteristic physical sign of severe incompetence of the aortic valve in the heart, a sequel to rheumatic fever a few years earlier. It used to be seen commonly in hospital wards, though rarely seen today. It is not common for the sufferer to experience pain and fainting, but could have happened if Emily had pericarditis with effusion at the time, showing that the disease was still florid, or if she had severe multiple valve disease. All this explains her illness in ch. XIII (fever and collapse): rheumatic fever was severe in Victorian times and occasionally accompanied by very high temperatures (“hyperpyrexia”), making the medical attendant despair of life. The extreme weakness and loss of weight in this girl mentioned in ch. XXIII could have been the result of infection of the heart valves in addition (subacute bacterial endocarditis) and was invariably fatal.

<sup>3</sup>I wonder if the theme of “the persecuted woman” did inspire later novelists.

<sup>4</sup>This scene in ch. II is again concerned fundamentally with “sincerity” – the theme of the novel.

<sup>5</sup>About the time Gissing wrote the novel, the great pioneer of Psychological Medicine, Kraepelin, described “Dementia Praecox,” now known as Schizophrenia. The disease may present as an acute and florid form in a young person, but the personality background of the sufferer is in exact accord

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with the following observations about Beatrice found in ch. II. We are told about her insomnia, her impulsive journey commencing at 5am in disregard of her mother, her vivacious flow of talk with a “curious note of irresponsible childishness,” her “inconsistencies and contradictions,” and in ch. IV that to her friends she “seemed so thoroughly open, not to say so shallow.” Even more sinister were the facts that “she led a life of indecision,” “she was unable to make close friendships,” “she was not in appearance emotional,” and that “she produced no strong impression, in spite of her beauty.” But the diagnosis is finally clinched by reference to Beatrice’s father who had paranoid delusions and by her own startling admission that she could not sleep because “I hear voices, as distinct as yours now.” The “schizoid personality” that Gissing described so well in 1888 was not properly recognised by the British Medical Profession much before 1940. Another example of the author’s apparent Omniscience!

<sup>6</sup>Compare *Born in Exile* where the theme is the poor man seeking the well-to-do girl with *A Life’s Morning* where the converse takes place.

<sup>7</sup>In *Isabel Clarendon* Gissing gives a sort of lecture to a young lady on how to set about writing well. In *A Life’s Morning* he mentions how to set about reading well. Ch. XV describes Mrs. Baxendale’s method as follows: “To read a chapter was to have provided matter for a day’s reflection ... the book was not reopened till previous matter had been thoroughly digested and assimilated.” This is precisely how a Gissing novel ought to be read.

<sup>8</sup>It is easily possible to construct a page by page analytical set of notes for this novel, accompanied by a sort of Biblical “Concordance,” but the result would be bulky. The matter is under consideration and a start has been made, but it is doubtful if any useful purpose would be

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served by publication.

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The Rejected *Veranilda* Preface: Wells’s  
View of Gissing as a Novelist

John R. Harrison  
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In saying that Gissing’s books will “find fewer lovers than readers,”<sup>1</sup> Wells was merely echoing the remarks made some thirty years earlier by Gissing’s other close personal friend, Morley Roberts, who, in 1904 (the same year in which Wells published this rejected preface to *Veranilda*),<sup>2</sup> had commented: “I think that the time must come when not a little of his work will be esteemed of little value. From this I doubt if he would have himself dissented with any particular reluctance.”<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, Gissing himself had anticipated the verdicts of both Wells and Roberts; for it was he who had first said that he was a faltering artist (“I have always,” he told Wells, “been drearily conscious of the immaturity discoverable in all my work...”),<sup>4</sup> and a novelist only under compulsion:

I had in me the making of a scholar. With leisure and tranquillity of mind, I should have amassed learning. Within the walls of a college, I should have lived so happily, so harmlessly, my imagination ever busy with the old world.<sup>5</sup>

A year before his death Gissing wrote in a letter, with reference to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*: “On the whole I suspect it is the best thing I have done or am likely to do; the thing most likely to last when all my other futile work has followed my futile life.”<sup>6</sup> While it is true, therefore,

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that Wells could claim that he was merely reflecting Gissing’s own opinion about his work, he also failed to see, as Pierre Coustillas has rightly suggested, “that, with Gissing, modesty was often apt to take the form of intense self-depreciation ...”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, retrospective satisfaction was a feeling Gissing very seldom experienced with any of his novels; and it is ironic that the “man who contended he knew Gissing better than anyone else” should, in fact, interpret his attitude to his novels with such “a remarkable lack of subtlety.”<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to understand, let alone justify, not only Wells’s lack of appreciation for Gissing’s work as a whole, but also his insensitive remarks in his rejected preface to *Veranilda*, in which he implied that Gissing, with his “unending, inky succession of words” and “misconceived series of novels,” had essentially wasted his life as a novelist.<sup>9</sup>

Wells believed that it was not his novels of London life but *Veranilda* which represented Gissing’s “proper medium,” “his own true expression,” a view also shared by Frederic Harrison in his preface to the book: “... I think these pages contain his best and most original work.”<sup>10</sup> Wells no doubt thought it appropriate that a historical romance set in sixth-century Italy should have been Gissing’s last work, since Gissing had, of course, loved the classics all his life; and, in referring to *Veranilda* as “Gissing’s maturest, last and most deliberately-conceived book,”<sup>11</sup> Wells was, in fact, merely echoing a letter Gissing wrote in which he admitted that *Veranilda* “will be the first really honest piece of work I have offered to my readers, for it represents the preparatory labour of years, and is written without pressure.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Wells, who had inveighed against Gissing’s depressing view of life, also no doubt welcomed this novel whose inspiration was so diametrically opposed to the author’s other stories. However, Morley Roberts for one was disappointed. “I’ve just read *Veranilda*,” he told Clara Collet, “and it distresses me above measure that I *cannot* think it a success ... it isn’t Gissing at all.”<sup>13</sup> In his article, “The Exile of George Gissing,” Roberts

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contradicted Wells by saying:

... *Veranilda*, with all its colour, its beauty of style, its knowledge of the period and its pathetic irony, cannot be reckoned equal to the books that were written with his blood ... [It] does not possess the true mark which distinguishes the successful historical romance; it has not that powerful conviction, that essential passion of the period, which makes the reader forget his vague knowledge of the time, and makes him say, “This is, this must be, true.”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, in comparison with Gissing's novels of contemporary life, *Veranilda* is hardly more than an unexpected and relatively insignificant tailpiece.

It has been suggested that part of the reason why Wells "puffed" *Veranilda* was simply because it was "the book he was introducing."<sup>15</sup> (The same is perhaps also true of Wells's claims for Frank Swinnerton's insensitive critical study of Gissing, to which Wells himself partly contributed).<sup>16</sup> There was undoubtedly an element of egotism in Wells's claims for *Veranilda* over the rest of Gissing's considerable output; yet, in all fairness to Wells, it should also be pointed out that he must have felt he had played some part – however small – in the conception and writing of *Veranilda* for both he and Gissing had discussed the book during their stay in Rome in 1898 and in numerous letters to one another. In a letter to Gissing in January of that year, Wells, in fact, seems to set the stage for him when he writes: "...you must tell me all the flesh you have put on the bare bones of that story[,] of the sunset and the coming of the wild men [i.e., The Goths] again."<sup>17</sup> In his comments about the concluding chapters of *Veranilda*, which Gissing, of course, did not live to write, but which he had discussed with Wells, Wells seems to echo his descriptions of London besieged by the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* (1898) when he envisions Rome "as absolutely

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desolate under the fear of the Gothic King," and refers to "the wave of panic" that would have "swept us to the end," leaving Rome "to the dogs and vermin ..."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in *Veranilda*, Wells saw expressed the same "extraordinary power of comprehensive design," which he had admired in *The Whirlpool* and in *In the Year of Jubilee*, and which he himself was soon to attempt in what was to prove to be his masterpiece, *Tono-Bungay* (1909). Indeed, in his rejected preface to *Veranilda*, Wells seems to be anticipating the thematic structure of *Tono-Bungay* when he writes that *Veranilda* offers the reader a "magnificent picture of decay – of the last days, of the last hours of the tradition of Imperial Rome."<sup>19</sup> "Again and again in this book," says George Ponderevo at the end of *Tono-Bungay*, "I have written of England as a feudal scheme overtaken by fatty degeneration and stupendous accidents of hypertrophy."<sup>20</sup>

Wells's hostility towards Gissing's novels, as expressed in the rejected *Veranilda* preface, may indirectly stem from the misunderstanding he had had with Arnold Bennett over the latter's failure to include him in his book, *Fame and Fiction* (1901), though Bennett did try to make up for this quite unintentional "oversight" by later publishing an article on Wells's work in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in August 1902.<sup>21</sup> It is important to note here that Wells wrote his intended preface to *Veranilda* only three years after Bennett's *Fame and Fiction* had appeared, and one year before his first large-scale novel, *Kipps* (1905), was published – the book which finally established Wells as one of the leading novelists of his day. Wells's anger over Bennett's failure to include him in *Fame and Fiction* was, of course, due to his intense "craving to figure as a novelist pure and simple."<sup>22</sup> However, when *Love and Mr. Lewisham* which represented Wells's first effort to raise himself in the literary world so that he might cease to be "a sort of literary page in the train of Caine, Zangwill and so forth"<sup>23</sup> first appeared in 1900, the majority of critics failed to discover any sort of beauty or

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technical ability in it. What the public had wanted was another *War of the Worlds*, not *Lewisham* surrendering himself to passionate love. When Arnold Bennett, shortly after the publication of *Mr. Lewisham* questioned Wells's commercial wisdom in abandoning his science romances for which his name was known, Wells bitterly replied: "... why the Hell have you joined the conspiracy to restrict me to one particular type of story? I want to write novels and before God I *will* write

novels.”<sup>24</sup> A few months later, in a letter marked “private and abusive” (19 August 1901), Wells told Bennett that it was the last three chapters of *Fame and Fiction* (those dealing with Gissing, Turgenyev, and George Moore respectively)

that get at ME most intimately, that make me – in view of the fact that you will probably go on writing and influencing opinion through all the years of my development – lift up my clenched hands and say, “Oh damn this Bennett!” ... I am doomed to write scientific romances and short stories for you creatures of the mob [a phrase which, ironically, Gissing himself might well have used], and my novels must be my private dissipation.<sup>25</sup>

In a *Journal* entry for 30 July 1904 – made just a month before Wells published his article on Gissing in the *Monthly Review* – Bennett significantly noted:

[Wells] told me he had written a little humorous novel [i.e., *Kipps*] on the lines of *The Wheels of Chance*<sup>26</sup> and had been trying to persuade Halkett to take it for the *Pall Mall Magazine*. Halkett protested he was delighted with it personally, but as to his public – well, the “range of the story was rather narrow.” Wells defended it, and instanced [W. W.] Jacobs as a proof that the public did not object to narrow range. “Yes,” said Halkett solemnly, “but Jacobs is a humorist.” Wells was evidently very dissatisfied with his position.<sup>27</sup>

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In his chapter on Gissing, which had originally appeared as an article in the *Academy* in December 1899,<sup>28</sup> Bennett, while admitting that Gissing’s “novels contain less of potential popularity than those of almost any other living novelist of rank,” also went on to express views that opposed those of Wells, saying that it is just “this ‘grey’ quality of his subjects” which “specially recommends” Gissing’s work to the critics.

Beauty is strangely various. There is the beauty of light and joy and strength exulting; but there is also the beauty of shade, of sorrow and sadness, and of humility oppressed ... To take the common grey things which people know and despise, and, without tampering, to disclose their epic significance, their essential grandeur – that is realism, as distinguished from idealism or romanticism.<sup>29</sup>

It was no doubt Bennett’s erroneous comment that Gissing must receive “higher prices for serial rights than many authors whose editions far outnumber his own” which prompted Wells, in a tone reminiscent of Jasper Milvain (*New Grub Street*), to remark that he should have been included in Bennett’s volume if for no other reason than the fact that the “*Strand Magazine* pays £125 for a short story by me and *Pearson’s* £15 a thousand for *The Sea Lady*.”<sup>30</sup> Bennett replied to Wells’s “abusive” letter by saying; “You will have to see a doctor about that modesty of yours”; and he went on to explain, with subtle sarcasm, that he had left Wells out of his book simply because “nothing less than a whole book could contain you,” to which Wells replied: “I hope you are serious when you speak of my greatness, because it is a very serious matter to me.”<sup>31</sup> Gissing himself had noticed signs of the same phenomenon as early as August 1897.<sup>32</sup> That Wells, at least until his own



recognition as a serious novelist was assured, may have harboured a certain feeling of resentment, if not jealousy, towards Gissing – the unpopular, yet widely respected, author – is suggested by the fact that, though he criticizes Bennett for overrating “the gawky crowded exploits” of Gissing’s novels, Wells had himself, just two months earlier, told Bennett: “I would be glad indeed if for once Gissing could have a shout.”<sup>33</sup> As Bennett himself pointed out:

Your views about my views of Gissing, Moore, and Turgenev, leave me cold, having regard to your own article on Gissing in the *Fortnightly*,<sup>34</sup> and to the fact, universally recognized by press and public, that on Moore and Turgenev I am the first and only authority in this country.<sup>35</sup>

In the rejected *Veranilda* preface, therefore, Wells was attempting to show both the critical world and Arnold Bennett – in what essentially amounted to depreciation rather than appreciation – that his friendship with Gissing automatically made him the “first and only authority” on Gissing’s life and work. As Pierre Coustillas has pointed out, “through the well-rounded sentences [of the rejected preface] one detected a sense of self-satisfaction, a desire to show off, an intellectual quackery.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, when Morley Roberts claimed that *Veranilda* was “a splendid failure,”<sup>37</sup> Wells confessed to him: “I’d like to say that I think you much more right about *Veranilda* than I was in my preface. You see, the thing was written as a preface and for purposes not critical but seductive.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Experiment in Autobiography*, 1934, p. 572.

<sup>2</sup> “George Gissing: An Impression”; originally written as a preface to *Veranilda*, but rejected by Gissing’s family; published in the *Monthly Review*, August 1904, and reprinted in *George Gissing and H. G. Wells: Their Friendship and Correspondence*, ed. by Royal A. Gettmann, London 1961, pp. 260-77.

<sup>3</sup> “The Exile of George Gissing,” *Albany Magazine* (London), Christmas 1904; reprinted in *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, Jean-Pierre Michaux (ed.) London, 1981, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Royal A. Gettmann, *op. cit.*, 7 August 1897, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), Everyman’s Library, London, 1964, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup>*Letters to Members of His Family*, Algernon and Ellen Gissing (eds.), 1927, p. 391. In December 1899, Gissing had also told Clara Collet that to say “my books will not be read is a pretty safe forecast ...” (p. 366).

<sup>7</sup> “The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” Pierre Coustillas, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, Vol. 72, No. 9, November 1968, pp. 588-610.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> “George Gissing: An Impression,” *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>10</sup>Preface to *Veranilda*, 1904, p. vii.

<sup>11</sup>*The Sphere*, 10 September 1904. Quoted in “The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” *op. cit.*, p. 602.

<sup>12</sup>Letter to Clara Collet, 17 February 1901, *Letters to Members of His Family*, p. 375.

<sup>13</sup>“The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” p. 603.

<sup>14</sup>“The Exile of George Gissing,” *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>15</sup> “The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” p. 593.

<sup>16</sup>Refer to Swinnerton’s prefatory note to *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (1912). “To write of Gissing,” observed Swinnerton, “is to write of one who failed.” In an undated letter, now in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Wells told Edmund Gosse: “In

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the matter of Gissing, the substance of my article [i.e., “George Gissing: An Impression”] was embodied in a very good book on Gissing by Frank Swinnerton ...” See also Wells’s *Experiment in Autobiography*, p. 567.

<sup>17</sup>Royal A. Gettmann, p. 77.

<sup>18</sup>“George Gissing: An Impression,” *op. cit.*, pp. 272 and 275.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>20</sup>*Tono-Bungay*, IV, iii, 2.

<sup>21</sup>“Herbert George Wells and his Work.” Concerning this article, Wells told Bennett (2 September 1902): “... I am enormously satisfied. This sort of thing like a theatrical poster has to enhance, but allowing for that, it takes me as being really good.” *Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells: A Record of a Personal and a Literary Friendship*, Harris Wilson (ed.), London, 1960, p. 83.

<sup>22</sup>*H. G. Wells: Interviews and Recollections*, J. R. Hammond (ed.), London, 1980, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup>Gordon N. Ray, “H. G. Wells Tries to be a Novelist,” reprinted in *Edwardians and Late Victorians*, Richard Ellman (ed.), New York, 1960, p. 123.

<sup>24</sup>Wilson, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>26</sup>Published in 1896, *The Wheels of Chance* was an early and comparatively slight attempt to mine the vein of *Kipps* and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910).

<sup>27</sup> *The Journals of Arnold Bennett*, Newman Flower (ed.), 3 vols., London, 1932, Vol. 1, p. 189.

<sup>28</sup>“Mr. George Gissing, an Inquiry,” 16 December 1899; reprinted in *Gissing: The Critical*

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*Heritage*, Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge (eds.), London, 1972, pp. 361-65. Gissing himself thought that this article “was rather more intelligently done than usual, but like everybody’s writing on this subject, showed an imperfect knowledge of my later work.” Letter to Clara Collet, 29 December 1899.

<sup>29</sup>*The Critical Heritage*, p. 362.

<sup>30</sup>Wilson, p. 59. *The Sea Lady* was serialized in *Pearson’s Magazine* from July to December 1901.

<sup>31</sup>Wilson, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup>When Gissing attempted to correct some of Wells’s erroneous remarks in his article on him [Gissing] for the *Contemporary Review* (August 1897), Wells had replied: “I think I see your point on Rolfe and Morton – but I always give myself the benefit of a delay before I admit an error.” Royal A. Gettmann, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup>Wilson, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup>Bennett is apparently referring to Wells’s article on Gissing for the *Contemporary Review* (August 1897).

<sup>35</sup>Wilson, p. 62.

<sup>36</sup>“The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” p. 593.

<sup>37</sup>“The Exile of George Gissing,” *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in “The Stormy Publication of Gissing’s *Veranilda*,” p. 604.

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### Reviews

Patrick Bridgwater, *Gissing and Germany*, London: Enitharmon Press, 1981.

Gissing’s closeness to some things German has always been guessed at or understood, from

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the curious speculation about his possible German ancestry to the critical evaluation of his stature as an experimental novelist in the continental European tradition. Patrick Bridgwater has brought

together in a monograph what has to date been demonstrated or hypothesized about the specific points of contact. He has added his own conclusions and some new considerations as well as evidence from unpublished notebooks. His book does not answer the full suggestion of its title; firstly, some areas of contact, most notably German music, are omitted without any acknowledgment of their existence; secondly, again without comment, the reception of Gissing in Germany is not engaged, except in passing reference to articles by his friend Bertz. What the book offers is a treatment of the four most substantial affinities between Gissing and German authors: Goethe, Heine, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, all four particularly important to Gissing's rational humanism, which the author rightly suggests deserves more study. They are dealt with in separate chapters, the author moving for his evidence from Gissing's personal writings to essays and novels as best serves his argument. In the process he glances at other German allusions that appear in the source under consideration, such as Romantic fairy tales in *Isabel Clarendon*, but no critical judgment is pursued, nor could a reader looking for reference to such material easily find it since the book has no index.

In the introductory chapter the author recapitulates the evidence for Gissing's occupying an exceptional place, shared only with Meredith, as a thorough Germanist among other Victorian novelists who were similarly interested in German letters. Gissing's wide knowledge of German writers, both past and contemporary, was distilled into a "very deep sympathy with a small number of writers." Such a narrowing is hardly as peculiar, though, as the author insists, especially since he argues that in the case of Jean Paul as with Goethe and Heine, the connection was not so much in terms of literary craft as, in Gissing's own words, an "intense *personal* interest."

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This is most true of Goethe, who for Gissing, as for many others including Carlyle, George Eliot and Meredith, was first the sage, who lived what he preached, especially the idea of renunciation. The works which meant most to Gissing were *Faust* and *Die Italienische Reise*, in which he recognized his own longing for the classical world and which the author sees as a model for Gissing's own *By the Ionian Sea*. Otherwise the literary use of Goethe's works seems to have been their gift of quotable extracts, on which the Goethe "*culte*" conferred implicit authority. The author admits, with rather too much reservation, that this pragmatic reason may falsify the estimate of their genuine favour with Gissing. He fails to see a similar explanation for what he finds a surprising prevalence of copied extracts on love. Maybe surprising for Gissing the man, but not so for the novelist.

For Heine as for his other main writers, Bridgwater sketches in with aptly specific examples the background of his general reception in England. The author's case is Gissing's evident interest in Heine's writings, although as throughout he concentrates too exclusively on the respective accidents of our having a dated, explicit proof of the poet's presence in Gissing's mind. Beyond this manifest personal interest there is for the record only a fortunately abandoned early plan to translate Heine's *Buch der Lieder*. The author writes that "it must have been from Heine that Gissing derived his predilection for 'savage' satire," which is arguable. But more specifically, it may be worth examining whether the *Ryecroft Papers* with its mixture of personal recollection and observation, learning and speculation, may derive from Heine's characteristic manner in the *Reisebilder*. The author concludes that "whereas Goethe appealed to the lifelong idealist and passionate classicist, Heine will have offered him something quite different: a witty, detached, and courageous response to a pessimism as profound as his own ..."

With the word "pessimism" he rings in the chapter on Schopenhauer. He shows that while

Gissing's preoccupation with Schopenhauer was typical of his period, the use in his novels of Schopenhauer's philosophy, as of Nietzsche's, was "well in advance of his time" (Schopenhauer in *Workers in the Dawn*, 1880; Nietzsche in *The Unclassed*, 1884). An introduction to Schopenhauer's writings in the 1870's inevitably and lastingly fulfilled Gissing's need for a philosophy of life and art. Gissing's own version in "The Hope of Pessimism," with the conclusion that in art, and in art alone, "good does prevail over evil, and there is excellence in the sum of things," was suited to set the man at rest and the novelist to work. Except for the attribution of references, which is as thorough here as throughout, this chapter contains no new arguments. Among the novels chosen for demonstration the author neglects *The Whirlpool* despite its pervasive treatment of themes from Schopenhauer (cf. a recent article published here). The cause seems to be again the over-reliance on explicit references, which makes him for instance find it "strange that neither Schopenhauer nor Nietzsche is mentioned in the *Commonplace Book*." True, but Gissing asks there, "Might one define Art as a satisfying and abiding expression of the zest for life?" – a question he answers in the affirmative in the Ryecroft Papers.

The chapter on Nietzsche is original. The author writes:

Schopenhauer remained his spiritual mentor ... More typical of his work of the 1880's, however, is an aristocratic conservatism that appears to owe more to Nietzsche than to Schopenhauer and which is indeed itself more typical of the 1890's in general, and more particularly of the "new Socialist-Nietzsche generation" (Bernard Shaw) of 1896-1914, whose *guru* Nietzsche was.

While it is clear that Gissing knew Nietzsche's writings, the issue of indebtedness is not. Gissing held views in common with Nietzsche: both believed in life for art's sake, an aristocracy of intellect, and the relativity of values. But as the author allows, Gissing could have developed them himself

from Schopenhauer's philosophy and Darwinian ideas, as Nietzsche did. This chapter suffers most from a confusion which pervades, only partly inevitably, the whole book: the problem of distinguishing between influence, affinity, and coincidental parallels is often broached but the best that can often be said for the author's solutions is that he honestly spreads before the reader the evidence and the diverse hypotheses. His reasons for opting for influence are not always compelling, and occasionally he returns to the notion of influence even after he has judged against it. In one instance he calls in question the book's general method when he asserts that "Gissing was a 'Nietzschean' by 1892 whether he had heard of Nietzsche by then or not." The deciding reason too often seems to be the author's definition of his study. Here the isolation of the enquiry, the absence of any attempt to weigh the German influence in a general British and foreign context (Gissing: "I keep up steadily my reading in Greek, Latin, German, French") makes the author's conclusions seem too dependent on his research interest. The frequent use of "surely," "of course" and similar rhetorical devices only creates further doubt in the reader's mind.

In its parts the book lacks a clear organizing principle: sometimes the arguments direct the selection of material, sometimes the findings in a particular text direct the course of the analysis; the novels are at one time seen as "illustration" of Gissing's philosophy, and the next his personal writings are used to elaborate his fictional views. The author's final conclusion is well prepared and incontestable: "His attachment was to German literature and thence to an idealized Germany rather

than to the real Germany of his own day, which he neither knew well nor trusted.” Both the book’s achievements and flaws should encourage further enquiry into the exact nature of Gissing’s relationship to Germany and with that his place in English and European letters. – Gisela Argyle.

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George Gissing, *Nouvelles choisies*, présentées par Pierre Coustillas, Lille : Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1980.

George Gissing, *Femmes en trop*, traduit par Pierre Coustillas et Suzanne Calbris, Lille : Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1982.

Professor Coustillas enjoys a well deserved reputation as one of the foremost, and the most dedicated, Gissing scholars in the world. His work, whether editorial, biographical, or critical, is as distinguished by its impeccable scholarship as by its sheer bulk. The two volumes under review show Pierre Coustillas in a relatively new light, as translator and editor of translations. It is not an entirely new departure for him, but it is a splendid confirmation of his expertise and talent. To say less because I happen to be his close friend and frequent collaborator would not be honest.

The two volumes issued in quick succession by the Presses Universitaires de Lille are different in more ways than one.

*Nouvelles choisies* is a selection of twelve short stories written by George Gissing during the last ten years of his brief life. They are taken from three collections which had originally appeared in 1898 (*Human Odds and Ends*), 1906 (*The House of Cobwebs*) and 1927 (*A Victim of Circumstances*). With characteristic abnegation, the editor has allowed himself only five pages for his introduction. Not that he needed much more space for his purpose; Pierre Coustillas is a very learned man, but he never spreads himself out complacently. That may be why, when airing his views about the short story as a genre, he praises its brevity, and even denounces the “excessives longueurs” of Victorian novelists from Dickens to George Eliot, and again speaks of the “interminables histoires à la *David Copperfield*.” Gissing himself is then placed somewhere between Dickens and Zola; as a short-story writer, he has no “penchant pour le grotesque – il contemple la réalité d’un regard pénétrant, ironique.” He is further praised for the delicacy of his

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psychological analyses and the clear-sightedness of his picture of Victorian society; and Coustillas concludes that Gissing’s mastery of the short story, though scantily recognized by critics, historians and theorists, is impressive. It is true that Walter Allen, in his recent book *The Short Story in English* (Oxford 1981) shows no interest in our author’s work in that field.

The editorial material is eked out by a four-page biography of Gissing and a brief but sufficient “Notice bibliographique.” The bulk of Coustillas’s labour for that volume has consisted in choosing twelve representative stories out of the hundred known to have been written by Gissing, translating two of them himself, and supervising the work of seven fellow-translators (Jean-Paul Hulin, Michel Ballard, Michel Krzak, Daniel Nury, Mary Wood, Danièle Hyppolyte, and Françoise Dottin). They appear to have all done a workmanlike job of it, even if some are excessively addicted to transliteration of popular speech. There are practically no misprints or other errors. The annotation, however, is minimal.

The more recent volume is a translation of *The Odd Women* under a felicitous new French title.

Apart from one page of biography, and perhaps half a dozen footnotes, the work consists wholly of the translation. Suzanne Calbris had already collaborated with Pierre Coustillas on their version of *New Grub Street* in the same series (which now includes, in its "Domaine anglais," three books by Gissing and one by Hardy). In the *Gissing Newsletter* it is not the novel but the translation that calls for review. However, it is impossible not to say that the opportunity of re-reading *The Odd Women* has been eagerly welcomed; the experience has confirmed once more that this is a very fine novel, profoundly moving, intelligent, and courageous. The translation is truly excellent, whether it is appraised through detailed comparison of sample passages with the English text or evaluated independently in terms of sheer readability. Again, it may seem occasionally that printing *j'crois* or

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*j'peux* is unnecessarily ugly and confusing since that is how most Frenchmen – whether they realize it or not – actually speak in any case. And "c'est-i' pas vrai?" seems to me markedly unlike "Indeed, mum?" both in meaning and in speech-level. But that is one isolated detail and a niggling remark that cannot seriously detract from one's admiration for the translator's achievement.

Altogether, these two handsome new volumes serve the cause of Gissing in France with great distinction. – Sylvère Monod.

George Gissing, *Six Sonnets on Shakespearean Heroines*. With an introductory note by Pierre Coustillas. London: Eric and Joan Stevens, 1982.

The spring and autumn of 1876 was one of Gissing's most difficult periods. Not yet nineteen, he had already suffered his disgrace at Owens College, and had served a month in prison at hard labor. During the following months, while living in Wakefield, and after his voyage to America, he somehow found the peace of mind to write these placid, well-turned sonnets addressed to the women of Shakespeare's plays. Coustillas, in his introduction, is right to call them a "fascinating psychological document," for they do tell us a good deal about the poet's mental state, and are almost the only surviving records we have of this time of his life. For one thing, the virtues he praises in Shakespeare's heroines were no doubt the very qualities he had found lacking in Nell Harrison, who had been the occasion of his downfall, and was nevertheless to become his wife three years later.

When he wrote these poems Gissing had not, of course, published anything, or tried his hand at fiction. But he had been composing verses since his schooldays. The first entry in the manuscript notebook of "Verses" at the Beinecke Library of Yale University in which these sonnets appear is dated 1869. He had won a poetry prize at Owens College in 1873 with "Ravenna," a long narrative poem in Spenserian stanzas, and continued writing accomplished, if thoroughly conventional poems

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from time to time, but he attached little importance to them, and apparently never tried to publish any of them, with one exception. This was a slight off-hand effusion titled "Song" which appeared in *Temple Bar* in 1883.

The six sonnets now published for the first time have been brought out in a pleasant blue-bound pamphlet, hand-set in an edition of 250 copies. Coustillas' introduction gives the circumstances surrounding their composition and briefly sketches their significance. It is odd that Gissing should have chosen the Italian sonnet form rather than the Shakespearean for treating these subjects. But he performs smoothly and competently, carefully observing the break between octave

and sestet, and employing an admirably simple and sensuous, if fairly artificial, poetic diction. Coustillas reminds us that Gissing had won the Shakespeare Prize at Owens College shortly before, and his preparation for this competition had involved him in a thorough immersion in the plays. As a result, he is able to speak of each heroine through images that capture the atmosphere of the play in which she appears. "Imogen" begins:

A still, calm lake within a desert vale,  
Smooth shingle sloping to the brink around,  
Uncloth'd with rush or reed, but simply crown'd  
With the chaste beauty of the lily pale.

which reflects the outdoor settings of Roman Britain where some of the scenes of *Cymbeline* take place. In "Miranda," Gissing speculates that his heroine might appear to him by magic, as if summoned by "some bright Ariel," and the play's island locale and songs are recalled in imagery of a "scented gale" and music.

There are some anticipations of Gissing's serious themes in these poems, but they also express attitudes he was later to change. The hope expressed in "Miranda" that the heroine may bring help to "our hearts which so the world doth mar" alludes to the harshness of the external world which Gissing was to have much to say about in his novels. The same complaint is heard in "Cordelia,"

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where he says that Truth, which manifests itself in silence, is drowned by the clamor of "the harsh world, where sound is more than sooth." The sonnets are full of the romantic idealism which still motivated Gissing when he met Gabrielle Fleury and wrote his love letters to her. On the other hand, there is nothing in them relating to the subject of women's emancipation, which was to become one of Gissing's major themes. In fact, he praises Portia because she returns to a submissive role as Bassanio's wife after her accomplishments in masculine disguise:

...with the fruit of victory in thy hand,  
Thou steppest meekly from thy lofty state,  
A woman's loving duty thy chief care.

Gissing has in mind these lines, spoken by Portia in Act III, Scene 2 of *The Merchant of Venice*, after Bassanio has passed the test of the caskets, and won her as his bride:

Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours  
Is now converted. But now I was the lord  
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,  
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,  
This house, these servants, and this same myself  
Are yours, my lord. I give them with this ring...

which is not the idea of marriage approved by the author of *The Odd Women*.

Each of the sonnets thanks the heroine to whom it is addressed for the virtues she exemplifies. In *Miranda* Gissing finds "purity and meekness"; in *Portia*, wit and eloquence as well as a sense of justice and mercy; in *Cordelia*, humility and the spirit of truth; in *Imogen*, chastity and calm; in *Perdita*, naturalness; and in *Desdemona*, innocence and a reproach to "blind wrath." These are



hardly surprising, but it is significant that throughout these poems he praises the women most for their capacity to project calmness, serenity and peace, for their displays of modesty, reserve and

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silence, and for their resistance to passion, violence and worldly disturbances. These are the same qualities Gissing praises in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, the sketch of an ideal existence he wrote many years later. It seems that, while Gissing altered some of his views about society as he matured, the underlying emotional structure of his mind, his deep attraction to quiet, seclusion and freedom from care changed little throughout his life. – Jacob Korg.

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#### Notes and News

Robert L. Selig's critical study of Gissing in the Twayne Press English Series is scheduled to appear in February 1983. By then the Harvester Press will have published a critical edition of *The Paying Guest* edited by Ian Fletcher, as well as the three titles announced earlier.

*Time*, the American magazine, has asked some distinguished men what are the indispensable books for an education. In his reply, "Five Ways to Wisdom," published on 27 September 1982, p. 73, James R. Killian Jr, retired president of MIT, mentions Gissing in a short list of authors and books. We cannot but agree with him. Adeline R. Tintner, who sends the appropriate cutting from *Time*, will be reading a paper on Gissing at the Comparative Literature Conference in Santa Barbara (March 24-26, 1983).

Reviewing Kenneth Churchill's *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930* (Macmillan) in the *Daily Telegraph* for 22 January 1981, Anthony Powell wrote: "George Eliot, overdoing the local colour in *Romola*, succeeded with it in the Roman honeymoon of Dorothea and Casaubon in *Middlemarch*. John Addington Symonds did his best to put the Renaissance, and Italian good looks, on the map. Much of that part of the Renaissance which Symonds had on offer was what Ruskin most disliked; while in George Gissing (like Samuel Butler, in love with Italy) we are really back

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with Gibbon in finding Ancient Rome the chief attraction."

Ariel Daigre reviewed J.-P. Michaux's anthology of Gissing criticism in his programme on Men and Books on the French Service of the B.B.C. (17 January 1982).

*Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. IV, 1800-1900, Part I, A-G, compiled by Barbara Rosenbaum and Pamela White and published by Mansell (6 All Saints Street, London, N1 9R1) includes a substantial entry on Gissing. The other authors included in this volume are Matthew Arnold, Jane Austen, the Brontës, Elizabeth and Robert Browning, Samuel Butler, Byron, Carlyle, Lewis Carroll, A. H. Clough, Coleridge, Wilkie Collins, De Quincey, Dickens, Disraeli, Maria Edgeworth, George Eliot, Edward Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gaskell. Gissing is therefore in very good company, as he should be. The volume measures 28.5 x 22.5cm, and numbers 864 pages, and 26 facsimiles. It is published at £80.00. Author sections are arranged alphabetically. Each begins

with an introduction which establishes a standard reference edition; discusses the canon of the author's work; surveys the manuscripts; traces their descent and dispersal and details important discoveries. The manuscript entries which follow are divided into six categories: verse, prose, dramatic works, works edited by, diaries and notebooks, and marginalia in printed books and manuscripts. Entries give information on the nature of the manuscript, date, variant title(s), state of completeness, provenance and location, the date and form of first publication, articles discussing the manuscript, and published facsimiles. Parts 2 and 3 of Volume IV are in preparation. Vol. V will be an Index to the whole *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. (1450-1900).

Professor Martha Vogeler, of California State University, reports: Gissing's "delightful" book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), is cited in G. Norman Knight's *Indexing, the Art of* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 21, as an unusual work of fiction because it contains an index.

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*Edwardian Fiction*, by Jefferson Hunter (Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), mentions Gissing in the following four contexts: his studies of Dickens are called "excellent" but said to have nevertheless failed to prevent the sentimentalism Dickens inspired in William de Morgan's novels (p. 15); *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is seen as a work in which action is almost completely replaced by "reverie and speculation," thus making it illustrative of modern novelists' freedom from the tyranny of plot (p. 25); Ryecroft the character is called Gissing's "second self" and the book an autobiographical work that takes "the Edwardian theme of retirement to an extreme of unassertiveness" for it came at a moment "when the artistic impulse of the Victorian century had flagged"; and, finally, the book's dismal image of London is compared to Conrad's in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and E. V. Lucas's in *Listener's Lure* (pp. 217-18).

According to a recent catalogue from the AMS Press, *Workers in the Dawn* is again available from this firm at \$55. Three volumes in one, second binding.

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### Recent Publications

#### Volumes

George Gissing, *Lungo il Mar Jonio (By the Ionian Sea)*: Antologia per le Scuole a cura di Paolo M. Reale. Reggio Calabria: Edizioni Parallelo 38, 1980, pp. 79. Blue and white stiff wrappers. Lire 4500. This small volume consists in a selection of passages from *By the Ionian Sea* in the original with a few footnotes. The text is preceded by a short introduction on Gissing followed by three pages on the book itself. The editor's competence would seem to have been minimal and the number of misprints in the introduction and notes is alarming.

George Gissing, *Femmes en trop (The Odd Women)*, translated by Pierre Coustillas and Suzanne Calbris. Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1982, pp. 367. Pictorial stiff wrappers.

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Francis 80. The novel is preceded by a short prefatory note on Gissing and the translations of his works into French.

George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, New York: Dover, 1982, pp. 404. Pictorial wrappers. The text is reprinted from the first American edition, Appleton & Co., 1895, \$6. The book is also available in England from Constable & Co., at £4.50, and in Canada from the General Publishing Company, Toronto.

John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books*, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. xvi + 426. Blue cloth, pictorial jacket. £18.50. Frontispiece and fifteen portraits of Gissing's relatives and friends.

#### Articles, reviews, etc.

Anon., "Un Villeneuvois plonge dans la littérature victorienne," *Nord Eclair*, 19-20 April 1981. A notice of the anthology compiled by J.-P. Michaux.

Robin Barrow, "Reviews," *Review of English Studies*, November 1981, pp. 475-76. Review of the Harvester editions of *Born in Exile* and *Denzil Quarrier*.

Anon., *The Bookseller*, 6 February 1982, p. 539. Paragraph on the forthcoming Harvester editions of *Demos*, *The Nether World* and *Henry Ryecroft*.

Anthony Powell, "The Miserabilist," *Daily Telegraph*, 16 September, 1982, p. 14; Terence de Vere White, "Grub Street," *Spectator*, 18 September 1982, p. 20; John Gross, "A Man with a Secret," *Observer*, 19 September 1982, p. 32. Reviews of *Gissing: A Life in Books*.

Sylvère Monod, "Comptes Rendus," *Etudes Anglaises*, July-September 1982, pp. 346-47. Review of *George Gissing: Critical Essays*.

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Jefferson Hunter, *Edwardian Fiction*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982. Gissing appears on pp. 15, 25 and 217-18.

#### Latest News

The Harvester Press announces that *The Nether World* (hard-cover and paperback) will be ready in November, the book selling at £9.95 and £2.95 (not £4.50) respectively. *Demos* will also be available in paperback (£4.95) and hardback (£9.95) in November together with *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (cloth £9.95; paper £4.50). *The Paying Guest* is expected to be ready before the end of the year, and a paperback of *The Unclassed* is being planned by the same firm for next Spring.

