

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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A Forgotten Appraisal of Gissing’s Work

by Alfred Richard Orage

Pierre Coustillas

In Volume 1 of *The Penguin Companion to Literature*, edited by David Daiches (1971), Alfred Richard Orage is defined by Nikita Lary as journalist and editor. A major critic of the first quarter of the present century he is by no means forgotten. Several books on him have been published since World War II, in particular *Orage and the “New Age” Circle* by Paul Selver (George Allen and Unwin, 1959) and *Orage as Critic*, edited by Wallace Martin (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974). He is mainly known as editor of an influential though little read weekly, the *New Age*, which appeared

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which appeared from 4 October 1894 to 7 April 1938. Orage was no Oxbridge man, no member of the literary Establishment, and his career was by any standards a strange, original one. The younger son of a farmer who later became a teacher in his own school, Orage was born at Dacre, near Bradford, Yorkshire, in 1873, but he was brought up at his father’s native village, Fenstanton in Huntingdonshire, after the death of the elder Orage. Like Gissing he experienced poverty from an early age. The benevolence of a local squire’s son enabled him to continue his education at the

village school as a pupil-teacher and, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, to proceed to a teachers' training college at Culham, Oxfordshire. From 1893 to 1906 he was a teacher in an elementary school at Leeds and became actively interested in socialism and in the possibility of effecting a revolution in culture and taste. With a friend, Holbrook Jackson, who achieved a lasting reputation as a bibliophile and critic, he founded the Leeds Art Club, with the main object of fostering new standards in the arts. The year 1906 was a turning-point in his career. He came to London as a free-lance journalist and, with the financial backing of Bernard Shaw, bought in the next year the *New Age*, a dying weekly which had been edited in turn by Frederick A. Atkins and A. E. Fletcher. Some of Gissing's books, it must be said in passing, had been prominently reviewed in this journal, and A. E. Fletcher had serialized *Will Warburton* in it from January to June 1905. Under the editorship of Orage, *New Age* was a political, economic and literary weekly in which the aims and nature of socialism were widely discussed. Although the journal was too poor to pay its collaborators, Orage managed to draw contributions from such leading writers as Shaw, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton and Arnold Bennett. Moreover he eagerly encouraged new talent, and many authors who later achieved prominence began their careers on the *New Age*. In 1918 Orage met Major Clifford Hugh Douglas and the result was that he became a convert to the Douglas social

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credit system – “a scheme for abolishing wages and replacing them with universal dividends” – and henceforth was less actively interested in literature. He gave up the editorship of the *New Age* in 1922 so as to devote himself to the work of Gurdjieff, the teacher of occultism.

Orage's critical writings are widely scattered. In addition to *Orage as Critic*, already mentioned, some volumes published in his lifetime and shortly after his death in 1934 offer a substantial portion of his critical writings. His largely unfavourable essay on *By the Ionian Sea* appeared in *The Art of Reading* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930, pp. 226-32) and in *Selected Essays and Critical Writings*, edited by Herbert Read and Denis Saurat (London : Stanley Nott, 1935, pp. 80-85). The original publication of this essay has not been traced but it seems likely that the writing of it was prompted by the 1917 Chapman & Hall edition of Gissing's travel narrative. The essay reprinted here, which was listed in the bibliography to *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, shows Orage in a mood much more sympathetic to Gissing. It first appeared in *The Labour Leader*, vol. III, nos. 137 and 138, 14 and 21 November 1896, pp. 392 and 400. It was entitled “George Gissing” and signed A.R.O.

## I

Literature is daily becoming more faithful to life. That is, I know, a somewhat optimistic view; but then, after all, what are we if not optimists, and how, without optimism, could we live? The consistent pessimist is impossible: all nature rebels against him. Even in his pessimism he takes a cautious delight. He lives on from day to day in the sheer hope of pessimism tomorrow. Nature has her own purpose to work out, and optimism is her first demand. Hence we are optimists, and there's an end of it. If it were not so, then, surely, to read the books of such men as George Gissing, Stephen Crane, Thomas Hardy, Arthur Morrison would change the world's wine into veritable ditchwater, whereof one might drink once and then perish. To know what really exists, yet not to be

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able to hope that one day it will cease to be – this is impossible. To know is to hope, and to hope is

in some vague indefinable sort of way to know.

Gissing, whether he admit it or not, is a most profound optimist. His books – or rather the two of them that I shall notice – are as rankly realistic as truth can make them. They are sketches from the life of our slums in London, and simply teem with the most horrible details of the life the “other half” leads. “The Nether World” and “New Grub Street” have scarcely a pleasant chapter. The trail of the devil is over them all.

The reader rises sick and savage. He wants to slay everybody straight off. If he be unconventional, he will, in all probability, swear at the author and things in general; while, if he be conventional, he had best be left alone for an hour or two; he won't be amiable. And yet Gissing is a most profound optimist. He is bitter as gall. Some of his thoughts are so bitter that he has to wrap them up in a most sweet irony. Even his own remedy he suggests ironically, as if it were Mrs. Partington's broom, and as for his opinions of the present system of private property which is responsible for all the ills that the poor is heir to – they simply cannot be written. Gissing himself cannot write them. And yet he is a most profound optimist. To hark back a little, it is curious to notice how great is becoming the interest literature takes in the slums; how the terrible problem of poverty is playing its part in the pages of such men as those I have named. The fashionable world our grandfathers read of is being relegated to penny novelettes, which prove to have a monopoly of that distinguished Utopia, and we must have our “labour leader,” our “socialist,” our “unemployed problem,” our philanthropic curate with Socialist leanings, along with the lords and dukes we have not quite learned to spare. All this is very significant. It means that literature is settling down to business, and that life is really going to be described at last.

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I know you may say, “that's all very well, but why should literature describe actual life any the more now than it did one hundred or two hundred years ago? May it not be a delusion, which has poisoned every age, that its literature is the reflex of its life?” Well, it may be, I deny nothing. It may have been possible for the last generation to have actually believed that the poor of England were copies of Dickens – as it may be that there are people who believe Meredith's characters to be real; but, out of respect to my ancestors, I ha'e ma doots. If so, then the optimist scores another point, for life itself must have changed; and there's the whole theory of the unchangeableness of human nature clean gone! The question is, Does our literature represent life as we know it? Does it reflect actual scenes, and are its people not merely stuffed or wax, but alive? And the answer is, No, but it tends to. Which is what I said at the start.

Now, Gissing's books represent a side of life which has lain very low in literature; so low as to be almost invisible. The very poor are wont to hide themselves, even as wounded animals are said to do, and in all literature of the past the very poor have found, oh, so great a hiding-place! You may read Shakespeare or Milton, and find them not. You may read Thackeray and his school, and find them not. Bacon and the philosophers! What had they to do with the poor? In our great literature they have taken away our poor, and we know not where they have laid them. And yet they were there! And we have them here – perhaps, indeed, some of us are among them. Let us lift up our hearts. For today we are discovered, and now we may hope for decent, speedy burial.

The moral of Gissing's books is one. He has no other purpose on earth. His books, like the animal creation, are moulded on one plan. He takes you a walk into the slums of London and shows you hell : and there is only one purpose in all of it. He is never tired of repeating his moral. He goes on and on as if it were a law of nature that he should say the things he says. He hammers away at it

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as the Hindoos hammer at a bit of metal. He is obstinate and obdurate as a mule. You ask him relief, and he gives you more moral. You beg a little respite, and you recline upon his moral. What is his moral? Oh, the easiest thing to say in the world! Just *don't be poor!* That's all. It's just the moral Smiles and his innumerable school have preached, and, I suppose, will continue to preach so long as there is a Savings Bank or an old stocking empty. The moral has been pointed so often before that Æsop must have had it on tradition. It has been the destiny which has shaped our ends; our very mainspring; the secret wire of every Jack in the box! Surely (you ask) this Gissing points a moral somewhat newer than this? No, comrade. That's his moral, and you take it or leave it. Depend upon it, he says, the greatest mistake a man can make is to be poor. Therefore, don't be poor. But, we may ask, how are we to avoid it? Tell us some remedy. What is the use of saying "Don't!" To all of which Gissing replies ironically, "Don't be poor." You see the maddening iteration of the thing. It rasps your nerves. If you are poor, you begin to realise what it means to be poor. You stir up the muddiest part of your anger and swear to be no longer poor; and, there you are. Gissing has brought you to divine discontent, and you're a man! If you be rich, you are suddenly smitten with the horror of poverty. The Bank of England stopped payment once, and these are troublesome days! What if – good Lord! and then comes Gissing again – Don't be poor. You begin likewise to realise what poverty means : you no longer vaguely wonder what it is like, and thank God for the workhouse, "A most excellent institution for the distressed, though some sad rascals make use of it." You begin to wonder whether more unlikely things have not happened than your own poverty; and speculate on the wickedness of a world that allows it, and there *you* are – Gissing *has* made a man of you. See? It's the simplest thing in the world. That is where Gissing's profound optimism appears. He knows

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perfectly well that we are all annoyed with his endless monotone – Don't be poor, Don't be poor – but he also has a deep faith in the possibility of something better. He assumes that no man need be poor, that is past argument now. He is optimist to believe that by dinning into men's ears the one piece of advice he will compel them to take it. And he will! So optimism is justified of all her children. I said there was a doubt as to whether he would admit the charge of optimism. He is too bitter to be quite perfect, and possibly he has no such intention as that I have named. But what would that prove? Merely that he knows himself less thoroughly than others may know him through his books. His books preach on one text – Don't be poor. As to what text he thinks they preach upon, that is another matter! Here is a passage from "The Nether World," which illustrates his irony and his text to perfection – "Genuine respect for law is the result of possessing something which the law exerts itself to guard. Should it happen that you possess nothing, and that your education in metaphysics has been grievously neglected, the strong probability is that your mind will reduce the principle of society to its naked formula. Get, by whatever means, so long as with impunity." Or, take this passage as a type of his text: "Put money in thy purse; and again, put money in thy purse; for, as the world is ordered, to lack current coin is to lack the privileges of humanity, and indigence is the death of the soul." As a completely ironic rendering I select this: "It is a virtuous world and our frequent condemnations are invariably based on justice; will it be greatly harmful if for once we temper our righteous judgment with ever so little mercy?" That's about as nasty a thing as a man could well say to a society, unless he said that society deserved it! But there, we are going off into hysterics. Society is the multiplication of ourself – more or less! and to curse Society is to curse a multiplied self. *Voilà tout !* Gissing is not a man of theories: he is a man of facts. He writes as a rule more like a rent collector who has kept his eyes and ears open. He has seen poverty, touched it,

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been with it: and he says, Don't be poor. And I shall be much surprised if any of Gissing's readers ever allow themselves, or anybody else, to be poor – if they can help it! Jestings apart, Gissing is worth reading. Start with "The Nether World," then read "New Grub Street." His other books, "Denzil Quarrier," "A Life's Morning," "Thyrza," "Emancipated," you can let alone. He is not the Gissing we want in either of these books. Next week I will give some account of "The Nether World" – Gissing's, I mean, of course.

## II

"What I really aim at is an absolute realism in the sphere of the ignobly decent. I am going to reproduce it verbatim without one single impertinent suggestion of any point of view save that of honest reporting. The result will be something unutterably tedious. Precisely. That is the stamp of the ignobly decent life. If it were anything but tedious it would be untrue." These are the words of Harold Biffen, the idealist author and optimist crank in Gissing's "New Grub Street," and to a very great extent they might be the exact expression of Gissing's own point of view. With exceptions he has achieved realism: without exceptions it has been in the sphere of the ignobly decent. With exceptions the result has been something unutterably tedious: without exceptions, where it has not been tedious it has been untrue. And these things, to my mind, constitute Gissing's claim to recognition alongside of Zola and Ibsen and Hardy and Crane. He has aimed at realism, and with them he has often fallen into artifice. The aim of art is to conceal artifice. He has achieved art, but now and then the bare bones of artifice have shown white. The plot of "New Grub Street" is very shadowy. Gissing is best, indeed, when he has no plot at all. His plot is very ostentatious artifice and you hear the pulleys creak. "New Grub Street" has no geographical position. That it is in London goes without saying, but whether Camberwell or Lambeth or some other such district is intended cannot be more than surmised. Neither has the new Grub Street many of the definite

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associations of the old Grub Street. It is economically new. The men, we feel, are poorer and more embittered: they are more conscious of their disabilities of poverty and opportunity. Alfred Yule, in his youth an idealist, turns sour with the world's acid. Edwin Reardon is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of care. Harold Biffen, the only consistent idealist in the book, is treated by Gissing exactly as the world would treat him – as a poor fool who prefers art for art's sake, without cant, to art for money's sake, with cant. For, as Gissing points out in another character, Jasper Milvain, there is no cant in professing art for money's sake: there is only weakness – the sort of weakness, however, which succeeds. Jasper is the successful person of the book. He succeeds to the top of his ambition. Frankly unscrupulous in business matters, conscientiously indifferent of art, caring only for literature for its plums, and intent only upon plums, Jasper lives an easy, almost happy life, and finally, as the book closes and leaves him in possession of some thousands a year, he utters a "Poor devils!" for such men as Reardon and poor Biffen. However, we are not allowed to forget Gissing's moral. If you have fancied it, you have been mistaken: "The difference between the man with money and the man without is simply this: the one thinks, 'How shall I use my life?' and the other, 'How shall I keep myself alive?'" Or again: "The curse of poverty is to the modern world just what that of slavery was to the ancient." And if, in spite of numberless reminders, such as those I have quoted, you are in danger of forgetting, he points out that Reardon – the failure as a writer, the failure as a husband, the failure as a man – is the necessary result of poverty acting on certain natures: that Biffen, the hopeless idealist, doomed to disappointment, chagrin, and bitterness, would have been but for poverty a very different and happier creature: and, finally, that Jasper Milvain

himself, desperately practical as he is, has missed in the successful struggle against poverty all the finer life of which he was once capable. In this way does Gissing preach his grand text. You can't

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escape it. If you argue loftily, poverty is not incompatible with happiness because happiness is a state of mind, then Gissing says in effect. The mind and body are inseparable. Starve one and you starve the other. Moreover, "poverty makes a crime of every indulgence." Even your mind cannot act without criminality. The thoughtful and virtuous poor is impossible. Only the thoughtless poor can be virtuous. If you say, "No doubt it is all their own fault," Gissing replies: "The inconvenience of having no foothold on the earth's surface is so manifest." Give them each a fulcrum and then judge their strength, but until then it is "the brute forces of society which fill with wreck the abysses of the nether world." Every time Gissing scores. The position is unassailable. His is the only impregnable rock. "Don't be poor." But, my dear sir – don't be poor! What can you say to a brick wall?

"The Nether World," if anything, is more obstinate and gloomy. The "world" is, of course, that submerged continent of London and its inhabitants of ghastly forms and bruised brothers. Even Gissing felt the oppression of the "nether world," and justifies his painting of a dunghill by showing a flower growing upon it. But the trick will not do. He is not in earnest when he paints the flower. He knows it is out of place, like a rare orchid in a city midden! The characters comprise, as usual, the sternly real and the sternly ideal. Sidney Kirkwood, a young working jeweller, and Jane Snowdon, a girl whose early education consisted in acting slave of slaves, are the two unfortunate idealists. We are never allowed to forget that they are unfortunate. Poverty and idealism are irreconcilable. It's a pitched battle of which the issue is always certain. Poverty is on the side of the big battalions, and idealism without money in its purse is doomed to misfortune. The other characters in the book are the Peckovers, the Hewetts, the Byasses, and the Candys. They are typical families of the poorest classes. There is nothing wonderful about them – not a touch of romance or the unreal. They are unutterably tedious, as Gissing said they would be, and as we know

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they are. The whole purpose of the book is to preach another sermon on the old familiar text, which I need not repeat. In "The Nether World" is some of Gissing's best writing – all on the text! He is most real here and most at home. His text does not lack illustration! Take this, for example – a common enough thing, probably taken from the newspapers. It is Hewett who speaks; "But where do you think I went this morning? Mrs. Peckover brought up a paper an' showed me an advertisement. Gorbutt in Goswell Road wanted a man to clean windows an' sweep up, an' so on — offered fifteen bob a week. Well, I went. Didn't I, mother? Didn't I go after that job? I got there at half-past eight, an' what do you think I found? If there was one man standing at Gorbutt's door *there was five hundred!* Don't you believe me? You go an' ask them as lives about there. If there was one there was five hundred! Why, the police had to come an' keep the road clear. Fifteen bob! What was the use o' me standin' there, outside the crowd? What was the use, I say? Such a lot o' poor starvin' devils you never saw brought together in your life. There they was, lookin' ready to fight with one another for the fifteen bob a week. Didn't I come back an' tell you about it, mother? An' if they'd all felt like me they'd a turned against the shop an' smashed it up – ay, an' every other shop in the street! What use? Why, no use; but I tell you that's how I felt. If any man had said as much as a rough word to me I'd gone at him like a bull-dog. I felt like a beast. I wanted to fight, I tell you – to fight till the life was kicked an' throttled out o' me!" That's the kind of thing of which

these books are full. One would almost imagine Gissing had collected newspaper scraps. What is his remedy? What does he propose? Hear his half-jesting reply: "Well, as everyone must have his panacea of the ills of society, let me inform you of mine. To humanise the multitude two things are necessary – two things of the simplest kind conceivable. In the first place, you must effect an entire change of economic conditions – a preliminary step of which every tyro will recognise the easiness

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– then you must bring to bear on the new order of things the constant influence of music. Does not the prescription recommend itself? It is jesting in earnest. For, work as you will, there is no chance of a new and better world until the old be utterly destroyed. Destroy, sweep away, prepare the ground, then shall music the holy, music the civiliser, breathe over the renewed earth and with Orphean magic raise in perfected beauty the towers of the city of man." I know not which is more hopeless, the disease or the remedy. But Gissing's business is not to suggest solutions: we have no right to demand them of him. His part is to destroy, sweep away, prepare the ground, and I know of no more destructive agency on earth than "honest reporting" of the "ignobly decent" lives. "The Nether World" and "New Grub Street" are Gissing's contributions towards the destruction of the modern Gomorrah.

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### Gissing and the Limits of Total Pessimism

Jude Brigley  
Hereford

In the present century, we have, from *Malone Dies* to *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, become accustomed to novels which deal with defeat and darkness, but Gissing's work when compared with such books does contain much zest for life and a refreshing faith in and enjoyment of some of the basic things of life. In his novels, total blackness and despair are far from being the whole picture.

His stories give us a sense of the importance of key moments in time. Like Browning, he believes that there are "spots in time," moments which stand out in the memory, and like Wordsworth, that in recreating memories we can partake again in past happiness. This idea is worked out very fully in *A Life's Morning*. In the early part of this novel, we read:

Emily's heart lacked no morning hymn; every sense revelled in that pure joy which is the poetry of praise ... Walking, she drank in the loveliness about her,

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marked the forms of trees, the light and shade of heavy leafage, the blendings of colour by the roadside, the grace of remote distances; all these things she was making a part of herself that in memory they might be a joy for ever. (London: John Murray, 1919, p. 48).

Similarly in *Demos* he put forward the necessity of a "cult of beauty" as some kind of positive in the industrial world. By this it was not just the beauty of art that he meant, but also natural beauty, which, inevitably, led him to the concept of "the beautiful person," particularly in the shape of the

ideal woman. He is most explicit as to his purpose when he writes that “self-consciousness makes of life itself a work of art” (p. 164). In the passage of *A Life’s Morning* just quoted where Emily “drinks in the scene” we have both a statement of his credo and an illustration of it: “She was an artist in life,” he notes; her life at ‘The Firs’ has brought her happiness “of a kind to dwell in the memory and be a resource in darker days” (p. 40). This is very close to Wordsworth’s creative reconstruction:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration. (“Tintern Abbey,” lines 21-30)

The link is made even clearer by Gissing’s comment that “it is the art of life to take each moment of mental joy, of spiritual openness, as though it would never be repeated, to cling to it as a pearl of great price, to exhaust its possibilities of sensation” (p. 48).

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This idea of “the moment,” which is worked out most plainly in *A Life’s Morning* occurs in a number of Gissing’s works. When Kingcote discovers the village of Winstoke, in *Isabel Clarendon*, when Nancy walks with Lionel in the woods, or on a more mundane level when Gammon sits down to bacon and eggs in *The Town Traveller*, or again when almost any character in his stories contemplates nature, Gissing is concerned to give us as much “feel” for the scene as he possibly can. Of course, any novelist worth his salt would want to paint as clear a picture of a scene as possible, but with Gissing in such instances, thinking and style come together in such a way as to be indistinguishable.

Gissing’s ability to impress upon us a sense of the life of such people as the Madden sisters in *The Odd Women*, Emma Vine and her harsh fate in *Demos*, Bertha Cross and her struggle for maintaining respectability in *Will Warburton*, does not have a merely depressing effect. Indeed, it is in such scenes as these that he shows that he is much more than a realistic novelist. Scenes like that in which Virginia and Alice are seen discussing how little they can live on have a quasi mythical dimension; they achieve a melancholy beauty which I can only attribute to the quality of the writing.

In his early essay “The Hope of Pessimism” (in *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction*, 1970) we find some of his basic ideas. Here more plainly than elsewhere he was intent on explaining his view of life, and the fact that this is an essay, not a novel, while inviting to caution, is rather an advantage than otherwise. He interprets the world in Schopenhauerian terms when he represents mankind as “shipmates, tossed on the ocean of eternity,” asserting that “one fate awaits us all” (p. 94). He feelingly exposes the absurdity of death which should bind men together like the crew of a sinking ship:

In the pity of it we must find our salvation. The compassion which each man feels for himself, let him extend to his fellow-sufferers. . . . This universal sense



of pathos in the most secret places of our nature is the unconscious expression of

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the truth whereon Pessimism founds its creed. (pp. 94-95)

Now, at first glance it may seem strange that a man who can write so bitterly about mob-rule and even democracy should write in this strain about the brotherhood of man; yet in the novels Gissing often overcomes class prejudice and he is always sympathetic to the individual case. His stance is hardly ever that of the traditional English reactionary. He has no love of Empire or militarism as appears in his dislike of military training in *The Crown of Life*. In matters of home affairs, although he distrusts democracy, he hates injustice and tyranny and consistently idealises men and women of liberal ideals.

It is Gissing's class prejudice, occasionally apparent in his ungenerous treatment of working-class characters, which stands in the way of the hope of pessimism. But when due allowance is made for his class prejudices and fear of political movements, most readers of Gissing find him humane and sympathetic. In *Demos*, Eldon makes a distinction between "humanity" and "humanitarianism":

"I hope I am not lacking in the former; the latter seems to me to threaten everything that is most precious in the world." (Dent, n.d., p. 312)

"Humanitarianism" is associated with ideas of democracy and progress whereas "humanity" is a basic sympathy for fellow men.

In "The Hope of Pessimism" there is only one kind of worldly optimism held out to the thinking man:

The artistic mind, as Schopenhauer demonstrates, is "*das reine Subjekt des Erkennens*," the subject contemplating the object without disturbing consciousness of self. (p. 95)

As this is perhaps unclear, it will help to go to Schopenhauer for clarification:

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If, however, the individual will sets its associated power of imagination free for a while, and for once releases it entirely from the service for which it was made and exists, so that it abandons the tending of the will of the individual person yet does not cease to be energetically active or to extend to their fullest extent its powers of perceptivity, then it will forthwith become completely *objective*. (*Essays and Aphorisms*, Penguin, p. 156)

In contemplating beauty the mind can forget the individual's problems and the senselessness of life and be absorbed objectively in the moment of perception. Beauty excites pleasure without having any connection with "the will." There are in the novels portraits of characters who seek salvation through contemplation of beauty – that of Hubert Eldon in *Demos* for instance.

There are other positives than love of beauty in Gissing's work. One of these, some would argue, is no positive at all, for it consists in withdrawing or, if one's view of Gissing is a hostile one,

escaping from the world, particularly for the sake of cultivating art. The other positives mostly centre round the ideas of love and family life, although it hardly needs to be pointed out that “true love” is rarely achieved and only by those who are willing to suffer and endure, waiting patiently for love to come around. Very often in Gissing’s work one lights upon the idea that happiness has to be earned. Prior to complete joy must come a time of suffering which can of course turn suffering itself into a positive. One is reminded here of Morley Roberts’s remark about Gissing saying that if out of suffering grew a work of art, there was no cause for regret.

Compared with Dickens’s generous humanity, Gissing’s attitude may at times seem narrow. So why is he read so much? The answers are many and varied. Firstly, his novels are readable and enjoyable, and most of them repay a detailed study because they are rich in insights and ideas. And

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even though the working-classes are often his blind spot there are types of characters which he excels at creating and about whom he shows great powers of psychological analysis. Furthermore there are many occasions when Gissing the humanitarian overcomes Gissing the snob and there are moments when his dealing with sorrow or defeat helps him to transcend petty prejudice and narrow vision. Examples of this include the burial of Emma Vine’s sister in *Demos* or the ending of *The Nether World*.

Gissing shows us in his novels his awareness of modern problems and he passes strictures on the sham, the hypocritical and the dishonest. What he wrote of Dickens could serve as a comment on his own work:

He suggests, as few writers are able to do, the complexity of modern life, with special references to its sordid aspects ... the society with which he is concerned does not favour goodness and ingenuousness. The conditions of this life are hard, for the most part ignoble; there goes on a furious struggle for existence and assuredly the self-forgetful do not win the fight. (*The Immortal Dickens*, p. 122)

Both writers denounce the crass materialism of the world they live in; they are indignant at the sufferings of so many people around them. Whereas Dickens counteracts his harsh view of society with his humour and humanity, Gissing’s strength is his theme of stoical endurance, his depiction of the beauty of lives marred by suffering and lived with noble resignation. *The Nether World* is an uncompromising book, presenting as it does a cruel and demanding world in which suffering seems to be the norm. Yet, when Sidney married Clara and takes on the burden of her family he speaks to his wife in words of great pathos:

We are husband and wife, Clara, and we must be kind to each other. We are not going to be like the poor creatures who let their misery degrade them. We are

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both too proud for that – what? We can think and express our thoughts; we can speak to each other’s minds and hearts. Don’t let us be beaten. (p. 379)

I do not want it to be thought that I am simply substituting endurance for pessimism, and that it is this quality of endurance which makes Gissing’s novels worth reading. Endurance could be as

deadly a quality as pessimism. Much depends on the literary use which is made of endurance. Consider the ending of *The Nether World*:

In each life little for congratulation. He with the ambitions of his youth frustrated; neither an artist, nor a leader of men in the battle for justice. She, no saviour of society by the force of a superb example; no daughter of the people, holding wealth in trust for the people's needs. Yet to both was their work given. Unmarked, unencouraged save by their love of uprightness and mercy, they stood by the side of those more hapless, brought some comfort to hearts less courageous than their own. Where they abode it was not all dark. Sorrow certainly awaited them, perchance defeat in even the humble aims that they had set themselves; but at least their lives would remain a protest against those brute forces of society which fill with wreck the abysses of the nether world. (p. 391-92)

This is especially moving in the context of the book, and just as it can be said of the ending of a tragedy that it is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, this last paragraph of the story transcends such ethical trends. *The Nether World* is a disturbing book in the sense that it portrays a world of suffering and deprivation, yet this conclusion, with its stress on endurance and survival and its subdued idealisation of courage, mercy and honesty, takes us to the heart of Gissing's stoicism. As

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literature, it is unquestionably effective – it makes us indignant but it also makes us take pride in these undefeated and enduring people. Bertz was one of the first critics to see this clearly:

He hates the modern industrial system with its ruthless competition and the struggle of man against man; he hates with a white-hot hatred the inhumanity of our social structure. (*Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, p. 153)

These words are in keeping with what Gissing himself wrote to his family:

I mean to bring home to people the ghastly condition of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society, to give light upon the plan of altering it, and, above all, to preach an enthusiasm for just and high *ideals* in this age of unmitigated egotism and "shop." (*Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, p. 83)

Therein are summed up many of the subjects which Gissing focuses upon in his novels and which account for his pessimism about modern life. Thus wrote the early Gissing but he never swerved from his purpose. As P. J. Keating observed:

In practice the disinterested aesthete did not supplant the social reformer. The two were grafted together. (*The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, p. 54)

Many of Gissing's early critics accused him of immorality because his sense of doom in modern life seemed to imply a rejection of ethical values – what do these matter, the novelist more or less openly declared, since things are bound to turn out badly? Those critics were grievously

mistaken. As D. Z. Phillips has argued in his pamphlet, *Some Limits to Moral Endeavour*

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(Swansea University, 1971), it is possible to be pessimistic and yet have what he calls “moral seriousness.” If you have ideals, you must needs keep striving even if you see yourself forever falling short of them: indeed this is part of the definition of the word “ideal.” Bertz understood Gissing better than the English critics of his day:

His pessimism allows little prospect of any victory for justice and humanity, but he is not one of those who condone evil on account of its power and measure the validity of ideals according to the success they achieve.

“Are we to range ourselves on the side of evil,” he asks, “because we despair of being able to defeat it?” (*Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, p. 156)

This moral seriousness gives an added dimension to the work of a writer who was a conscious and sincere artist and who, like Hardy, brilliantly succeeded in showing “the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things” (*Novelists on the Novel*, p. 132).

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Notes on Some Items of Correspondence  
from George Gissing to his Brother Algernon,  
1880-1885

Clifford Brook  
Wakefield

The purpose of the present notes is to show that in his correspondence of the early 1880s with his younger brother, who was at the time working in a solicitor’s office in Wakefield, George Gissing was encouraging him to take an active part in local affairs. Meanwhile light will be thrown

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on topics discussed in five of his letters as well as on the context of Algernon’s life during those years.

New societies were constantly being formed in nineteenth-century Wakefield and two competing ones of interest to us were inaugurated in 1880. The earliest mention on record of the Wakefield General Debating Society occurs in a local paper in February<sup>1</sup> and the existence of the second was reported in the same paper in October under the heading “Wakefield Debating Society.”<sup>2</sup> The second article announced that at a meeting held in the Music Saloon of the Mechanics’ Institution it was “resolved that the title of the Society should be ‘The Wakefield Literary Society’” and that officers and a committee were elected. “The first debate,” the article went on, “is to be on ‘The Irish Question.’” From the names given of those attending the two organisations, and both were referred to in that same issue, it is likely that they were aligned with the two rival political parties.

On 11 November 1880 George wrote to his brother: “At the last moment I hasten to send you a note on Ireland remembering that to-morrow comes your debate”;<sup>3</sup> and on 15 November: “I

applaud immensely the part you took at the opening meeting.”<sup>4</sup> The one report seen that makes mention of Algernon’s name implies that he played a small part on that occasion. “The first debate of the Society was held in the Music Saloon on Friday evening, last week [12 November] the question for consideration being ‘Should steps be taken by the Government to test the adaptability of peasant proprietorships for Ireland’ – the chair was occupied by the Vice-President, Colonel Mackie [brother of R .B. Mackie, M. P., who represented Wakefield in the Liberal cause from 1880 to 1885] and there was a good attendance. The minutes of the previous meeting being adopted on the motion of Mr. GISSING” etc. Then followed an eight-inch column report of the speech by the Rev. A. Chalmers, the proposer of the motion and a shorter one of that by the opposer. “Messrs. Gissing, Carter, J. W. Dunne and G. King having taken part in the discussion the Chairman put the

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subject to the meeting when the affirmative was carried by a large majority.”<sup>5</sup>

A little later, on 22 November 1880, George observed: “I am not sure that I quite understand the subject of your debate for next Friday. For indeed no one could say that physical courage is as much thought of now as in any previous period of our history.”<sup>6</sup> This matches the newspaper account: “Wakefield Literary Society. The second debate of this Society was held in the Old Town Hall, yesterday evening [26 November], the proposition being ‘In the present state of civilisation the value of physical courage is greatly over-estimated.’ Mr. Samuel Bruce [Algernon’s future uncle-in-law] occupied the chair. Mr. C. M. Atkinson proposed and Mr. J. W. Dunne opposed. Messrs. Gissing [etc.] took part in the discussion.”<sup>7</sup> Algernon’s name has been found on only one other occasion in connection with the proceedings of this society: “Wakefield Literary Society. At the meeting of the above-mentioned society held last night [18 March 1881] in the Trinity [Church] Parish Rooms, George Street, Mr. Gissing opened a debate on the following question, taking the affirmative: ‘Should the principle of hereditary succession as applied to seats in that branch of the legislative known as the House of Lords be set aside for a system calculated to ensure a more natural model of government.’ Mr. J. W. Dunne led off for the negative and on a discussion the negative was carried by 7 to 6.”<sup>8</sup> As at all other meetings the Chairman was a prominent member of the Liberal Party.

After this, newspaper references to the Society became less frequent and none has been found later than that of 14 January 1882 in the *Wakefield Express*.

The next letter of interest from George, dated 8 September 1883, was on a different matter: “I have but this moment received the Wakefield newspaper but I must sit down forthwith to tell you with what extreme delight and sympathy I have read this very admirable letter. ... Your last paragraph is the best part of the letter and really fine. By the bye, I am ashamed to say that I forget

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whence the quotation is. ... Please correct the typographical errors very clearly. ... Once more, cordial congratulations on this letter. One word alone, I object to in it, and that is ‘foolery.’”<sup>9</sup>

There is no letter in the papers at that time under Algernon’s name but on that very day one appeared under the pseudonym “A Bachelor.” From the three statements above referring to “typographical errors,” a quotation at the end of Algernon’s letter, and the word “foolery” it is obvious that George’s words apply to the second and, consequentially, the third letters in the correspondence, reprinted below, that appeared in consecutive issues of the *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*. The second letter has been corrected in accordance with Algernon’s later instructions.

I

CORRESPONDENCE : A NEW SOCIETY

(1 September 1883, page 8, column 4)

Sir, I am forming a new society in Wakefield and I am looking for valuable and willing assistance from your paper. The society I am forming is one for which the need is great, which will not be denied by anyone frequenting our streets at night, and as I have the honour (?) [sic] of forming the society I shall insist on one thing only viz. that we experiment to commence with on Primrose Hill. [Then a poor district of Wakefield by Kirkgate Railway Station]. The Society is established for the purpose of buying blacking brushes and blacking [made from graphite and used for polishing iron fireplaces and in particular kitchen “ranges”] wherein to clean and purify the filthy mouths of many of our lower class of women. It has been my lot to hear filthy language, forcible and impressive, but never did I come across such a filthy-mouthed creature as one on Thursday night. The floodgates of blasphemy, obscenity and impurity seemed to have been opened, and what is worse she seemed

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to glory in it, her husband standing by, a passive admirer. If this angel of sweetness calls at the office of this paper she will find a donation left to purchase the first blacking brush, and that she may put it to good use is the wish of yours truly,

Snapdragon.

II

CORRESPONDENCE : A NEW SOCIETY

(8 September 1883, page 8, column 4)

Sir, The letter of your correspondent “Snapdragon” which appeared in your last issue under the heading “A New Society” although written in the spirit of too much levity draws attention to a subject which must daily give real pain to all persons of any feeling whatsoever. Your correspondent presumably wishes to “clean and purify the filthy mouths of many of our lower class of women,” let me tell him however, that if he finds himself able to approach the subject in such a spirit of foolery as his letter indicates, he is totally unfit for the work of improvement which he suggests. One would have thought that the incident he mentioned, when “the floodgates of blasphemy, obscenity and impurity were opened” would have struck him with such an amount of horror as to have rendered the “blacking brush” nonsense impossible.

Moreover it seems to have been a question in his mind whether the work he speaks of undertaking *is* an honour! He is in doubt whether it is not somewhat degrading to try to purify the lives of some of his female fellow creatures, or at any rate, to speak above his breath of doing so. Alas! It is this petty, this inexplicably cowardly and hypocritical spirit amongst us, which so seriously stands in the way of a more widespread work for the good of our degraded fellow creatures – especially women; “a monstrous conventional feeling amongst us righteous ones,” that

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the very touching upon such a subject is “defilement and degradation.” Surely a miserable base feeling this. Ought we not rather to feel ashamed that knowing of the existence of the filth, we are willing deliberately to shut our eyes to it with the consolatory feeling that at any rate, such a horrible matter is no fit subject for our pure minds? If some strong-hearted one speaks openly to us on the subject we, in our self-righteousness, shrug our shoulders with “H’m somewhat indelicate this, better let it alone”; or more fiercely “This is mighty offensive, what are we taken for?” Good on any appreciable scale, is impossible so long as the generality of us harbour this miserable feeling. Until your correspondent has rid his mind of this, he had better let the matter alone. As this pusillanimity is abroad to such a degree, only the very brave can hope to effect much good, and it does require the spirit of the bravest to combat a deeply rooted conventionalism.

It is a hackneyed argument but one which I believe to be true (although contrary to our earliest recorded precedent on this point) that to man attaches the blame for the graver faults of woman as well as himself; and particularly in this matter of foulmouthedness to which your correspondent especially refers. I confess that I behold a drunken foulmouthed man with nothing but a feeling of loathing and pity. I may have formed a too high and somewhat ideal view of woman’s nature, but I have not founded it groundlessly. She is human, hence not faultless. But depend upon it, that whatever we have of good and pure in the world springs from her. When she is foulmouthed and impure let *man* look to it. I am not peculiar in this appreciation of woman, but merely follow those who are generally accredited with some knowledge of human nature, of whom not the least respectable are Shakespeare, Scott and Ruskin. Those who do not already know by heart “Sesame and Lilies” and the gentle and loving-hearted Elia’s Essay on “Modern Gallantry,” had better forthwith complete their education by learning them.

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But Sir, I ramble too far. To return to your correspondent. Let him get the true history of the life of the foulmouthed one he speaks of, and he will find that at any rate, she was *once* and *might still have been* entitled to the name of “angel of sweetness” which he now jeeringly applies to her. Let him find out the mode of life of this *husband*, this “passive admirer” of his wife’s filthiness, and then solve to himself the question of why she is not still the angel of sweetness which she ought to be. Husband forsooth, rather call him house-ruin! Let men ponder on the meaning of this beautiful English word husband or house-band, the prop or stay of the home, and then ask themselves how so often it is applied in truth to a man. Spend your time in this country’s Police Courts – aye this borough’s Police Courts – and learn the lesson which they teach. If every man in gaining the title of husband solemnly resolved to be worthy of the name throughout his life and kept his resolution, we should not have such cause of pain from the dreadful state of some of our women. Let men fully appreciate the real position and influence of woman in the world, and treat her with the tender respect due to her, and she will soon be the angel of goodness and sweetness in nature she is meant to be. This is no wild theorising. I trust that many of us have in our minds practical illustrations of what a true woman is. Let him that has this happiness take care that he sees in *every other* woman the reflection of this his type of womanhood, and treat all womankind, by virtue of their common womanhood as he would treat this idealised member of the sex. And in conclusion let every man and woman wear in their hearts the true and beautiful sentiment of a true man that “the soul’s armour is never well set to the heart unless a woman’s hand has braced it, and it is only when she braces it loosely that the honour of manhood fails.”

I am, Sir, yours most truly

A Bachelor.

III

CORRESPONDENCE : A NEW SOCIETY  
(15 September 1883, page 3, column 4 )

Sir, for the sake of exactness may I note the following misprints which appeared in my letter last week?

“Surely a miserable feeling is this,” I did not write the *is*. “Consolating feeling” should be “Consolatory.” “I am not *particular* in this appreciation of woman” should be “I am not peculiar.” I am very particular about it.

Yours truly,  
A Bachelor.

Considering George Gissing’s unhappy domestic circumstances at that time, with a wife who, we believe, could have modelled the Primrose Hill wretch, he must surely have had a different view from Algernon’s on the cause of such degradation.

By 1st August 1883 Algernon had become so involved with the Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution that at the Annual General Meeting held on that day it was he who nominated the four vice-presidents.<sup>10</sup> A month later, on 6 September, as a result of the resignation of Isaac Dixon he was appointed without election to the vacancy on the Committee of the Institution and as one of his duties sat on the Library Sub-Committee.<sup>11</sup> Within a few months “thanks were given to Mr. Gissing for preparing the Supplementary Catalogue which he has completely rewritten.”<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, the Supplement was to the Catalogue produced by his father fourteen years earlier. George, aware of Algernon’s activities, wrote on 6 March 1884 : “If you want to get for the Library one of the most charming and delicate of modern novels, you should send for Besant’s *All in a Garden Fair*.”<sup>13</sup> More personally, it was not until the 1889/90 session that any novels by the brothers were

purchased for the Library : *Thyrza* by George and *Joy Cometh in the Morning* by Algernon.<sup>14</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting held on 30 July 1884 Algernon was elected Honorary Librarian of Wakefield’s Mechanics’ Institution,<sup>15</sup> the position held by his father from 1868 to his death in 1870.<sup>16</sup> Another of the interests common to several members of his family is illustrated in a report that “at a meeting of the Wakefield Naturalists’ Society held on Wednesday evening [4 December 1884], Mr. A. F. Gissing read a paper entitled ‘English Plant Names.’”<sup>17</sup>

Then on 27 April 1885 “The Sandal Local Board appointed Mr. A. F. Gissing of Stoneleigh Terrace, Agbrigg, a member of the Board in place of the late Mr. Isaac Dixon.”<sup>18</sup> It was a local government council, with limited powers, governing an area bounding Wakefield on the south of the town. It existed from 1879 to 1895, being preceded by Sandal Magna Township Vestry and followed, because of the Urban District Council Act of 1894, by the Sandal Magna District Council. Some idea of its duties can be formed from two items from its Minute Book:

“11 May 1885. Paid 3/6 cab hire for the removal of Fred Green a person suffering from Small Pox.



The lighting of the Public lamps be discontinued from 23 May for a period of two months.”<sup>19</sup>

This was the only meeting attended by Algernon as in June of that year he left Wakefield to take employment with a firm of solicitors in Richmond, North Yorkshire, a step very likely prompted by his engagement to Catherine Baseley. Both events are reported in the diary of Lucy Bruce, wife of Samuel Bruce and aunt of Catherine (Kity), Algernon’s wife-to-be. Kity and several of her sisters, in turn, spent long visits with the Bruces, who were childless:

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6 June 1885: “A.F.G. [Algernon Fred Gissing] came directly after breakfast announcing his having an appointment of managing clerk at Richmond. Kity went there [Mrs.Gissing’s house in Agbrigg] in afternoon”.

12 June: “A.F.G. came to see Samuel on business and to say good-bye to us, before leaving Wakefield for Richmond.”

23 June: “Margaret and Nellie [Ellen] Gissing came to fetch their ‘sister’ for a walk. J. Jackson came, congratulated Kity on her engagement [to Algernon].”<sup>20</sup>

1. *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 7 February 1880, p. 5, col. 5.
2. 30 October 1880, p. 5.
3. *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, ed. Algernon and Ellen Gissing, Houghton Mifflin, 1928, p. 84.
4. *George Gissing on Fiction*, ed. Jacob and Cynthia Korg, Enitharmon Press, 1978, p. 20.
5. *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 20 November 1880, p. 6.
6. *Letters to His Family*, p. 86.
7. *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, 27 November 1880, p. 8.
8. *Wakefield Free Press*, 19 March 1881, p. 8.
9. *George Gissing on Fiction*, p. 21.
10. Annual Report, Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution, Session 1883/4.
11. Minute Book, Wakefield Mechanics’ Institution.
12. *Ibid.*

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13. *Letters to His Family*, p. 136.
14. Annual Report, Wakefield Mechanics' Institution, Session 1889/90.
15. *Ibid.*, Session 1884/5.
16. *Ibid.*, Sessions 1868/9, 1869/70 and 1870/1.
17. *Wakefield Express*, 6 December 1884.
18. *Wakefield Express*, 2 May 1885.
19. Minutes of Sandal Magna Local Board (John Goodchild Collection).
20. Diaries of Lucy Bruce, 1872 and 1875 to 1903. Held by Clifford Brook.

[Items 1 to 19 are held in the Local History Department, Wakefield Library Headquarters, Balne Lane, Wakefield.]

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#### Notes and News

Not without difficulty, because the book is out of print, a copy of the Romanian translation of *New Grub Street* has been obtained. It is a two-volume edition, published by Editura Minerva of Bucharest in 1978, under the transparent title *Noua Strada Grub*, and consists of nos. 967 and 968 in the Biblioteca Pentru Toti (Everyman's Library), a series founded in 1895. The front cover of Vol. I shows a writer sitting at his desk and apparently in the throes of composition. A few books can be seen on two shelves under a flight of stairs, and through a window a clock-tower vaguely reminiscent of Big Ben. The front cover of Vol. II, with a young lady playing the piano and a man standing beside her, is evocative of the last scene of the novel. The back cover of Vol. I offers a portrait of Gissing, obviously reprinted from Jacob Korg's critical biography and an extract from the introduction by Ileana Verzea in which we can recognize part of Gissing's well-known statement on his literary purposes, namely that the most characteristic part of his work is that which

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deals with "a class of young men distinctive of our time – well educated, fairly bred, but *without money*" (letter to Morley Roberts of 10 February 1895). The back cover of Vol. II reprints literary judgments by John Gross, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell and Irving Howe. They all come from the jacket of the Bodley Head edition (1967) as is implicitly suggested by a note on the verso of the title page.

The introduction proper (pp. v-xxv) attempts to situate Gissing in nineteenth-century English literature and reflects Mrs. Verzea's familiarity with such works as Walter Allen's *English Novel*, Madeleine Cazamian's pioneering work in Vol. I of her three-volume enquiry into the late Victorian and Edwardian novel and Jacob Korg's critical biography (1963). The bibliography (pp. xxiii-xxv) mentions no work in any language published after 1963, and the chronology (pp. xxvii-xliv) stops with Jacob Korg's edition of Gissing's *Commonplace Book* (1962). It supplies

the dates of many events in Gissing's life and career, mentioning such lost works as *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies* and *Sandray the Sophist*, as well as (in smaller type) contemporary literary events in England, on the Continent and in America. The translation, which seems to follow the original very closely, is by Bianca Zamfirescu, who is currently translating *Thyrza*. A few notes appear at the bottom of pages : they are concerned with such subjects as money matters, Latin phrases or topographical difficulties.

The most extraordinary feature of this edition, however, is the number of copies which have been printed – and sold, namely 100,120. A new edition with an updated introduction would be in order.

Gissing appeared on two pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* for 4 March 1983. Graham Hough mentioned him in a review of John Lucas's *Romantic to Modern Literature* (Harvester Press, £18. 95), on p. 217, and a passage from the *Ryecroft Papers* (Autumn XX) was identified by Mrs.

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June Benn in "Author, Author," on p. 214. Ryecroft's views on "Wine-drinking in England" had been printed on p. 107 of the number for 4 February 1983 as the first of three quotations readers were invited to identify.

Seeking for mentions of Gissing in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is very much like looking for a needle in a haystack. Three discoveries were reported in recent numbers: (i) *seven* in the phrase "Mr. Gammon is more than seven" (*The Town Traveller*, London, 1898, p. 81); (ii) *mundungus* (*Our Friend the Charlatan*, London, 1901, p. 137); (iii) *to dusk* (*A Life's Morning*, London, 1890, p. 169). Two more quotations from *A Life's Morning* have been found : *soilure* ("with minds disengaged from anxiety of casual soilure," on p. 41 of the same edition) and *to companion* ("It takes a long time before the heart can companion only with memories," on p. 263). The best hunting ground would now seem to be *The Nether World*.

Adeline R. Tintner read a paper on *New Grub Street* and Juvenal's Third Satire at the English Triennial Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association, which was held at Santa Barbara, California on March 24-26.

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### Recent Publications

#### Volume

Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing*, Boston : Twayne Publishers, 1983, pp. xiv (unpaginated) + 177. This volume is no. 346 in Twayne's English Authors Series. Red cloth, \$15. 95. It has a frontispiece (photograph of Gissing by G. & J. Hall of Wakefield), a chronology, ten chapters, detailed notes and references as well as a selected bibliography.

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Articles, reviews, etc.

Rod Edmons, "The Conservatism of Gissing's Early Novels," *Literature and History*, no. 7, Spring 1978, pp. 48-69.

Angus Easson, "Review article : Gissing's Diary," *Literature and History*, Vol. 6 : no. 1, Spring 1980, pp. 111-115.

John Halperin, "Trollope's Conservatism," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 81(1982), no. 1, pp. 56-78. Short passages on Gissing on pp. 65 and 74-75.

Anon., "Current Literature," *English Studies*, December 1982, p. 546. Short review of Jacob Korg's *George Gissing : A Critical Biography* (1980) and of Michaux's *George Gissing : Critical Essays* (1981).

Yves Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1982. Contains a number of references to Gissing and to the French translation of *New Grub Street*.

Mario Curreli, "Dickens, Gissing e la società italiana dell'Ottocento," *Studi dell'Istituto Linguistico*, University of Florence, Vol.V, 1982, pp. 103-23.

Justin Wintle (ed.), *Makers of Nineteenth-Century Culture 1800-1914*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, pp. 248-49. Biographical entry on Gissing.

Claude Glayman, "Derrière l'Assommoir," *L'Unité* (the French socialist weekly), 25 February 1983, p. 23. Review of *Femmes en trop* and *Nouvelles choisies de George Gissing*.

Anon., "Paperbacks of the Month," *Sunday Times*, 6 March 1983. Mentions *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, *Demos* and *The Nether World* (all available from the Harvester Press).

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Derek Severn, "Resuscitating Gissing," *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 1983, p. 15. Review of the three Harvester Press paperbacks.

Anon., "Paperbacks," *Books and Bookmen*, March 1983, p. 37. Notice of the three Harvester paperbacks.