

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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The Roman Spring of George Gissing
and H. G. Wells

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In April 1897 H. G. and his second wife “Jane” Wells spent a brief holiday with George Gissing at Budleigh Salterton in Devon. The Wellses were on a bicycling tour; Gissing had gone to Devon to recover his health and to get away from *his* second wife. He spoke longingly of Italy, going so far as to show his visitors such mementoes of previous trips as a pressed flower (picked at Hadrian’s Villa) and a ticket for the Vatican Library. H. G. and Jane had never been abroad. When

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later in the year Gissing returned to Italy for the winter, inviting them to join him in Rome the following spring, they eagerly accepted. In later years H. G. was to build himself a house in France and to become an inveterate globetrotter. Never again, however, was he to play the role of tourist as avidly as when he met Gissing in Rome.

In October, six months before the journey began, one of Wells’s characteristic pen-and-ink sketches, or ‘picshuas’, shows himself and Jane studying the copy of Murray’s guide to Italy that

they had borrowed from the London Library.¹ Soon H. G. was writing to Gissing about the choice of trains and accommodation, about the topography of Rome and the reasons for preferring it to Naples and Florence. In another series of picnics, dated February 1898, the prospective tourists have disappeared behind an enormous "Map of Rome," and Wells, determined to "do as the Romans do," is trying on his toga in front of a mirror.² When the great day came, on March 7th, 1898, the Wellses were seen off at Charing Cross station by their friends Edwin Pugh and Sidney Bowkett. Pugh later recalled that Wells was "dancing with excitement; he kept shaking hands with his friends and talking, talking, talking."³ Soon he would be writing "Miss Winchelsea's Heart," a short story about an English visitor to Rome which he thought up one day while walking with Gissing either in the Pincio or in some fields near Tivoli.⁴ Miss Winchelsea, too, felt a "swelling pride" on the Charing Cross platform, and found "the gayest scene of adventure in this unprecedented departure."⁵

In the event, the Wellses reached the Hotel Alibert in Rome just before midnight on March 8th. They met up with Gissing the next morning, going for the first of many walks together. "We three" (as Gissing called them)⁶ saw a great deal of one another in the ensuing thirty-five days, and using Gissing's published diary, supplemented by the manuscript diary of Jane Wells, it is very easy to trace their movements.⁷ Nevertheless it is curious that – for all the manifest importance that each of

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the three attached to this episode⁸ – neither Wells's nor Gissing's biographers tell us much about it. The most expansive of the various writers I have consulted is Lovat Dickson, who in *H.G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times* maintains (i) that Gissing must have spoken frequently to Wells of his disastrous passion for Nell Harrison, and (ii) that Wells had suddenly "had enough of it" and left in a hurry for Capri.⁹ Neither of these points has any evidence to support it. It seems unlikely, to say the least, that Gissing would have spoken of Nell in front of Jane, and Wells's autobiography implies that he did not learn the truth until much later.¹⁰ A letter of March 20th to Harry Quilter shows that the Wellses' departure from Rome – which took place after a full five-week stay and on the same day that Gissing and a mutual friend, W. M. Evans, also left the city – had been pre-arranged at least three weeks in advance.¹¹ If anyone grew restless in Rome, it was Gissing, who was anxious to carry on with his writing and was, moreover, deeply upset by the news of his family that was arriving from England.¹²

Some of the atmosphere of this Roman holiday can be captured in a photograph, showing Gissing and Wells (the former erect with military bearing, the latter in a gawky and twisted posture, seemingly undernourished, and a full head shorter than the others) together with two more prosperous-looking tourists, E. W. Hornung, later to become celebrated as the author of *Raffles*, and his brother-in-law [Sir] Arthur Conan Doyle.¹³ Hornung had called on Gissing and left his card on March 12th; thereafter there were frequent evening calls, including (on Saturday March 26th) what Mrs. Wells recorded as a "musical party." Conan Doyle seems to have arrived early in April, and on the 8th, he, the Hornungs, the Wellses and Gissing dined at a trattoria and then went to see the Colosseum by moonlight. The photograph may well have been taken earlier on that day.

It is clear that, during these five weeks, Gissing enjoyed an unusually active social life. He was accustomed to live very cheaply on his visits abroad, but on this occasion he had thrown caution to

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the winds and moved in to the hotel where the Wellses would be staying. Not only did this bring him into close proximity with H. G. and Jane, it introduced him to the "very pleasant company" of

some other English visitors,¹⁴ including Evans (a Roman Catholic journalist who accompanied them on some of their excursions), the Miss Steels (two cheery young ladies from “Porrth” in Scotland), and, more enticingly, Mrs. Williams, the widowed youngest sister of Beatrice Webb. Mrs. Williams seemed to offer the intelligent and attractive female companionship of which Gissing, who had separated from his wife some months before, found himself badly in need. His first impression was distinctly unfavourable – though, above all, it was distinct – for, as he noted on March 24th, she was “loud; bullies waiters; forces herself into our conversations.”¹⁵ Later, there were joint excursions to the Vatican and the Colosseum, and later still (presumably after their return to England) Gissing proposed a sexual relationship to Mrs. Williams, but was rejected.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Gissing accompanied the Wellses everywhere they went during the first five days of their stay, and joined them for frequent rambles and sightseeing trips in the weeks that followed. In thirty-five days there were at least sixteen joint excursions, together with evening parties and visits to *Lohengrin* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Doubtless, too, there were days when trips were postponed, for at one point Gissing recorded that he was suffering from lumbago and diarrhea, and on other days it rained steadily (though this did not necessarily dampen the ardour of Wellsian sightseeing). The pace was indeed hectic. Three times in the third week, on days when she and H. G. visited the Vatican picture galleries, the Colonna Palace, and the Pantheon and other churches, Mrs. Wells recorded “troppo” in her diary;¹⁷ a reaction not unknown amongst more recent visitors to Rome. Gissing was present on only one of these days. According to Wells, he had an aversion to the city’s Christian monuments.¹⁸ It seems equally probable that he had found an excuse to spend some

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days researching and writing *Veranilda* while his less experienced friends worked through the sights. Yet Wells was to recall him as an “unsparing enthusiastic guide,” not only to Rome itself but on “tramps in the Campagna, in the Alban hills, along the Via Clodia, and so forth, merry meals with the good red wine of Velletri or Grotto Ferrata.”¹⁹

Gissing and Wells were both shopkeepers’ sons. Since two of Gissing’s uncles were in the drapery trade, their nephew would have known something of the world which Wells was to describe from painful firsthand experience in *Kipps* and *The History of Mr. Polly*. Both future writers owed their education to the Victorian expansion of technical and scientific training, and the scholarships and exhibitions that went with it. But where Gissing’s studies at Owens College, Manchester (primarily a scientific institution) were classical, Wells won a government scholarship to the future Royal College of Science, in South Kensington, where he studied biology, geology, and physics. Even so, Wells probably knew a good deal more about the classical world than the average college student a hundred years later. The subject of one of his earliest contributions to the *Science Schools Journal*, the college magazine that he edited, was Socrates.²⁰ Nevertheless, he must have absorbed much of his knowledge of Roman civilization from Gissing, who not only acted as guide but used him as a sounding-board for the reconstruction of sixth-century Rome he was planning in *Veranilda*. Wells’s memory of Gissing on their Roman holiday makes him sound like the finest of classics masters:

At the back of his mind, a splendid Olympus to our Roman excursions, stood noble senators in togas, marvellous matrons like Lucrece, gladiators proud to die, Horatiuses ready to leap into gulfs *pro patria*, the finest fruits of humanity, unjudged, accepted, speaking like epitaphs and epics....²¹

If Gissing was a marvellous guide, Wells was an avid pupil. It was, he wrote to a

correspondent, “a time of wonderful sensations” for him; and as he and Jane left for Naples he added that “Our days in Rome are at an end but it’s been a wonderful time for our untravelled eyes.”²² But what further significance was this visit to Rome to have for the two men?

For Wells, its direct creative results were minor ones. Only his short stories “Miss Winchelsea’s Heart” and “A Dream of Armageddon” (written later but set in Capri and Paestum, which he visited after leaving Rome) seem indebted to his two-month holiday in Italy. Indirectly, however, in touring Rome he was examining the headquarters of Caesarism and of the Roman Catholic church, two institutions which play crucial roles in the understanding of history that inspired much of his later writing. Having danced on the platform as he prepared to board the train for Rome in 1898, Wells began *Crux Ansata* (1943), his vitriolic indictment of the Catholic church, with a chapter provocatively entitled “Why Do We Not Bomb Rome?”²³ In *The Outline of History* (1920) he described the Roman Republic as the precursor of all modern states, and the Empire as an archetypal betrayal of republican hopes, a squalid spectacle of power-lust and blood-lust, greed and cruelty. Where no less a libertarian than Shelley had had one or two good things to say of Roman imperialism, Wells viewed even its celebrated legal system with a jaundiced eye; after all, he explained, he “contemplate[d] the law and lawyers of to-day with a temperamental lack of appreciation.”²⁴ Yet, he recognized, both Roman imperialism and the Catholic church had been premature manifestations of the dream of world unity and a common human purpose which headed his agenda for mankind in the twentieth century. It was as grotesque examples of opportunities missed that he criticized them so harshly.

In 1898 Wells had, as it were, tried on the imperial toga and decided it did not fit. As in the student days when he wrote his essay on Socrates, he liked to think of himself as a Hellene. Gissing,

however, seemed different:

Gissing’s imagination ... escaped from the cramping gentilities and respectability of home to find its compensations in the rhetorical swagger, the rotundities and the pompous grossness of Rome. He walked about Wakefield in love with goddesses and nymphs and excited by ideas of patrician freedoms in a world of untouchable women. Classics men according to their natures are all either “Latins” or “Hellenes.” Gissing was a Latin, oratorical and not scientific, unanalytical, unsubtle and secretly haughty. He accepted and identified himself with all the pretensions of Rome’s triumphal arches.²⁵

This is one of those passages in *Experiment in Autobiography* which has deeply offended some of Gissing’s admirers. How well did Wells know Gissing, and how true was he to what he knew? The terms of the judgment he passes in this passage are curiously reversible. George Ponderevo in *Tono-Bungay*, indisputably a Wellsian self-projection, describes himself as a “spiritual guttersnipe in love with unimaginable goddesses.”²⁶ It would be just as plausible to present Wells as an oratorical Latin, and Gissing as an austere and analytical Hellene. Yet that is not to say that Wells had no insight into Gissing’s character; in some ways, it would seem, he understood him uncomfortably well. Both men had been stunted and perhaps coarsened by events in their early lives. Both had a self-indulgent side to their natures, a tendency to puerile simplifications and vapid

idealism. From a certain point of view the similarities between Gissing and Wells are as striking as the manifest differences.

If Wells's response to Rome was ultimately embodied in such books as *The Outline of History* and *Crux Ansata*, Gissing's is to be found in *Veranilda*, his unfinished historical romance. It is hard to write of *Veranilda* today without considerable embarrassment. Wells's preface to it not only upset Gissing's family, it has received a uniformly bad press from contemporary Gissing scholars.

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Pierre Coustillas has accused him of "puffing *Veranilda* simply because it was the book *he* was introducing."²⁷ John Halperin condemns Wells's essay, with more alliteration than justice, as a "preposterous, patronizing preface," adding for good measure that its replacement, a preface by Frederic Harrison, was "senile."²⁸ One might have thought, from Halperin's protests, that Wells's crime had been a failure to appreciate the merits of *Veranilda*, but it is quite otherwise; Halperin (echoing Gillian Tindall) himself dismisses Gissing's novel as "virtually unreadable."²⁹ In fact, the defects both of *Veranilda* and of Wells's preface to it have been grossly overstated, by critics jealous of the reputation of Gissing's earlier novels (which Wells had, however, praised on other occasions). Perhaps it is time to give him credit for actually daring to praise *Veranilda* in print; he has certainly had remarkably few successors.

John R. Harrison recently wrote that "in comparison with Gissing's novels of contemporary life, *Veranilda* is hardly more than an unexpected and relatively insignificant tailpiece."³⁰ For Halperin, "It is sad that he devoted so many of his last months to so hopeless an undertaking."³¹ Yet *Veranilda* is not merely a painstakingly researched example of the now despised genre of historical fiction; it is a book with some splendid scenes and magnificent evocations of the decay and corruption of sixth-century Rome. Wells, who like most turn-of-the-century readers was steeped in the "Scott tradition" of historical romance, was well-placed to appreciate its superiority to Scott's run-of-the-mill imitators.³² In addition, he had had an unforgettable exposure to Gissing's enthusiasm for ancient Rome. And the book which was to have been the final expression and justification of this enthusiasm had been – cruelly – left unfinished. What we know of its projected ending, we know from Wells. As early as January 1898 he had written to ask how Gissing was progressing with "that story of the sunset and the coming of the wild men again."³³ In *Veranilda*

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Gissing portrayed the social and moral collapse of Rome, and the final chapters were to have shown the city besieged by the Goths and physically deserted, like the London Wells described "under the Martian heel" in *The War of the Worlds*.

A curious feature of Wells's preface is that the part of *Veranilda* that he evokes most eloquently is that which Gissing did not live to write. I should like to think that in his account of the novel's unwritten conclusion we can detect the spirit of both writers, and the possibility of an unfulfilled collaboration between them, a possibility glimpsed – for all the tensions that would later, and retrospectively, cloud their friendship – in the spring of 1898 when they had visited the ruined Palatine Hill, the shattered Basilica of Constantine, and the Forum fenced off with iron railings.³⁴ Wells claimed that, as Gissing lay on his deathbed, "In the last hours of his ebb and exhaustion he talked constantly of *Veranilda*, and of armour and weapons of the Goths."³⁵ And here is how, according to the same witness, *Veranilda* would have reached its conclusion:

the main threads run clear to their end; in a moment the tumult of the assailing

Goths, terrible by reason of their massacre at Tibur, would have become audible, and the wave of panic that left Rome to the dogs and vermin have swept us to the end. And the end was morning, a sunlit silence upon the empty forum, upon the as yet unruined Palatine Hill, upon the yet unshattered Basilica of Constantine. For just that one tremendous moment in her history Rome lay still.³⁶

The accents of this conclusion are Wellsian no doubt, but they reveal the Wells who had seen so much of Rome through Gissing's eyes, the two men "full of friendly antagonisms ... our brains reacting and exchanging very abundantly."³⁷

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1. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), London (Gollancz) 1966, II, p. 564. Hereafter referred to as *EA*.
2. *EA*, p. 566.
3. Geoffrey West, *H. G. Wells: A Sketch for a Portrait*, London 1930, p. 133.
4. West (*op. cit.*, p. 133) places it in the Pincio, Wells (*EA*, p. 572) near Tivoli.
5. H. G. Wells, *Complete Short Stories*, London 1927, pp. 991, 992.
6. Diary entry dated April 2nd, Pierre Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, Hassocks, Sussex, 1978, p. 488.
7. For Gissing's diary, see Coustillas, *op. cit.* Amy Catherine Wells's pocket diary for 1898 is in the Wells Collection at the Rare Book Room, University of Illinois.
8. For Wells and Gissing, see Royal A. Gettmann, ed., *George Gissing and H. G. Wells*, London 1961, to which this article is generally indebted. In the case of Jane Wells, it should be noted that her 1898 diary is the earliest to have been preserved (the next is for 1906) and that it is almost blank apart from the daily entries recording the two-month holiday in Italy.
9. Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times*, London 1969, pp. 74-75.
10. *EA*, pp. 568, 569.
11. Unpublished letter to Harry Quilter, dated "Hotel Alibert, Roma, Italy, March 20." Wells's letters to Quilter, an art critic who had proposed collaborating with him on a stage play, are to be found in the Special Collections of the Library of Hofstra University, N.Y.
12. "Am getting very restless, and anxious to be at work," Gissing wrote to Bertz from the Hotel Alibert on April 5th. *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz 1887-1903*, ed. A. C. Young, London 1961, p. 248.
13. The photograph is reproduced in Gettmann, *op. cit.*, facing p. 99.

14. Coustillas, *op. cit.*, p. 489 (diary entry for April 9th).
15. *Ibid.*, p. 487 (diary entry for March 24th).
16. Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile*, 1974, p. 285n.
17. Amy Catherine Wells, diary entries for 21, 22, and 26 March 1898.
18. *EA*, p. 573.
19. *EA*, p. 570; Gettmann, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
20. Herbert G. Wells, "Socrates," *Science Schools Journal*, December 1886, pp. 18-21.
21. *EA*, p. 570.
22. Undated Letters to Quilter from Hotel Alibert, Roma, the second of which is superscribed "Going on to Hotel Geneve, Napoli (for the next month)."
23. H. G. Wells, *Crux Ansata*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1943, Ch. 1.
24. H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, London 1920, p. 303n.
25. *EA*, p. 570.
26. H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, London 1909, p. 250.
27. Pierre Coustillas, "The Stormy Publication of Gissing's *Veranilda*." *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, LXXII, no. 9, November 1968, p. 593.
28. John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books*, Oxford, 1982, pp. 356, 357.
29. Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 357; Tindall, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
30. John R. Harrison, "The Rejected *Veranilda* Preface," *Gissing Newsletter*, XIII, no. 4, October, 1982, p. 26.
31. Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 357.
32. In fact, Wells had published some scathing attacks on bestselling romances in the "Scott tradition." See, e.g., Patrick Parrinder and Robert M. Philmus, eds., *H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism*, Brighton, Sussex, 1980, pp. 83-85, 119-23.
33. Gettmann, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

34. Undated letter to Quilter from Hotel Alibert, Roma.

35. Gettmann, p. 275. The essay written as a preface to *Veranilda* was first published as “George

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Gissing: An Impression,” in the *Monthly Review*, August 1904.

36. Gettmann, pp. 275-76.

37. *EA*, p. 572.

Echoes from the *Westminster Gazette*:
A Personal Reaction to Gissing’s Death

Pierre Coustillas

There is in the Dartmouth College Library, New Hampshire, a manuscript letter dated 5 January 1904 and signed John L. Tayler, which is of a nature to puzzle librarians and scholars alike. It consists in a warm apology of Gissing’s work, expresses genuine sadness at his death, and is addressed to an unknown correspondent who was obviously another admirer of Gissing. Of John L. Tayler nothing is known besides what he says of himself in his letter. He would seem to have been a doctor of medicine in his mid- or late thirties, and little more information is likely to come to light until the census records for 1901 are made accessible to the public, that is until the year 2001. Meanwhile, as he appears neither in the *Dictionary of National Biography* nor in *Who Was Who*, it seems reasonable to suppose that he was fairly representative of the average English cultured reader of the period who responded to Gissing’s artistic achievement with – as will be seen – something more than intellectual sympathy. His letter naturally brings to mind the names of various

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correspondents of the writer like Philip Bergson or Isabella Keer who spontaneously expressed their appreciation of this or that novel or, towards the end of his career, of such books as *By the Ionian Sea* or *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. But these names have remained little more than names for, as a rule, the letters of such occasional correspondents have not survived or at least are not available. In the present case not only do we have the letter, but we are made to feel something of the man’s emotional reaction to Gissing’s early death. And quite naturally no proper appreciation of it is possible unless it is viewed in the right perspective – that of an early twentieth-century Englishman who hears through his newspaper, the *Westminster Gazette*, of the death of a writer whom he has for years read with much approval and gusto.

Like most London daily newspapers the *Westminster Gazette* announced the untimely end of “the English Zola” or “the disciple of Dickens” in its number for 29 December 1903. John L. Tayler, who also called himself J. Lionel Tayler, found in it comments on Gissing’s career in three different places. On the front page one of the three columns of “Our London Letter” was devoted to an informal, yet accurate survey of some aspects of his heroic contribution to English literature:

“The late Mr. Gissing has himself told some of his early struggles. When he was at work on his ‘New Grub Street’ his finances became exhausted. He finished the book, however, in six weeks, working ten hours a day, speaking to no one, and keeping himself alive by selling books off his shelves to second-hand dealers. ‘I sold the copyright for £150 and ate once more,’ he afterwards wrote.

In that remarkable work ‘The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft’ the late novelist also set forth in terms of painful poignancy some of the miseries, amounting too frequently to actual want of food and fuel and other needs, which he endured in earlier days before his work had found general appreciation. Many

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pages of his novels, in which similar circumstances are set forth with all that accuracy of observation and power of description of which he was master, likewise possess, of course, an autobiographic interest.

Mr. Gissing was an instance of one doing splendid work in an essentially uncongenial field. No man was less inclined by nature to deal with the sorrows of mean streets and the tragedies of London lodging-houses. By nature he was essentially a scholar and a recluse, whose whole soul revolted against the squalor, the vulgarity, and the suffering which he depicted with such masterly power. One may recall in this connexion a passage from that exquisite book of travel which he wrote, ‘By the Ionian Sea.’

‘Every man’, Mr. Gissing here told his readers, ‘has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful.’ And many similar passages from his novels might be cited.”

The anecdote about *New Grub Street*, which was widely circulated in the British and American press in late December and early January, came from a so-called interview by John Northern Hilliard, published in the *American Book Buyer* for February 1898, pp. 40-42, which had prompted a series of paragraphs in English dailies and weeklies and had roused Gissing’s anger. A protest from him against Hilliard’s partly inaccurate piece had been printed in the *Academy* (19 March 1898), but in late 1903 the *Westminster Gazette* was merely repeating the anecdote about *New Grub Street*, to which the writer’s diary does not give the lie, from its own files. Echoes from the *Book Buyer* had been published in the London paper under the heading “Here, there and everywhere” on 17 February, p. 10.

On page 2 of the *Westminster Gazette* there followed this paragraph under “Notes of the Day”:

“Of George Gissing it cannot be said that his work was done, for he has passed

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away in the prime of his years. He was only forty-six, and no doubt had he been spared he would have added considerably to the fifteen or sixteen works which now bear his name. He was not a popular writer in the ordinary sense, nor did he

choose themes that made for popularity. But his eminence in the field of what may be called the fiction of gloom was undoubted. Like many other authors, he did not, so far as his earlier books were concerned, find the public immediately responsive; but his admirers were a continually growing number, and the austere strength of his efforts in fiction had left on many a lasting impression. In *By the Ionian Sea* Mr. Gissing showed quite another side of his talent from that displayed in his novels. His last work, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, was published during the present year, and in the opinion of his admirers bids fair to achieve an enduring fame.”

John L. Tayler read this passage, which, although substantially correct, underestimates the bulk of Gissing’s achievement and typically stresses the darker aspects of his work, but it was mainly the third and longer piece which prompted Tayler to write to the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*. This piece was the obituary proper, and the reference in it to *The Unclassed* as the novelist’s first story indicates that the compiler was writing with *Who’s Who* close at hand. Gissing had decided in 1897, when the editor of this reconstructed annual directory had asked him to fill in a form, that *Workers*, which he had revised up to the end of volume I with little satisfaction, must be left out of this brief account of his career. The obituary, which appeared on page 4 of the paper, read as follows:

Death of Mr. George Gissing
The Author of Some Popular Novels

“General regret will be felt at the announcement that Mr. George Gissing,

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the well-known author, died yesterday near Biarritz. He was announced as being on the list of invalids some little time since, but was generally supposed to have made a good recovery. Mr. Gissing was in his forty-seventh year. His career as a novelist extends over the last twenty years, and he wrote about a score of novels. *The Unclassed*, published in 1884, was soon followed by *Demos*, (which treated of Socialism), *Isabel Clarendon*, *Thyrza* (dealing with life in factories), *A Life’s Morning*, *The Nether World* (which had for its subjects poverty and crime), *New Grub Street* (the life of the literary hack), *Born in Exile*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, and many others. It soon became a commonplace of criticism to dub him ‘the English Zola,’ and in many respects the cognomen was deserved. Those who have literary instincts, at any rate, could not afford to neglect a writer who was always powerful, if sometimes sordid. He was one of the ‘depressing’ authors, fonder of the struggle than of the joy of life, decidedly more given to fact than fancy in the treatment of his somewhat weird themes. Without some of the qualities which arrest, while displeasing, the readers of Zola, he had all the French author’s powers of minute observation. The general effect of all his earlier writing was to impress the reader with a gloomy pessimism, unrelieved by a single ray of hope. A great admirer of the works of Dickens, he made use of his deep knowledge of that author’s works in the introductions which he wrote for the Rochester edition thereof; and in 1901 he produced a book of quite a different character from his other works under the title *By the Ionian Sea*. In it – and it is no inappropriate ending for such a book of travel as this was – he

expressed a hope that he might wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, 'to-day and all its sounds forgotten' – an aspiration which may perhaps be regarded as realised now. Before 'The Ionian Sea,' however, Mr. Gissing had shown some change of front in *The Town Traveller*, a book in which glints of that humour which so keen an admirer of Dickens must have possessed began to

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lighten the story. He was also the author of a monograph on Dickens, which is a striking piece of criticism and appreciation, even if occasionally its judgments do not always seem easy to reconcile. Early in the present year, the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* marked a further stage in Mr. Gissing's development and made perhaps as great a success as anything he ever wrote; indeed, in some quarters today it is held that this fragment of the autobiography of a Devonshire recluse, with its delightful descriptions of past struggles and present facility, its scraps of philosophy and its gossip on the world at large, may live long after some other of its writer's works are forgotten".

This was as good an appraisal as could be compiled within the few hours after the news of Gissing's death reached London, and it had at least the uncommon merit of avoiding a factual mistake that is still occasionally made about the locality where the novelist had died. The compiler had probably noticed discrepancies in the accounts offered by the morning papers which gave the place as Saint Jean de Luz, but also sometimes as Saint Jean Pied de Port.

It was this particular piece which Tayler quoted and criticised in his letter to the editor of the paper, who took his time to have it printed on 4 January 1904. In between the *Westminster Gazette* had reprinted an old anecdote about Gissing and Morley Roberts having both chosen the same title for their next novel in 1896 as well as a new one which was being circulated in various English newspapers about the French translation of *New Grub Street*. He was mistakenly represented as enough of a French scholar to have made it himself ("Our London Letter," 30 December 1903, p. 1).

Tayler's letter appeared between a paragraph of literary gossip in which *Will Warburton* was announced for publication early in the year as *Veranilda* was thought to be incomplete (of course we know that the historical novel was published first) and an advertisement for the fourth

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impression of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, "ready to-morrow":

Mr. Gissing

To the EDITOR of THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.

Dear Sir,

May I be permitted to criticise the not unfriendly but nevertheless, in my opinion, unjust notice of Mr. Gissing's death? You state that as a writer he was sometimes sordid, and that "the general effect of all his earlier writings was to impress the readers with a gloomy pessimism, unrelieved by a single ray of hope." This view is, I am aware, a not uncommon one; yet I believe that all careful

readers of this author, *who knew life*, will agree that the two characteristics which could be most definitely excluded from a careful estimate of his peculiarities are just these two of sordidness and pessimism.

He was undoubtedly a realist, at once more profound, more accurate, and more sympathetic than Zola, for his realism embodied higher mental ideals as well as physical, and he never omitted to make it felt that the lower is, and always has been, lower. This Zola failed to do, and it this absence of refined outlook that is largely responsible for his popularity. The true and permanent test of a writer's merit is not, after all, marked by the tendency of transient criticism, but *by the class* of reader that the author increasingly commands. I have worked as a medical man for nearly four years in a district which gives ample opportunity of observing to which side of life any writer appeals, and I have studied for more than ten years the quality of books to be found in varying localities on varying bookstalls.

Gissing is read by refined people, and by these alone; and his small sales are thus accounted for.

May I point out that sadness, which derives its pathos from the portrayal of truth, that makes the inexperienced *feel*, as well as the experienced, that beauty of human living may be, in an evil

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world, a cause of failure, is not pessimism? It is, on the contrary, the healthiest of all outlooks, for it makes us see beyond social position to character and individual merit, and thus grow to desire the removal of all evils which fetter higher living.

I believe I am only voicing the thought of many lovers of healthy, pure-minded, and truly great literature when I state that for truth and sincerity of tone, for higher beauty of style, for musical and, still more, for artistical portrayal of the every-day but terribly important incidents of life, Gissing was by far the greatest writer that the world produced in the latter half of last century. – Apologising for the length of this letter, I remain, yours truly,

J. LIONEL TAYLER.

189, High-street, Stoke Newington, N., December 29.

This was indeed a gallant defence of Gissing on literary as well as on ethical and social grounds; also a class-conscious apology which bears the stamp of the period. That it found an echo in some readers of the *Westminster Gazette* is revealed in the unpublished letter by Tayler which somehow reached the Dartmouth College Library. Its anonymous recipient must have wasted no time in expressing his approval after Tayler's letter was printed, since the doctor's reply was written on the next day. More clearly than in his public statement, he emphasizes here his appreciation of Gissing's artistic integrity, anticipating a well-known remark by Thomas Seccombe when he referred to "something in [Gissing's] life, character and writings that impressed his readers with a sense of kinship to him." Tayler's letter to his unknown correspondent also reveals their touching sense of belonging to a small close-knit confraternity. Their exchange of remarks on the scarcity of the early titles – doubtless *Workers in the Dawn* and *Isabel Clarendon*, which had become virtually unobtainable in any condition – and on the whereabouts of the novelist's published portraits is part

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and parcel of the epistolary game between book collectors. These men would have found kindred souls in Arthur Henry Bullen, Christopher Morley and George Orwell.

189 High Street,
Stoke Newington.
N
5.1.04.

Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged for your letter and for your kind reference to me.

Gissing was always to my thinking one of the strong men of our time. He had a path of his own and was not afraid to travel by it even though it did not bring with the journey success in the ordinary sense. To hear such a man falsely spoken of or misunderstood is to have aroused in one's mind a sense of injury that is almost personal.

I think there was something in his life, character and writings that impressed his readers with a sense of kinship to him for I also felt that in his death I had lost a friend though I never had the pleasure of meeting him.

I am glad to know of the portraits you allude to as the only ones that I have been able to obtain have been two collotypes that came out one in a number of "*The World's Work*"¹ and the other in "*The Bookman*"² and both small.

His earlier books seem very difficult to discover and I have searched sometime for them. I fancy that those that buy his works seldom part with them again.

I have had a sad pleasure from the writing of that letter for it has brought me into touch with other readers whose sympathies are also my own and we who care for him are few and separated.

Yours,

Very sincerely,

John L. Tayler³

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1. Tayler had in mind the April 1903 number of *The World's Work*, a recently founded monthly journal edited by Henry Norman, a personal acquaintance of Gissing's. A substantial review of *Henry Ryecroft* on pp. 582-83 was preceded on p. 580 by a portrait of Gissing by J. Russell & Sons which has become familiar to present-day readers since it was reproduced on the jacket of *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (1978).
2. The portrait in the *London Bookman* was that which accompanied the review of *Henry Ryecroft* by A. St. John Adcock in the March 1903 number, pp. 245-46. It is more easily accessible in Edward Clodd's *Memories* (1916).
3. For kind permission to publish this letter I wish to thank the Dartmouth College Library. I am also most grateful to Dick Hoefnagel for drawing my attention to its existence.

Additional Notes to *The Unclassed* and *Thyrza*

P. F. Kropholler
Paris

The Unclassed

[The edition referred to is the Harvester edition, 1976, reprinted 1983.]

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- p. 53, l. 8.

“The vulgar saying has it that ‘time is money;’ like most vulgar sayings putting the thing just the wrong way about.” Exactly the same arguments in favour of “money is time” were to be repeated later in *Ryecroft* (Winter XXIV).

- p. 53, l. 14.

“the tree of life.” A reference, of course, to Genesis, II.9.

- p. 54, l. 38.

“I am what Browning somewhere calls a ‘beast with a speckled hide.’” See Browning: “The Worst of It”: “I, never the worse for a touch or two / On my speckled hide....” and later: “Yes, all through the speckled beast that I am.”

- p. 57, l. 19.

“his French and his German were of barbarisms all compact....” Echoing: “Are of imagination all compact” (Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.I.8).

- p. 60, l. 22.

“I love her, I love her, and who shall dare, to chide me for loving that teacher so fair.” A parody of: “I love it, I love it; and who shall dare | To chide me for loving that old arm-chair?” (Eliza Cook: “The Old Arm-Chair”).

- p. 60, l. 35.

“Miss Enderby hath a beaming eye.” A parody of: “Lesbia hath a beaming eye | But no one knows for whom it beameth” (Thomas Moore: “Lesbia Heath”).

- p. 68, l. 22.

“He wanted to write either a poem or a drama on some subject taken from the ‘Decline and Fall’...” The description of Stilicho referred to occurs in Ch. XXIX of *The Decline and Fall*.

- p. 70, l. 24.

“A work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine.” A quotation from Milton, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty*. Milton is referring to his intention of writing a great poem.

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- p. 71, l. 4.

“to make confusion worse confounded.” From: “With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout | Confusion worse confounded” (Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Book II, l. 995).

- p. 83, l. 29.
“The night air freshened his spirits; he sang to himself as he went along.” Cf. “Late at night, I shall walk all the way back to Islington, most likely singing as I go.” (*Ryecroft*, Winter V).
 - p. 85, l. 26.
“‘Excellently well, if God did all,’ he observed with a smile”. The quotation is slightly incorrect: “Excellently done, if God did all” (Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*, I.V.256).
 - p. 113, l. 34.
“What think ye, then, of Christ?” St. Matthew, XXII.42: “What think ye of Christ?”
 - p. 114, l. 23.
“their heritage of woe....” This expression occurs in Byron: *Lara*, I.II. Probably a coincidence as Maud Enderby is unlikely to quote Byron.
 - p. 116, l. 43.
“virginibus puerisque....” From Horace: *Odes*, III.I.4.
 - p. 119, l. 16.
“they were once more creatures for whom the external world alone had reality.” The author seems to echo Théophile Gautier’s remark: “Je suis un homme pour qui le monde extérieur existe” (*Journal des Goncourt*, 1 May 1857).
 - p. 130, l. 19.
“We were not content to enjoy the beauty of the greater and the lesser light.” A reference to Genesis, I.16.
 - p. 130, l. 23.
“we might become as gods, knowing good and evil.” A reference to Genesis, III.5.
 - p. 155, l. 34.
“introduced his companion, by the name of Mr. Rudge.” Later on (p. 217 ff.) this character
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- is referred to as Mr. Budge (he appears as Mr. Mellodew in the first edition).
- p. 193. l. 35.
“Passion should be a law unto itself.” Ultimately of biblical origin: “These ... are a law unto themselves” (Epistle of Paul to the Romans, II.14).
 - p. 221, chapter heading.
“The Will to Live.” One of the numerous references in this chapter to Schopenhauer.
 - p. 222, l. 40.
“and, when she ceased, he, like Adam at the end of the angel’s speech, did not at once perceive that her voice was silent.” Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, 1-3: “The Angel ended, and in Adam’s ear | So charming left his voice that he a while | Thought him still speaking, still stood

fixed to hear.”

- p. 226, l. 42.

“It was no result of deliberate decision....” This passage describing Waymark’s feelings as regards his forthcoming marriage is strongly reminiscent of *The Whirlpool*, Part I, Ch. 12, where Rolfe is in a similar position and experiences the same sensations: “No more the result of deliberate purpose than any other change that had come about in his life.”

- p. 228, l. 18.

“he knew only too well that man is ‘ein erbärmlicher Schuft,’ ...” From Goethe: “*Venezianische Epigramme*: “Wundern kann es mich nicht, dass Menschen die Hunde so lieben, / Denn ein erbärmlicher Schuft ist wie der Mensch so der Hund.”

- p. 289, l. 8.

“this thought supplied him with a flattering unction....” From: “Lay not that flattering unction to your soul” (Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, III.IV.145).

- p. 291, l. 17.

“the sickness of one great hope deferred.” Proverbs, XIII.12: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”

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- p. 299, l. 9.

“The house was more tomb-like than ever on such a night as this.” The use of “on such a night as this” sounds like an ironic echo of the famous passage in Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice*, V.I.

- p. 307, l. 19.

“Sic volo, sic jubeo pro ratione voluntas!” From Juvenal, VI.223. The correct form is “Hoc volo.” In his *Commonplace Book* (p. 38) Gissing remarks that this passage is habitually misquoted.

Thyrza

[The edition referred to is the Harvester edition, 1974, reprinted 1984.]

- p. 23, l. 17.

“the cast of thought”. Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, III.I.85 (“the pale cast of thought”).

- p. 76, l. 20.

“the fire-new thought”. The use of “fire-new” may be the result of Gissing’s reading of Shakespeare. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, III.II.24 (“some excellent jests, fire-new from the mint”).

- p.171, l.18.

“Academic sweetness and light....” An allusion to Matthew Arnold: *Culture and Anarchy*.

- p. 174, ll. 1-2.
“the sounding of brass and the tinkling of cymbals.” From St. Paul: I Corinthians, XIII.1.
- p. 223, l. 1.
“Totty managed to quieten her little charge.” The *Saturday Review* of 11 June 1887 criticized the use of the verb *to quieten* (*The Critical Heritage*, p. 106). The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives quotations from several authors using this verb, including Mrs. Gaskell. On p. 329, l. 31,
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- Gissing wrote: “The only way of quieting her....”
- p. 236, chapter heading.
“Mischief Afoot,” Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*, III.II.265: “Mischief, thou art afoot.”
- p. 240, l. 18.
“He was averse from conversation.” The use of *from* is interesting. In *New Grub Street*, (Ch. VII) Alfred Yule condemns the use of *averse to*.
- p. 244, l. 11.
“What a coil was here.” Shakespeare: *The Comedy of Errors*, III.I.48: “What a coil is there, Dromio.”
- p. 319, l. 26.
“the valley of the shadow of vilest servitude.” An allusion to Psalm XXIII (“the valley of the shadow of death”).
- p. 337, l. 24.
“his ‘everlasting Nay’ ...” *The everlasting No* comes from Carlyle: *Sartor Resartus*, Ch. 7. The title of Ch. 9 is *The everlasting Yea*.
- p. 349, ll. 6-7.
“Of course the wish was father to the thought” Cf. Shakespeare: *King Henry IV*, Part II, IV.V.91 (“Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought”).
- p. 364, ll. 18-19.
“to camp in strangers’ houses and eat strange flesh?” “Thou didst eat strange flesh” comes from Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*, I.IV.67.
- p. 421, l. 21.
“– the ‘gerund-grinding’ of Thomas Carlyle –” Carlyle used the phrase in *Sartor Resartus* (Book II, Ch. III). The *Oxford English Dictionary* also quotes this phrase from Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*.
- p. 423, l. 40.
“Joys of the solitary work....” The Everyman edition of Walt Whitman gives “joys of the solitary walk.”

- p. 425, l. 4.

“Moschus over his mallows...” A reference to *Epitaphios Bionos* by the Greek poet Moschus, one line in which might be translated as follows: “When the mallow, alas, has faded in the garden.”

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- p. 425, l. 5.

“Soles occidere et redire possunt.” From Catullus: *Carmina*, V.

- p. 489, ll. 25-26.

“You were tried, Mr. Egremont, and found wanting”. A reference to *Daniel*, V. 27 (“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting”).

The following notes refer to the first edition (Smith, Elder, 1887, 3vols.). The passages concerned were cancelled by Gissing when he revised his novel for the one-volume edition (Smith, Elder, 1891).

Vol. I

- p. 26, l. 28.

“Macte virtute!” Virgil: *Aeneid*, IX.641.

- p. 94, l. 14.

“Mary’s short way with the Dissenters.” A reference to Defoe’s pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*.

Vol. II

- p. 163, l. 21.

“the sweet lips that so passioned for his?” Again the *Saturday Review* condemned the use of this verb, saying it was not English. There are some examples, however, in Shakespeare: e.g. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV.IV.174 (“’twas Ariadne passioning for Theseus’ perjury and unjust flight”) and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, I.I.216 (“I passion to say wherewith”).

- p. 239, l. 19.

“She looked back upon the peace ‘that is among the lonely hills.’” From Wordsworth: “Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.”

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Vol. III

- p. 3, l. 11.

“And that way in truth lay despair.” Cf. Shakespeare: *King Lear*, III.IV.21 (“O! that way madness lies”).

- p. 105, l. 12.

“If Molière read plays to his housekeeper....” According to G. Bordonove (*Molière génial et familier*) Molière used to read his plays to Honorée Le Bel de Bussy, a “fille à demi galante.”

- p. 129, chapter heading.

“Mark but my fall.” Shakespeare: *Henry VIII*, III.II.440.

- p. 129, l. 12.

“Saturnia Regna.” From Virgil: *Eclogue*, IV.6.

- p. 139, l. 14.

“‘portion and parcel of the dreadful past,’ he quoted.” Tennyson: *The Lotus Eaters* (Choric Song). The Globe Edition of Tennyson’s works has “portions and parcels.”

Book Review

Jacob Korg.

George Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, ed. Pierre Coustillas, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1985.

George Gissing, *A Life’s Morning*, ed. Pierre Coustillas, with historical and topographical notes by Clifford Brook: Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1984.

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With these two editions, the Harvester Press approaches its announced goal of producing a uniform edition of all the Gissing novels. The only ones remaining to be produced in the format that has become standard for the Harvester editions are *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, *Eve’s Ransom* and *Veranilda*. When these appear, a notable publishing effort, extending over many years, will have been brought to a conclusion.

The publication of these novels is a significant event, for they have not been easily available to the general reader. Neither of the recent facsimile reprints of the first edition of *Workers in the Dawn* by AMS Press in 1968 and by the Garland Publishing Company in 1976 is attractive or reasonably priced, and *A Life’s Morning* was last reprinted in 1947. Both now appear in a convenient paperback format, with the thorough and authoritative apparatus, including textual notes and bibliography, that those familiar with the scholarly work of the *Newsletter’s* editor have come to expect.

The text of *Workers in the Dawn* is the excellent Doubleday Doran reprint in two volumes of 1935 edited by Robert Shafer. As Coustillas explains in his bibliographical note, there had been two attempts to republish the novel in America in the 1920s, with introductions by George Moore and Rebecca West, but both were abortive. Shafer’s edition may be said to have established the tradition which the present volumes follow, for he was the first to make a scarce Gissing novel available in a scholarly edition with ample biographical and bibliographical information. He also found that Gissing had marked one volume of his own copy with changes intended for a revised edition (which was, of course, never published). As a note reprinted here says, Shafer did not adopt these revisions, but indicated Gissing’s intentions by footnotes which are reproduced by Coustillas as a part of his text.

The present edition begins with a bibliographical note giving some little known facts about the history of the book. For one thing, the portrait of Gissing that forms a frontispiece for the Shafer edition should be dated 1901 rather than 1895, as a correction made by Gabrielle Fleury shows. The general introduction discusses the conditions under which the book was written, its reception by reviewers and the public, its autobiographical elements, and its relations to other Victorian novels, and offers an interesting discussion of the numerous themes and structures Gissing undertook to deploy. As Mrs. Harrison was the first to notice, *Workers in the Dawn* contains far too much material to fit comfortably into even so capacious a form as the Victorian novel. Gissing seems to have intended to write all his novels at once, mingling social criticism, a love story, domestic drama, a conflict of ideas and several other generic elements into one huge imbroglio.

Coustillas attributes this plenitude to the powerful urge for self-expression which is especially evident in Gissing's early novels and still perceptible in the later work written primarily for professional reasons. He had a great many passionate messages to deliver about such varied subjects as poverty, marriage and art, and in this imperfect first novel they are put forward with a minimum of inhibitions. The numerous faults of the novel and the power noticed by so many commentators are both consequences of the young Gissing's uncompromising drive to confront his readers with vital truths.

Like many of Gissing's novels, *Workers in the Dawn* has the curious relationship to his life that a photographic print has to its negative. That is to say, it shows a clear understanding of problems that Gissing himself could not solve, so that his life appears to be a pale, reversed image of the consciousness that speaks in the novels. This irony, noted by many critics, is especially conspicuous in *Workers in the Dawn*. Coustillas shows how Arthur's relationship with Carrie

Mitchell in the novel parallels that of Gissing himself with Nell Harrison, and points out that the novelist married just after he had written his account of his character's disastrous married life. "The individual," he observes, "flatly refused to take the advice of the writer."

The introduction offers a useful discussion which brings the numerous themes of *Workers in the Dawn* under control, and sketches their appearance in various characters and events of the story. It also shows that this Protean novel first uses material that Gissing employed later in his writing, including character-types, settings and general themes. Acknowledging that the novel is in some respects derivative, Coustillas nevertheless makes an interesting case for its essential originality.

When Robert Shafer reprinted *Workers in the Dawn*, he corrected a number of printer's errors. Coustillas has diligently repeated this operation, collating the first edition with the manuscript, which is in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, and in a "Note on the Text" has supplied a list of about 250 additional variants which serves to correct the printed text, and contains some entries of considerable interest. For example, where Mr. Tollady urges Arthur to use his art for social betterment, according to the text, by giving "the true image of *our* social dress," he should be saying "social dregs." Similarly, Will Noble takes Arthur on a certain visit, not after "a week of surprise," but "a week of suspense."

In a separate note, Coustillas discusses the changes the author intended to make in the novel when he revised it more than ten years after its first publication. Most of this revision consists of cancellations, many of them quite substantial. Discursive passages and repetitive effects were cut, and character delineations were made more economical. Gissing also took care to delete or soften touches of sarcastic social criticism that the more mature author no doubt found embarrassing.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of this edition is the appendix on the manuscript. It

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contains numerous cancelled passages and corrections, and differs in many ways from the first edition. Coustillas lists and describes all of the material deleted before publication, including some examples of Bowdlerization, and reproduces some of the more significant ones. As a result, this appendix contains substantial examples of Gissing's writing that have never been seen before, and these, together with the passages that are described but not published, add considerably to our understanding of his approach to his art in this first novel.

A Life's Morning, Gissing's fourth novel, in the order of composition, is one of his most appealing, for in it he presents some very attractive characters and settings without sacrificing his serious intentions, and handles the combination of love-interest and social concerns which was coming to be his trademark with considerable deftness, showing an enormous amount of progress over *Workers in the Dawn*. It is reprinted from the 1890 edition published by Smith, Elder in a single volume. A bibliographical note sketches its publication history, as a serial, a three-decker, and in various reprints. Interestingly, an abridged translation which Gissing apparently never heard of was published in Russia, and more recently, some excerpts in English appeared in Japan. The only part of the manuscript extant is Chapter 3, consisting of eleven pages which Coustillas has discovered among some letters from Gissing to W. H. Hudson. The fragment has a considerable number of corrections and variants, and Coustillas' report on his careful study of this material reveals some notable facts about Gissing's methods of composition.

The introduction reviews in detail the difficulties Gissing had in publishing this book. He suffered from a lack of confidence in it, a feeling which was not at all alleviated by Meredith's opinion that he had abandoned his proper subject in writing about the middle classes. He was offered only £50 for all rights at first, and while the serial brought him an equal amount, the book

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publication was postponed for more than two years. Furthermore, he was required to rewrite the last part of it in order to achieve a happy ending.

In taking a governess as his protagonist, and contrasting the environments of northern and southern England, Gissing was following some well-known examples in earlier Victorian fiction, but Coustillas convincingly demonstrates that Gissing brought much of his own spirit to these familiar themes. For one thing, the setting of part of the novel is his native Wakefield, and the appendix by Clifford Brook explains in detail how these scenes correspond to the Wakefield locale, street by street and house by house. Though she belongs to the governess character-type, Emily Hood's problems do not emerge from occupational conditions, but from other sources. In an interesting analysis of her spiritual conflict, Coustillas specifies the relation of her aesthetic idealism to the ideas of Ruskin and Pater.

The introduction tells us that in the novel's original version, Emily was fated to die of a heart attack just before marrying Wilfrid, but James Payn's insistence on a happy ending forced Gissing to mutilate his story, and gave it a final direction he did not intend it to have. The fatalism characteristic of Gissing's work, which appears in the story of James Hood, was supposed to affect his daughter's life as well. It seems as if the death of Emily would have been as arbitrary as that of Thyrsa, but it would at least have been consistent with the convictions that shaped the novel as a whole. "It is one of the most distressing incidents in English literature," says Coustillas, "that an incompetent publisher's reader should have been allowed to spoil the conclusion of a story written

with so much intellectual fervour.”

The two newest additions to the Harvester series show Gissing at very different stages of his development as a novelist, *Workers in the Dawn* has almost nothing to recommend it technically; it

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is rambling, awkwardly managed, and composed of parts that do not seem to go together. The narrative tone is naively direct and confidential and improves only when Gissing addresses himself to straightforward reportage. Its redeeming qualities are its energy, its sincerity, its well-meaning, if not especially accurate reflection of Victorian ideological conflicts, and its scattered passages of effective realism. In *A Life's Morning* on the other hand, Gissing conducts his story with both grace and vigour, showing himself to be the master of an impressive repertory of narrative strategies. He has dropped the tone of fervent conviction that pervades the earlier novel, and adopts a cool, objective mode, often touched with irony: “Miss Hood did not, of course, dine with the family. Though, as Mrs. Rossall said, it was a distinct advantage to have in the house a governess whom one could in many respects treat as an equal, yet there was naturally a limit, in this as in all other matters.” Gissing’s new resources are especially evident in his treatment of Dagworthy, the villain of the story, who is presented in a carefully-modulated portrait that is free of condemnation or even excessive seriousness:

Looking at him casually from the outside, one found small suggestion of the pathetic in his hard face and brusque manners; nearer companionship revealed occasional glimpses of a mood out of harmony with the vulgar pursuits and solitudes which for the most part seemed to absorb him ... Though he possibly brought about his wife’s death by ill-usage, that did not alter the fact that he had a carriage and pair to offer to the lady whom he might be disposed to make her successor.

Clearly, Gissing had put the heavy-handed earnestness of his early work behind him. The simultaneous appearance of these two novels offers an excellent opportunity to observe the enormous progress he was able to make in a comparatively short time.

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[Editor’s Note. In view of Jacob Korg’s statement about the discovery of the manuscript of Chapter III of *A Life’s Morning*, I wish to renew my thanks to Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis Shruballs for his disinterested assistance in tracing this document.]

Notes and News

The publication of an article on Gissing in a Spanish academic journal is an unprecedented event in Gissing studies and it must be viewed hopefully. To the best of our knowledge the only type of Spanish publication in which the novelist could so far be found was encyclopaedias. At long last some scholars are discovering his works across the Pyrenees and we may be confident that the present article – “George Gissing’s Attitudes Towards Language” by José Antonio Hoyas Solís – will be followed by others of equal interest. Mr. Hoyas Solís has been for some years studying

Gissing's works, correspondence and private papers, and this article is a well documented survey of a vast subject on which he is soon to publish a small book in Spanish as well as other articles. *Anglo-American Studies*, in which this first article can now be found, is a pleasantly printed journal of the same format as *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* and *Etudes Anglaises*, edited by two senior Spanish scholars, Román Álvarez Rodríguez, of the University of Salamanca, and Ramón López Ortega, of the University of Extremadura. Among the editorial board are such well-known names as

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Terry Eagleton, Roger Fowler, Arnold Kettle and Norman Page.

Clifford Brook reports on the recent Gissing Trust Display in the new Ridings Shopping Centre in Wakefield (April 1-15). The Wakefield Planning Department made an excellent job out of the material in their possession, and although the exhibition was confined to one large display cabinet it attracted a good deal of attention. Its principal aim was to publicize the recent Harvester Press edition of *A Life's Morning*. The material on show included photographs of the Hoods' house, as we may call it, the Corn Exchange, the Mechanics' Institution, St. John's House, the Manor House (at Heath, near Wakefield), the Sandal Castle ruins and T. W. Gissing's grave, as well as general information on Gissing, the Gissing Trust, *A Life's Morning* and the Harvester publication of the writer's works. There was a short interview of Clifford Brook on Radio Leeds. It was broadcast on 11 April at 11 o'clock.

Like last year *The Times* listed Gissing's birth among its "Anniversaries" on 22 November 1984, but his death was not mentioned on 28 December. "Peter Simple," of the *Daily Telegraph*, mentioned *The Nether World* in a list of novels which deal in part with unemployment ("Way of the World") 22 March 1985, p. 16). *The Odd Women* was discussed by Gillian Tyler and a group of students on 1 May in the Victorian Studies Centre at the University of Leicester. Professor Clotilde de Stasio, Associate Professor of English Language and Literature in the State University of Milan, gave a lecture on "George Gissing and his dilemma as a fin-de-siècle novelist" at the Biblioteca Calvaire, Milan, on 13 April 1985.

A most desirable presentation copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, inscribed to E. W. Hornung in February 1903, was sold at auction at Christie's in New York City on 16 November 1984. It fetched \$2,090.

John Simpson's *Concise Dictionary of Proverbs* (O.U.P., 1982) has been reissued in paperback. It contains four quotations from *The Nether World* ("there is no accounting for tastes"; "a heaviness

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at his heart [that] came only of hope deferred"; "when things are at the worst they begin to mend"; "it's probably as well for you that *to-morrow* never comes") and one from *The Crown of Life* ("faint heart – he mused over the proverb").

The new *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, edited by Margaret Drabble, has an entirely new entry on Gissing and, if one overlooks a small error for which the author of the entry rather than the printers or the proofreaders must be blamed (Owen's for Owens) it is a pleasure to say that it does justice to Gissing and duly records the extensive development of Gissing studies in the last

twenty-five years. This entry puts to shame the editor of the *Cambridge Guide to English Literature* (1983), Michael Stapleton, who writes of Gissing as if one were still in the early 1940s. If this *Guide* is ever reprinted Stapleton or his successor would be well advised to ask a competent scholar to write a new piece. Nor is the Gissing entry the only one that can be skipped with profit. The amount of space devoted to writers is often grossly inadequate – either unduly generous or shamefully skimpy. Of all Gissing's novels, Stapleton thinks, only *The Odd Women* is good enough for revival. One wonders how many he has actually read. He would do well to have a look at some advertisements in the Winter number of *Victorian Studies* and watch for the publication of some books by and about Gissing which are to appear within the next two years.

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Recent Publications

Volume

Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge, eds., *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, £8.95. A paperback reissue of the title first published in 1972.

Articles, reviews, etc.

John Gross, "About Books: Black Boxes and Movie Poems," *New York Times Book Review*, 29 June 1984, p.10. Comments on an entry in Gissing's *Commonplace Book*.

José Antonio Hoyas Solís, "George Gissing's Attitudes Towards Language," *Anglo-American Studies* (University of Salamanca, Vol. IV, no. 2, November 1984, pp. 197-206.

Mario Curreli, *Invito alla lettura di Conrad*, Milano: Mursia, 1984. Contains occasional mentions of Gissing. Francesco Badolato reviewed this book in the *Corriere di Roma* under the title "Solitudine ed espiazione in Joseph Conrad" on 5 May 1985.

Francesco Badolato, "Critici e letteratura straniera: Narrativa sul tardo periodo vittoriano," *Il Corriere di Roma*, 15 February 1985, p. 4. Review of the paperback of *The Town Traveller* (Harvester) and of the French translation of Conrad's *Tales of Unrest*.

L. R. Leavis, "The Late Nineteenth-Century Novel and the Change Towards the Sexual – Gissing, Hardy and Lawrence," *English Studies*, Vol. 66, no. 1, February 1985, pp. 36-47.

Jean-Claude Amalric, "Book Reviews," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, no. 21, April 1985, p. 99. Notice of *George Gissing: Antologia Critica*.

Margaret Drabble, ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, O.U.P., 1985. An entirely new account of Gissing's career is given on pp. 393-94 and an abstract of *New Grub Street* appears on p. 694.