

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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Marriage as a Symbol of Alienation  
in *The Whirlpool*

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A major theme presented in *The Whirlpool*<sup>1</sup> shows how marriage as a viable institution impacts negatively on individuals living in an urban environment. In 1897, when Gissing published the story, the theme was not for him a new one. Indeed, in several of his previous novels his perspective on marriage itself is more incisive than that one finds in the works of his near or immediate contemporaries. Thus, in Dickens, Eliot, Moore, or even Hardy (if one exempts *Jude the Obscure*), marriage as an institution is not discussed *per se* but, rather, is

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accepted as part of the social and personal culmination of a series of romantic encounters or intrigues. This is not the case with Gissing.

Among Gissing’s novels where the question of marriage is scrutinized to any degree, especially within a dynamic urban setting, *The Odd Women* comes to mind. In this story, the two older Madden sisters, for instance, never marry, but in their loneliness one, Alice, suffers from hypochondria, the other, Virginia, becomes a hopeless dipsomaniac. Monica, the youngest sister, marries a phlegmatic man, Widdowson, and they both are too insecure and egocentric to open their minds or hearts to each other, and their relationship ends tragically. The exception is

Mary Barfoot, who, while not marrying, has relative financial security which enables her to pursue an individual social goal. She establishes a technical school for less privileged young women unlikely to marry, and who lack skills to function adequately in a changing society. With the assistance of Rhoda Nunn, whose superior intelligence and sense of purpose prompts her to dedicate her life to an ideal that excludes marriage, Mary fulfils herself and avoids any self-destructive habits. Everard Barfoot, her cousin, and a privileged young man of the world, feels threatened by the “new” woman, namely Rhoda Nunn, who rejects his masculine need to protect her.

In *The Odd Women*, each of the characters is set against a background which witnesses changes in values, concerning the social and economic conditions of society, thus heightening the conflicts between men and women. Yet, the two principals, Everard Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn, at least, experience the emotions of love, while neither, from strong convictions, gives in to his feelings. Barfoot does eventually marry, but Rhoda remains a spinster, unwilling to sacrifice her beliefs by submission to male authority in matrimonial life.

The differences between *The Odd Women* and *The Whirlpool* are considerable, in that the

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former concentrates on character interrelationships in the face of social and economic crises, while in the latter, the characters are victims of a process that affects the whole complexion of society and the way that society works. And underlying *The Whirlpool's* varying perspectives is Gissing's analysis of marriage as a symbol of the alienation between men and women. This alienation coincides with the rush of technological advancement and social upheaval affecting English middle-class life during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The two principal couples in the novel, Harvey Rolfe and Alma Frothingham, and Hugh Carnaby and Sibyl Larkfield, are victims of, as well as participants (along with their friends and acquaintances) in, the new way of life. Each relationship epitomizes the disruptive contemporary trends that Gissing observed in his era. The almost total absence of romance, or love, reflects the barrenness of a society that reduces emotions to sexual liaisons and the struggle for dominance of one sex over the other.

In both relationships, emphasis is on *self*. While the two couples live in the same world, each member of each couple *sees* it in his own particular way. The four principals understand that to survive in the depersonalized commercial society of which they are part, self-preservation comes before feelings of mutual concern or personal commitment to one another. The overwhelming need each character has to control his personal destiny, paradoxically, creates the attraction each has for the other.

Rolfe, for example, at the outset of the novel, wants to give some purpose to his life. He is described as a well educated man, “bookish” and philosophical; his tastes (natural to such a man) are conservative. Essentially a non-activist in the cares of the world, he yearns for the quiet contemplative existence of the amateur scholar.

As the novel unfolds, we learn that Rolfe is full of contradictions, which, in its way, reflects the unstable conditions of the world in which he lives. He, along with his friend, Hugh

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Carnaby, is a man shaped by a social frame that is outmoded in the fast-paced world he meets. He is torn between the values and virtues of the past and the exciting but uncertain “busyness” of present-day society. On one level he feels himself superior to the social climbers and speculators who feed off one another to gain prestige and recognition from their betters. At the same time he is drawn to the affluent lifestyle he sees around him, even though he knows that those most visible are shallow and have no idea about the precarious nature of their positions in life. Thus, Rolfe's rationalized philosophy, in its seeming humanism, acts as a weapon to extract what benefits he can from those he both despises and envies. Once Alma Frothingham, a

beautiful erstwhile heiress, is available to him, she becomes his means of realizing his “purpose,” that is, of claiming for himself one of the chief prizes of the social élite.

The contradictions in Rolfe, however, are what gives the novel its essential meaning. For example, the early portion of the book has Rolfe, prior to Alma’s fall from her former social heights, commenting on the institution of marriage and its concomitant, children. First, he considers the broken marriage of his landlord, Buncombe, whose wife has left him to pursue a singing career in “second-rate halls.” Comparing himself to Buncombe, he says, that while having “run through follies innumerable” himself in his youth, he had not been “hampered” by marriage: “Sometimes,” he wonders, “by a freak of imagination he pictured himself a married man, imprisoned with wife and children amid these leagues of dreary, inhospitable brickwork, and a great horror fell upon him” (26). This section having to do with Buncombe and his wife serves, in its way, as an adumbration of what later happens to Rolfe in his relationship with Alma.

Second, Rolfe’s seeming disdain for marriage contrasts with another ideal, the matrimonial

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condition of his friend Basil Morton, even though he scorns it in principle. His implied comparison between the modern urban marriage of “misery,” as exemplified in Buncombe’s, Wager’s and Abbott’s relationships, and the old-fashioned idealized relationship found in the rural environment of the Mortons, shows a nodding tolerance for the latter, mainly because of where the couple live — in the country — and the apparently submissive nature of the country wife, as seen in Morton’s spouse.

A third contradiction in Rolfe that heightens the conflict within him is his seeming lack of regard for children. After having received a letter from his friend Morton, in which the latter mildly complains about his domestic problems, Rolfe responds in a supercilious fashion: “All domestic matters,” he asserts, “were a trial to his nerves”:

It seemed to him an act of unaccountable folly to marry a woman from whom one differed diametrically on subjects that lay at the root of life; and of *children* he could hardly bring himself to think at all, so exasperating the complication they introduced into social problems which defied common-sense. He *disliked children; fled the sight and sound of them in most cases, and, when this was not possible, regarded them with apprehension, anxiety, weariness, anything but interest* (20) [Italics mine].

Over and again in the early chapters of the novel, the reader receives this lament from Rolfe. When such words as “dislike children,” “fled the sight and sound of them,” “regarded them with apprehension, anxiety,” etc., are used to identify Rolfe as the consummate bachelor and cynic, they also presage what will mock him in his later marriage to Alma, and as father to their child.

Rolfe, a man alone, self-consciously observant, aware of the chaotic society that threatens all who participate in it, really gives no clear reason as to why he dislikes children. He

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comments on them mostly in the context of abandonment by parents who give them so little concern, and with respect to their levels of education, according to their social and economic status. For example, early in the novel he makes a reference to the tragic circumstances surrounding Wager’s abandonment of his children. Rolfe states that the forlorn husband’s frustrations were “a natural revolt against domestic bondage” (13); that Wager, on his wife’s death, should have “got rid of [the children] in some legitimate way” by having them placed in a state institution. And he goes on to relate how “people talk such sentimental rubbish about

children ...” People, he says, should “know nothing about them till they’re ten or twelve years old, [since children are] a burden, a hindrance, a perpetual source of worry and misery.” As for their mothers, most of them “are sacrificed to the next generation ... People snivel over the deaths of babies,” he says, but “if a child dies ... the probabilities are it *ought* to die; if it lives ... you get the survival of the fittest” (13) [His italics].

The bitter irony of this Spencerian passage again compounds itself, as is borne out later, by Rolfe’s relationship to his own child, little Hugh. At this early stage in the novel, Rolfe’s attitude does, indeed, embody that of the cynical observer of life, not a participant in it.

Since these contradictions represent the essential conflict for Harvey Rolfe, and, to a much greater extent, are the foundation for the larger conflicts in the novel, Rolfe’s declaration on both marriage and children should be seen within the context of the whole environment. The speculative world of vertiginous egos, such as the Leaches, Strangeways, Abbotts and Wagers, whose major concerns are self alone, leaves no quarter for the care, the education, and the love of children, those important ingredients of most marriages and the perpetuation of society.

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Yet, despite these harsh criticisms of domestic life, Rolfe knows better. When his friend, Hugh, accuses him of being a misogynist, Rolfe becomes defensive. Bound by the constraints of his own limitations and experiences, and his nostalgia for the former passivity of women and distrust of the independence of the modern woman, he is an illustration of the dilemma of Victorian society in general. In the midst of growing economic diversity, man’s dominance over women in domestic relations no longer holds absolute. Women, spurred on by the democratization process, have seized the moment to reshape their destinies as full participants in society.

Thus, when Alma’s reduced circumstances appear to afford Rolfe an opportunity to reassert male dominance, he imagines he does so as an enlightened man, one with principles that he believes are consonant with the times — reason and common sense.

His “love” speech to Alma, for instance, just before their marriage, is condescendingly smug: “When I ask you to *share* it [his life in marriage], I ask you to *share liberty*, not restraint” (117) [Italics mine]. On the surface, this is noble of him, but he believes he knows, too, the woman with whom he contracts these words. At least his approach is different from the staged invitation to concubinage proposed by Felix Dymes and from the more suave opportunism and deadly offering to Alma by Cyrus Redgrave.

Harvey explains to her the basis of his proposal: “Many people,” he says, “nowadays revolt against marriage because it generally means bondage, and they have much to say for themselves.” Consequently we have in due course two people, amiably respectful, but closely observant of each other’s manner, jockeying for mutual dominance.

As his future wife, Alma finds it difficult to believe that Rolfe will countenance her professional ambitions to be a concert performer:

Rolfe scrutinised her face, observed the tremulous mouth, the nervous eyelid.

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“Then,” he said, “it will be better for you not to marry me.”

And silence fell upon the room, a silence in which Harvey could hear a deep-drawn breath and the rustle of silk. He was surprised by a voice in quite a new tone, softly melodious.

“You give me up very easily.”

“Not more easily than you give up your music.”

“There’s a difference. Do you remember what we were saying, last Wednesday, about simplicity of living?”

“Last Wednesday? It seems a month ago. Yes, I remember.”

“I have thought a good deal of that. I feel how vulgar the life is that most people lead. They can’t help it... But I should like to live as I chose, and not care a bit what other people said.”

*Harvey had the same difficulty as before in attaching much significance to these phrases.* They were pleasant to hear, for they chimed with his own thoughts, but he could not respond with great seriousness” (118) [Italics mine].

This exchange suggests the insincerity of both parties who use language as a weapon of subjection to satisfy selfish, not mutual, aims. Subtle forms of self-delusion are acceptable: each wants his or her own independence, even, paradoxically, as they talk of “sharing” their lives. In effect, an effort is made to codify personal relations, to establish marriage on a new but superficial level, somewhat analogous to a business partnership. Mutual feelings become nothing more than a series of agreed upon guideposts. Harvey looks on Alma as a delightfully wilful child who needs an indulgent male or father-figure to protect her from the world’s pitfalls. And his “difficulty in attaching much significance to [her] phrases” extends far beyond her

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petulance regarding social acceptance. While a lenient master, Rolfe remains no less committed to an old-fashioned romanticism that he would like patterned after the relationship of his rural friends, the Basil Mortons.

Alma Frothingham, however, while a muddled personality, identifies with all the manners and forms of contemporary society. Ambitious, but ill-trained, charming in public, but vain and shallow, envious and picayune, such is Alma, but the negative aspects of her personality are offset, initially, by an ingenuousness that is appealing. Later, her naive guile turns to pathos, which (to paraphrase George Eliot) results in personal tragedy that stems from her deeds as much as it is determined by her character. Once at the pinnacle of stylish society, she discovers, after the death of her father by suicide, that she no longer holds any significant power (if one may call it that) over her admirers. Alone in the world, charming and beautiful still, but no longer sheltered by her father’s fortune, she quickly learns what is necessary in her new circumstances to regain control of her former position, and this means that she needs the protection of a man who will allow her to do as she pleases, with no restraints. While she is not a cruel person, nor a cold one, her vanity, which served her well when in riches serves her but poorly when impoverished.

In her desperate attempts to carve a niche for herself as an artist, she approaches every situation badly. Despising Felix Dymes, the effervescent composer of popular music, Alma nevertheless uses him to foster her meagre talent as a concert violinist. But it is he who reaps the benefits from the alliance, even though she is able to fend off his advances towards her. More difficult for her to fend against are the insidious manoeuvres of the mysterious and affluent womanizer Cyrus Redgrave. Her ambitions force her into repugnant intrigues involving Redgrave, with the assistance of Sibyl and Mrs. Strangeways, to the extent that her public and private moral sensibilities are compromised. Falling a prey to her own vanity and vulnerability,

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she finds herself a failure as a concert artist, a failure in competing with the shrewdly elusive Sibyl, and a failure at being both a wife and a mother.

Rolfe, seeing her as a child who needs the controlling hand of an indulgent parent, fails himself to grasp the essential flaw in Alma’s character, even though he recognizes some of her

faults: her determination to regain her former status in society is blocked by his own vanity and his inability to compromise between his need to retire from the world and his need to be a participant in it. He nonetheless hopes to escape it all by establishing an idyll for his prized possession, Alma, and himself in suburban London or elsewhere.

In a way, it might be said that Rolfe, who had nothing to do with either Frothingham's business or his demise, could hardly have prevented Alma from her follies or her fate. However, after he entered her life, his own practical judgment might have taken a more sanguine course. But, in the last analysis, he should not have married Alma at all. A better companion would have been Mary Abbott, who, as time passes, shows greater degrees of sympathy and has more in common with him: she is intelligent, unambitious, having become a tempered but attractive personality through suffering of her own. She would have complemented Rolfe's retiring nature. Parts II and III of the novel work out the dramatic consequences of Harvey's domestic and public dilemma, as well as the parallel alienating conflict between their friends Sibyl and Hugh Carnaby. As with Alma and Rolfe, the failure in the Carnabys' relationship is predicated on misjudgments and confused loyalties. Sibyl, for example, early described in the novel as "beautiful and brilliant," is "devoted to the life of cities, wherein she shone." At the same time (as her name suggests), she is an "enchantress whose spell would not easily be broken [and] before whom her husband *bowed in delighted subservience*" (9) [Italics mine].

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Sibyl, it appears, thoroughly understands this new world, where appearances mean everything. For her, survival requires the rejection of a moral conscience. Like the men who conduct the financial affairs of large commercial interests, whose business knowledge and expertise sharpen their capacity for machination, deviance and exploitation to gain great profits, she exercises similar brilliance in the social world in order to remain among those associated with such power. Her husband, Carnaby, becomes, therefore, a tool that she uses to gain and maintain her position. The nefarious relationships Sibyl cultivates with Mrs. Strangeways and Cyrus Redgrave are counter-balanced by the control she exhibits in her social and domestic affairs.

As for Hugh Carnaby, he is confused by what he sees and experiences as the husband of a woman so much involved with and defined by the commercial spirit of the times. In personality, Hugh is the opposite of his friend, Harvey, in that he is athletic and a would-be man of action. Less so than Rolfe, even, Hugh has no place in this "new" world of commercial and social competitiveness. He belongs to an old order of manliness, or, at best, he is a displaced warrior in the Kipling tradition. Early in the novel, we are told that "Carnaby was a fair example of the well-bred Englishman — tall, brawny, limber, not uncomely, with a red neck, a powerful jaw, and a keen eye" (8-9). A figure, we imagine, one should find in the romances of Thackeray, but "something more of repose, of self-possession, and a slightly more intellectual brow, would have made him the best type of conquering, civilising Briton." However, because of his marriage to the "enchantress," Sibyl, "all hope for him was at an end ... Such a woman might flatter [his] pride, but could scarce be expected to draw out his latent energies and capabilities" (9). He is undesirous — or incapable — of extracting himself from a fast-paced artificial world he loathes. But because of his uxorious devotion to Sibyl, he remains a captive of the magnetic

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social world of London of which his wife is one of the chief personalities. Enthralled by her "cool" beauty and intelligence, Carnaby withdraws into a mock world of fantasy where "men" become explorers and hunters in distant lands.

Hugh's weakness in character, it seems, exemplifies a gelding complex that afflicts most of the males in this urban world. The satirizing process Gissing invokes against such men as

Carnaby illustrates their complete disorientation in the society he portrays. Hugh, a man whose “robust physique and temper, essentially combative, demanded liberty under conditions of rude or violent life” (58-59), finds himself inhibited and undermined by jealousy and frustration, with an outlet only in a moment of wasteful fury that, by a single blow, kills a man. This is the extent of the “robust” man’s “combativeness.” His subsequent public humiliation by trial, and imprisonment, leaves him, upon his release, a man defeated and broken in spirit.

An anachronism, Hugh is reduced to standing in “guilty embarrassment before his own wife’s face of innocence” (300) upon confronting her with his suspicions about her and Redgrave.

Thus, between Harvey Rolfe and Hugh Carnaby, as studies in contrasting temperaments, there exists the fundamental bond of delusion. In Harvey, it is manifested in his belief that he can master his own destiny through the authority of reason, a belief which ultimately condemns him to a reclusive existence with his “slight” seven-year-old son, Hugh, whose prospects of attaining his namesake’s robust manliness are slim. And Carnaby, following his subjection to irate, irrational passion, and his punishment, becomes a dispassionate man of business with the “prospects of money-making” (453) as his only hope for the future.

While both Sibyl and Alma accept their roles within the new, pragmatic but artificial society, and each, in her own fashion, will go to any lengths to achieve her ends, Alma,

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emotional, erratic, and a dilettante in the machinations of social warfare, is overmatched. Sibyl, in the words of Faulkner, continues to endure, whereas Alma, vain and spoiled, but too sensitive to bear the enigmatic forces of an alienating society, dies because she cannot endure.

All things considered, Gissing’s novel appeals less to one’s sense of disillusionment, I think, than it does to one’s need to understand that men and women, while social beings, must find levels of compromise if they are to achieve some form of compatibility between them. Love, sharing and mutual respect combined must remain the cornerstone around which families and societies are built.

1. All references are to the Harvester Press edition (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), edited by Patrick Parrinder.

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#### Foreign Words and Phrases in Gissing’s Works

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Gissing was a good linguist. He constantly read foreign books, enjoyed being abroad and finally settled in France. Foreign words and phrases are quite numerous in his books, many of which have at least in part a foreign setting. Also, of course, several of his characters share their creator’s interest in things foreign.

As for the languages used, French, the most widely understood foreign language in late-

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Victorian England, holds absolute sway. Latin words and phrases are often introduced, varying from simple tags to more abstruse quotations from the poets. In *Demos* Gissing showed a predilection for Italian, as also to some extent in *A Life’s Morning*, where Mr. Athel had had an Italian wife. His influence may have induced Emily Hood to take up Italian in her years of solitude. German serves mainly to create local colour and to identify German characters, just as

Italian was almost inevitable in *The Emancipated*, where the Italian setting plays a great part. The large number of foreign words in *The Crown of Life* contributes to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of that novel. Gissing wrote it shortly after meeting Gabrielle Fleury, which no doubt accounts for the highly idiomatic type of French used. We know the author set great store by the accuracy of such phrases. During the writing of *The Whirlpool* he asked Bertz for the translation of a short sentence spoken by a German boy. Bertz complied but owing to a misunderstanding his rendering turned out to be somewhat inappropriate.

A novelist may introduce a foreign word from a variety of motives. The least admirable of these is the desire to show off. In a young novelist this is not unnatural, however, and it explains why some rather unnecessary French words found their way into *Workers in the Dawn*, where we read about a *bruyante* cousin, who causes a *bouleversement* in the housekeeper's time. A rather learned term like *ceteris paribus* sounds inappropriate in the reflections of the London printer Tollady. In another early novel — *Isabel Clarendon* — Kingcote's exertion of the brain was *acharnée*.

A more creditable excuse for a foreign word is the writer's feeling that it conveys a slight shade of meaning lacking in the English equivalent. This applies to *ennui*, a favourite word in Gissing's novels. In the preface he wrote for *The Pickwick Papers* Gissing calls Sam Weller, the

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grown-up *gamin*, which contains just the element of boyish mischief he wished to express. Similarly in *The Whirlpool* Rolfe tells Alma that teaching is not her *métier* thus avoiding the more commercial or business-like connotations of *trade* or *profession*. "Our insular *cuisine*" in *Ryecroft* is more comprehensive than mere *cooking*. In *A Life's Morning* Beatrice gets through half a dozen books *tant bien que mal*. An English equivalent, for instance *somehow or other*, might be less expressive of Beatrice's slapdash reading method. In *Thyrza* Gissing refers to the sturdy Briton who dreads the *petit-maître*. The now old-fashioned French phrase suggests that dandyism or foppishness is a foreign concept to the robust Briton. In *New Grub Street* Alfred Yule takes his literary efforts *au grand sérieux*. The French phrase may imply a hint of ironic doubt. Did Yule's productions deserve to be taken so seriously?

A foreign phrase may indeed be found useful to express some gentle mockery. In *Workers in the Dawn* the pompous clergyman Whiffle is sadly lacking in paternal authority. His vapid self-importance is emphasized by a reference to his *patria potestas*. In *Demos* the squalor of the Regent's Canal is underlined by a quotation from Dante, and in the same novel the petty gossip in a village community is given added force when we read that Mrs. Mewling's cry was *haro*. Also in *Demos* Rodman's meeting with his abandoned wife is a *contretemps*. This cannot represent Rodman's literal thought. It is the author's ironic comment on a man whose career is made up of shady practices.

In *Demos* vulgar English surroundings can be set off by a foreign phrase, as also in *The Nether World*, where Clem Peckover enjoys her *bonnes bouches* and Bob Hewett treats young women of his class with genial banter *de haut en bas*, though he is himself fated to make a *mésalliance*. His contemptuous treatment of his wife is summed up in the Latin phrase "Sic volo, Sic jubeo." Classical allusions are to be found in the same novel when Gissing describes a

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Cockney bank holiday in terms of the Roman Saturnalia. In a different though equally ironic way the Latin phrase *Satis superque* is applied in *The Emancipated* to Miriam Baske's puritanical northern English home.

In *Born in Exile* Godwin Peak, who lives in poverty, cleans his boots *propria manu*. He may be poor but he is after all something of a scholar. A foreign phrase may thus have a humorous effect. In a working-class shop described in *The Unclassed* a bad penny is nailed to the counter *in terrorem*.



Such a phrase may also be a convenient way of sparing delicate feelings. In *Workers in the Dawn* a risqué anecdote is a *conte moral*, and a prostitute is more politely referred to as a *fille perdue*. In *The Unclassed* the prostitute Lotty has her *clientèle*. Euphemism is not restricted, however, to indelicate subjects. It may avoid disagreeable suggestions. Thus in *New Grub Street* Gissing avoids the slightly derogatory connotations of *idleness* or *doing nothing* by referring to Amy Reardon's few weeks of *désœuvrement*. Mrs. Wade in *Denzil Quarrier* uses this device when she asks Lilian: "Do you think me what the French call *hommasse*?"

The use of foreign words in conversations may help to "place" a character. The reasons why such words are used are almost as numerous as the occasions on which they occur. It may be a matter of snobbishness or flaunting one's superiority. An example of this is provided by Maud Gresham in *Workers in the Dawn*. It is true she spent a good deal of time abroad, but so did her friend Helen Norman, whose speech remains remarkably "pure." For instance, in her conversations and correspondence Maud uses *Schwärmerei*, *sans-culotte*, *canaille*, *sage*, as well as a complete French sentence (in a letter from Versailles). The chapter describing Maud's wedding is appropriately called "Marriage à la mode." Her father, a shifty character, is also given to using foreign phrases, like *bon ton* and *à quoi bon?* "imitating French tones and

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gestures," he exclaims: "Mon Dieu! Ces Anglaises!" The clergyman Whiffle in the same novel emphasizes his quasi-solemnity by using Latin: *persona ecclesiae* and *in flagrante delicto*.

Foreign phrases may be a cheap ornament. They indicate a shallow character. There are numerous instances of this in Gissing's work. Vincent Lacour (in *Isabel Clarendon*) says: "I am *de trop*." Even Isabel herself, when she tries to play the part of a woman of the world, lapses into *ennui* and *voilà tout*. Barbara Denyer, too, is guilty of affectation (in *The Emancipated*) when she is sure to murmur "Roma, capitale d'Italia" whenever that city is mentioned.

This is related to the use of French phrases in society journals. One of these (in *New Grub Street*) describes Biffen's novel as belonging to "the genre ennuyeux." A similar publication in *The Odd Women* mentions "the monde where one never s'ennuie."

There is always the danger of overshooting the mark by mispronouncing a French word. Mumbray (in *Denzil Quarrier*) likes a quiet evening "ong famille." Over-precision, however, is just as bad. Chilvers (in *Born in Exile*) pronounces naturalized English phrases with the correct classical quantity.

Another character who tries to look superior is Mrs. Luke (in *The Odd Women*). She uses *nous*, which she had picked up from "a young gentleman late of Oxford." A superficial display of sophistication is evident in Fanny French (in *In the Year of Jubilee*), who freely scatters her foreign phrases after a visit to the Continent: "Comme vous voyez" and "Charmée, Monsieur." In this respect she reminds us of Felix Dymes, the superficial musical expert in *The Whirlpool*, who "used many German phrases, which he pronounced badly, to fill up the gaps in his knowledge." A flashy character in *The Crown of Life*, Daniel Otway, likes foreign phrases of different origins, and uses them almost as a weapon in his dealings with other people. His vocabulary includes Italian (*benissimo*) German ("Was soll es bedeuten?") and French ("à

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l'heure qu'il est").

It is sometimes difficult to define the borderline between mere boasting and real sophistication, as when Eleanor Spence (in *The Emancipated*) refers to "the *jeune fille* according to society" and "ordinary surveillance." The self-assured William Glazzard (*Denzil Quarrier*) throws in a careless *au contraire*. Barfoot (*The Odd Women*) tries the same trick with the cultivated Rhoda Nunn, when he drops phrases like *pis aller* and *catalogue raisonné*.

Certain characters may be said to adopt foreign phrases as a deliberate ploy to obtain the upper hand. Lionel Tarrant (*In the Year of Jubilee*) finds himself married against his will to a

woman he regards as his inferior. He gives added weight to his feelings of contempt for Nancy by using foreign words, most of which she cannot understand. We find him using *de rigueur*, *alti quai*, *il respecte la consigne*, *péché de jeunesse*, *lion comique*, *et tu*, *haro*. Nancy realises what lies behind this show of learning when she says: "I don't like you when you begin to use French words." When Tarrant meets Nancy's mother, Mrs. Damerel, a more formidable character, he realizes he will not be allowed "to perform his share of the talking *de haut en bas*," as Gissing puts it in another foreign phrase. Mrs. Damerel's French is limited, but she finds it sufficient to overawe her more naive son Horace, to whom she uses *distinguée* and *la petite*.

In a short story, "The Firebrand," the leading character uses the phrase *vache enragée* to his doctor, who is then obliged to confess his ignorance and ask: "What in the world is that?"

Jasper Milvain (*New Grub Street*) is determined to make his way in the literary profession, although he has neither scholarship nor outstanding literary gifts. He cannot afford to play the part of a modest man and one way of impressing his hearers is the use of foreign phrases. Even to his sister he says: "I stand to you *in loco parentis*" and to other characters we find him using

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*simpatico*, *merum sal*, *opera omnia*, *quocumque modo*, *borné* and *causas rerum*.

In *Our Friend the Charlatan* the newspaper editor Breakspere is inclined to use Latin phrases. His profession was one Gissing hardly admired and the Latin the editor comes out with is of a more elementary type such as he used to embellish leading articles (*hoc signo vinces*, *meminisse juvabit* and *nunc dimittis*). Dyce Lashmar, although the charlatan, was not so badly educated and his Latin quotations are less trite (*sat prata biberunt* and *sedet in aeternumque sedebit*).

The use of foreign phrases, especially Latin, is often in bad taste in mixed company. Gissing was fully aware of this when he remarked of one of his more attractive characters, Basil Morton (*The Whirlpool*) that pedantry led Morton to murmur Latin. Latin phrases are only acceptable when used by Latin scholars speaking to fellow-enthusiasts, who may feel a pleasant thrill of recognition. Thus when Waymark quotes Latin to Casti (in *The Unclassed*) or Reardon to Biffen (in *New Grub Street*). These men are kindred to the author who wrote in *By the Ionian Sea* that in his youth "every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful".

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### Book Reviews

George Gissing, *Veranilda*, edited with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987.

As nearly all of its reviewers have observed, *Veranilda* is the odd man out of Gissing's novels. Posthumous, uncompleted, his only historical novel, and written in a formal, archaizing

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style, it has usually been given little attention, even by Gissing's most enthusiastic supporters. Yet, as Professor Coustillas' edition shows, it occupied his mind far longer than any of his other novels, and involved more preparation and research than anything else he wrote. To add to the paradox, it was a labor of love. Here Gissing set aside the commitments that had motivated his earlier novels and allowed his imagination to wander in the scenes of antiquity that had infatuated him since his school days. He seems to have wanted to please no one but himself, and he very nearly succeeded. Frederic Harrison's brief preface, which is reprinted in this volume, calls *Veranilda* "far the most important book which George Gissing ever produced; that one of

his writings which will have the most continued life," but his claim served only to antagonize the critics, who took a different view, and considered the book a weak performance. In this edition, Coustillas undertakes, among other tasks, to correct this appraisal.

His introduction traces the genesis of the novel in some detail, showing that the reading and travel of a good part of Gissing's life was a preparation, conscious or otherwise, for the writing of *Veranilda*. The novel is rooted in his devotion to classical antiquity, but it is odd that he should have chosen for its setting the period of Rome's history when it was at its least classical, and was clearly beginning to exhibit the characteristics of medieval civilization. Laid in sixth-century Italy, many years after the official "fall" of Rome in 476 and the conquest of Theodoric, the Ostrogoth in 488, *Veranilda* depicts a country harried by barbarian invaders, and torn between the power of the Byzantine empire under Justinian and that of the Gothic king, Totila, in which native Romans are a subject people, abjectly choosing to side with one or the other of their conquerors. Paganism, imperial power and the *Pax Romana* are dead, and the Christian piety, decentralization and paralyzing turmoil of the Middle Ages have begun their

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long ascendancy.

This is the setting for Gissing's story of a noble Roman who falls in love with a Gothic princess, is parted from her as she is mysteriously kidnapped, spoils his reunion with her by killing a friend in a fit of jealousy, ultimately regains his Christian faith, allies himself with the Gothic king whose conquest of Italy is slowly succeeding, and becomes reconciled with Veranilda. The uncompleted story breaks off after two final chapters describing Rome under siege and initiating an intrigue among minor characters.

The major impression this plot creates, especially against the background of the exhaustive research and planning Coustillas' apparatus reveals, is one of reserve. There is one violent action in the book; otherwise it is occupied with long periods of waiting, quiet searching, uneventful journeys, and the patient construction of conspiracies. Basil, the protagonist, is a passive hero who falls ill at one point, and is forced to retire from taking part in the action. His friendly enemy, Marcian, a much more interesting character who suffers from agonizing divisions of the mind, actually performs the deed Basil fails to do, rescuing Veranilda from her captors. But it is done through guile, without exciting action, and the princess herself is kept out of sight during the escape. Overt conflicts are averted, deferred, or kept offstage, and many of the vital events are narrated or discussed only in retrospect, after they have actually occurred.

Furthermore, Gissing made no effort to exploit the possibilities of color and romantic effect offered by the historical novel. A military action which a romantic novelist might have exploited for its exotic quality is described in the barest possible manner: "the armed men ascended and stood in line, the bowmen with their arrows on string." Gissing used the knowledge he had accumulated about the general social conditions created by the war between the Greeks and the Goths, the domestic details of daily life and the religious controversies of the time to gain a

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feeling for the remote historical period, and to create a subtle sense of familiarity with it. The obtrusive antiquarianism of Scott and his followers is replaced by fleeting, understated references to historical forces and physical details which have the effect of combining the factual and fictional elements into a single fabric.

The situation of Basil's kinswoman, Aurelia, for example, is a careful construction of such materials. Her father, Maximus, is dying, but his last days are made unhappy because he fears that his beloved daughter will be unable to inherit his estate. Aurelia, a Roman and a Catholic by birth, once married a Gothic nobleman and adopted his Arian religion, but is now widowed. Under Roman law, her Arianism is considered heretical, and makes her incompetent to inherit her father's property. Further, she lives in Cumae, where her husband commanded, at some

distance from her father, because, as Gissing explains, after the city was taken by the Greeks and her husband was killed, “this ancient city became the retreat of many ladies who fled from Rome before the hardships and perils of the siege ...” The problem is temporarily resolved when a churchman induces Aurelia to agree to a secret conversion, making her take an oath on a golden cross which, he says, contains “dust of iron from the bars on which the blessed Laurentius suffered martyrdom.” The rich fund of historical information necessary for the development of this episode is carefully assimilated into the ongoing action without special emphasis.

In explaining the usual dining arrangements among Romans, Gissing had noted that the curved bench around the table was still used, but that only “the effeminate” followed the old custom of reclining at meals, while Christians sat upright. His narrative smoothly incorporates highly specialized details about the re-use of marble columns in the construction of a church, methods of treating illnesses, and the topography of ancient Rome, conveying an intimate sense

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of how things were done and what life was like. The houses, even of the wealthy people, are ruins, shattered remains of Rome’s better days. Much of the strength of the novel arises from Gissing’s method of using the facts which define the life of the time in these inconspicuous, indirect ways. Reviewers often complained that *Veranilda* lacked a quality they called “vitality” or “the breath of life” or “the bite of reality.” Such criticism misses the pleasure of reading a restrained and reticent text which employs archaeology rather than realism for providing insight into the life it depicts.

The narrative style of *Veranilda* also is generally direct and sober, lacking in the quiet irony that is a feature of the prose of Gissing’s middle period, when he had dropped the overt indignation of his novels of poverty, and skillfully used understatement to convey his attitudes. There are passages where simplicity and restraint are effectively used, as in: “Basil kissed the old man’s hand. They never met again. A week later the bishop was dead.” But the generally spare prose is often toned by a formality and dignity that verge on elegance. The inversions of the first sentence signal this tendency: “Seven years long had the armies of Justinian warred against the Goths in Italy.” Expository passages sometimes exhibit elaborate periodicity: “Totila, whose qualities of heart and mind would have made him, could he but have ruled in peace, a worthy successor of the great Theodoric, had reflected much on this question of the hostile creeds ...” The diction sometimes verges toward formality: “Thus Basil had spent his schooldays mostly in the practice of sophistic argument, and the delivery of harangues on traditional subjects ... among his proud recollections was a success he had achieved in the form of a rebuke to an impious voluptuary who had set up a statue of Diana in the room which beheld his debauches.” The dialogue is even more artificial, perhaps in imitation of the Latin the characters must be imagined as speaking.

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One of the most surprising features of *Veranilda* is its treatment of religion. Coustillas has some interesting observations about the close attention Gissing paid to this theme and the distinction he makes between unscrupulous clergymen and the positive moral and personal values taught by the church. As a lifelong agnostic who occasionally attacked organized religion, Gissing might have been expected to treat the Christianity of sixth-century Rome as one of the major elements of its decadence. Instead, he describes the Abbey of Monte Cassino as an orderly, peaceful refuge from the troubles of the world, and makes his hero’s period of recuperation there and his conversations with its abbot, St. Benedict, an education in repentance and humility. A significant element of Basil’s visit with the good monks is their work with books and their love of learning, a predictable emphasis coming from Gissing, but the ultimate effect is clearly religious, as he reviews his past actions in the light of St. Benedict’s teaching,

and gains insight by reading sacred texts. Gissing had not changed his personal views about the futility of religious belief as they are expressed in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, but he was willing to accept the values which Christianity shared with general humanism, and to show how his sixth-century Roman would use them to resolve his moral problems.

This edition, which is reprinted by offset from the first edition of 1904, is the fourth edition of *Veranilda*. It has a critical apparatus, as all the Harvester editions do, but the one Coustillas has supplied is exceptionally thorough. It contains a great deal of information relevant to the novel, some of it newly developed, and is worth describing in detail. A "Bibliographical Note" briefly describes the scattered materials Coustillas has brought together for his study. They include the various editions, the manuscript in the Pforzheimer Library, some discarded pages which are privately owned, two sets of proofs, and some unpublished letters. The introduction

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is divided into three sections. The first traces the composition of the novel from Gissing's earliest manifestations of interest in antiquity, and follows the stages of research and writing, which extended over many years, to the final interruption and beyond, to Gissing's plan for completing it. There has been considerable speculation about what was to happen in the unfinished part of the narrative, but Coustillas has pieced Gissing's intentions together from his notes and some comments from family members, so that readers can now, for the first time, be fairly sure of how the novel was to end. What is revealed substantially contradicts Frederic Harrison's implication that the narrative is all but complete as it stands.

The second section of the introduction deals with the reception of the novel, and with the controversy *Veranilda* precipitated when it appeared. This has been described in Coustillas' article, "The Stormy Publication of Gissing's *Veranilda*," in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, November, 1968, but something is said about it here, and the assessment of the novel by the critics, especially those who had something favorable to say, is described. The third section is a rewarding critical analysis, dealing with Gissing's use of his sources, his treatment of the religious figures, his interest in transitional civilizations, and parallels between the characters of *Veranilda* and those in Gissing's modern novels. Coustillas finds that in this novel, as in others, Gissing "shows himself, as he always does, gravely concerned with all the obstacles man has to overcome in his quest for self-fulfillment."

The text of the novel is followed by a section of textual notes explaining historical and topographical references and relating specific details to the sources in which Gissing learned about them. Since, as many critics have observed, this period of Roman history is one of the most obscure, the identification of names and places is indispensable, and helps to fill in a background which Gissing preferred to treat casually. The notes are followed by an essay on the

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ninety pages of preparatory notes together with Gissing's book-list, a section which contains valuable new information. The parts of Gissing's notes which bear upon his plans for the unwritten chapters disclose at least a part of what was to happen. But Coustillas also describes a separate set of notes, an outline of an entirely different story set in this general period which Gissing ultimately set aside. This is undoubtedly the sketch for "The Vanquished Roman," an Ur-version of *Veranilda*, as Coustillas calls it, which Gissing told Bertz he had worked on for an entire month. He calls it "an elaborate plan of the whole story," and Coustillas' account of it, together with the sections he quotes from it, show that it was intensively prepared. These notes are of interest in revealing the preliminary ideas from which *Veranilda* was developed, but their major importance rests on the fact that they are the only manuscripts we have which show Gissing thinking through his plans and specifying the main points of his story before writing.

Coustillas' thorough discussion of the manuscript, which, like the preparatory notes, is in the Pforzheimer Library, deals with the errors which can be detected in the published text when

it is compared with Gissing's holograph. As Coustillas points out, it is difficult to account for these variants, partly because there was a typescript intervening between the manuscript and the printed version which has been lost. He lists the variants, which are not numerous or particularly serious, and also gives a number of fairly long cancelled passages found in the manuscript and on discarded pages which have become separated from it, some of them from the original, rejected story. The manuscript shows that the word which belongs in the blank space on page 340 of the first edition, which the typist apparently could not read, is "tiers." Finally, the bibliography lists the following in four separate sections: the reviews of the first edition, articles about the introduction by H. G. Wells which appeared separately as an article, books referring to *Veranilda* and articles about it.

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This edition not only performs the important service of making *Veranilda* available in a thoroughly annotated form which leaves very few questions unanswered, but makes three exciting additions to our knowledge of the Gissing manuscripts: the preparatory notes, the sketch of the novel's continuation, and the outline of "A Vanquished Roman." These important primary materials illuminate an aspect of his accomplishment that has never been fully appreciated. — Jacob Korg

Editor's note — Dr. David Grylls has drawn my attention to an error in the printed text of *Veranilda*, on p. 343, where "Thick-willed" should read "Thickwitted." This error should have been listed on p. lxxxviii.

George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, with a new introduction by John Halperin, London: The Hogarth Press, 1987.

Which Jubilee? some prospective buyers of this new edition will wonder, just when Stanley Weintraub's deflationary *Victoria: Biography of a Queen* is being advertized. The appearance of *In the Year of Jubilee* in this new garb is well-timed, a hundred years after the Golden Jubilee which Gissing, with a seven years' perspective, showed to have been a blatant exhibition of national fatuity. Of this Jubilee and of the next, which he celebrated again in his own way by publishing *The Whirlpool*, another satirical story, we have many pictorial mementoes in those dozens of albums, coffee-table books and illustrated histories about the last two decades of the Queen's reign that have been published since the war. And they are well worth keeping on a shelf not too far from the fiction of the period. Indeed, as time passes, their visual adjuvants may become more and more useful despite the graphic power of Gissing's stories.

"I have much more hope of this new novel than I had for any of its predecessors," Gissing

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wrote to Bullen on sending the manuscript, now in the Huntington Library, where it has not been much disturbed by scholars. And John Halperin, in his five-page introduction, agrees that *In the Year of Jubilee* is one of Gissing's "finest, and easily one of his most interesting" stories. In turn, one feels prompted to agree with him, with this rider that the book's immediate predecessors, *New Grub Street* (1891), *Born in Exile* (1892) and *The Odd Women* (1893), probably stand a little above it. However, the reason why *In the Year of Jubilee* can be reckoned one of his best may not be essentially that put forward by John Halperin, a reason which has done service ever since the main outlines of Gissing's life have become public property. Indeed calling such a novel autobiographical implies an unduly flexible use of the epithet. Of course Peachey's domestic life reflects Gissing's own difficulties with his wife in his Brixton days, but

further than this it is impossible to go. *In the Year of Jubilee* is a novel with a plot and strongly imagined characters, not an autobiographical meditation, and the verbal resemblance noted by the editor between the description of Peachey's apprehension for his little son and disgust with his wife on the one hand, and Morley Roberts's account of Gissing's own feelings when he left his wife and son for the day, although fundamentally relevant, is possibly a little misleading. When Roberts wrote in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* that "he [Maitland/Gissing] often said to me, that he might return and find the baby badly injured" he may have refreshed his memory by taking a new look at his friend's novel. Indeed Gissing cannot have *often* made such confessions to Roberts for the sufficient reason that they met infrequently in the days of Gissing's second marriage.

However, this is but a slight disagreement on the nature of autobiography in the novel. There is no doubt that *In the Year of Jubilee* as a work of fiction was fertilized by its author's strong feelings on the various themes interlocked in the narrative. Like many novels of the

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1890s, this is a story concerned with married life and the New Woman, and John Halperin dilates on the by now familiar view of the story "as a sort of testing-laboratory for his own future actions," an idea which is developed at length in Gillian Tindall's *The Born Exile* (1974), but which was in fact originally expressed by John Middleton Murry in his 1956 essay on Gissing, published posthumously three years later (pp. 41-42).

Of the other themes selected by John Halperin one is especially interesting — ecology and the rampant development of advertising — which glances back to a late Trollope novel, *Marion Ray* (1881-82) and forward to H. G. Wells's social novels of the 1900s and to Orwell's interwar novels, more especially *Coming Up for Air* (1939). In the latter story, with its contrasted images, past and present, of Lower Binfield, there is something which Gissing had noted earlier in connection with Camberwell and Brixton. "*In the Year of Jubilee*," John Halperin comments, "charts the destructive spread of suburbs, and the greedy passion of entrepreneurs to 'develop' the countryside. The transformation of Camberwell and Brixton by land speculators is memorably described here. Long before Forster and Lawrence made the theme famous, Gissing decried the ruin of country life by commerce. In *In the Year of Jubilee* he portrays the ravaging of earth and field by "builders' refuse," the felling of trees by "the speculative axe," and "the defacement of the landscape by placards." George Bowling, one feels, should have added Gissing to the list of authors he read at Twelve Mile Dump during the Great War. It seems more than merely hypothetical that Orwell had read *In the Year of Jubilee* before he reviewed the Watergate Classics edition, together with *The Whirlpool*, for a periodical which predeceased him. Had he lived long enough to write the biography which his correspondence reveals he was contemplating, Gissing would probably not have supped as late as Thomas Seccombe predicted he would. But in this context as in others "better late than never" is an acceptable motto, and

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this new edition, with its short survey of Gissing's life and of the novel's themes, will doubtless help to enlarge the novelist's audience. The text is offset from the Lawrence & Bullen 1895 edition, the proofs of which were read by Gissing. No better choice could have been made. —

Pierre Coustillas

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Elaine Showalter, New York and Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library, 1983.

Gissing criticism has gone through a series of phases since the writer's death and each of his books has had a fortune of its own. There was a time when *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and the other late volumes of *belles lettres*, *By the Ionian Sea* and the Dickens criticism, towered above the novels and short stories. *Henry Ryecroft* was then a steady seller and the later

works were commonly thought to have a better chance of being kept in print than the working-class novels of the 1880s and the major, more polished, studies of middle-class life of the 1890s up to *The Whirlpool*. This must have been the opinion of the general editor of the World's Classics in 1929 when he chose to include in his series *Veranilda* and *Will Warburton* rather than, say, *New Grub Street*, and *Born in Exile*. *Henry Ryecroft* held its own until the mid-1960s when abruptly the book was eclipsed by the whole of the fiction, *New Grub Street* emerging as Gissing's most memorable contribution to the English novel. But the pre-eminence of this story is now being challenged, especially in America, by *The Odd Women*. A remarkable series of articles, chapters in critical studies and introductions to new editions of the novel have thrashed out the ambiguities of its characters and plot — altogether more than enough material to fill a casebook — and the present edition offers tangible evidence of the high favour the story has been enjoying for some time.

This Meridian Classic presents several characteristics which differentiate it from other

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editions of the book currently available. The text has been pleasantly reset, it is introduced by a distinguished commentator on feminist literature, Elaine Showalter, who is Professor of English at Rutgers University and well-known as an author of *A Literature of Their Own*, and the story is accompanied by a selected but useful critical bibliography.

Like Deirdre David's article on "Ideologies of Patriarchy, Feminism and Fiction in *The Odd Women*," Elaine Showalter's twenty-page introduction is a thorough, well-informed, stimulating discussion of a novel which, for years, was regarded superficially as a dusty period piece. Her approach is historical, biographical and literary, and its quiet tone is refreshing after the passionate misreadings of one or two female commentators of the new shrieking sisterhood of the 1970s. The story is discussed mainly as a reflection of contemporary realities, that is the condition of woman in the 1880s and 1890s, but its relevance to present-day feminism is constantly in the critic's mind. In this respect there is a commendable correspondence between Elaine Showalter's perceptive discussion and the description of the novel on the back cover: "Written in 1893 [actually the year before], *The Odd Women* seems to be a century ahead of its time. An amazingly prescient novel, it vividly reminds us that feminism is not a new concern as it brings into sharp focus the dilemmas that continue to surround the struggle of women today." The wealth of ideas discussed and illustrated in the story, either by the two feminist figures, Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn, or by characters of the old school like Widdowson, is efficiently connected with the credos of William R. Greg, Ruskin and Eliza Lynn Linton. In his essay "Why are Women Redundant?" Greg had argued that the problem of the surplus women could be solved by emigration because, in his eyes, it was the heavier emigration of men that largely created the demographic problem and imperilled the natural balance between the sexes. "The one thing to avoid," commented A. James Hammerton ten years ago (in *A Widening Sphere*),

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"was the feminist solution of making single life as easy, attractive, and lucrative as it was for men, and thereby encouraging further 'redundancy' of women." There is no evidence that Edmund Widdowson, in the novel, has read Greg, but he is familiar with Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, and, since Gissing had read some of Eliza Lynn Linton's works, perhaps the anti-feminist views for which she was well-known also contributed to inform the doctrine which he has Widdowson try so disastrously to put into practice. Anyway her defining the "womanly woman" as "quiet, unselfish, modest, submissive, unambitious, and passionless" (Elaine Showalter's words) forcibly recall the sentimental construct which, in Widdowson's mind, has replaced the image of womanhood offered by common observation.

The most valuable feature of this introduction, next to its being well-documented and lucidly conducted, is its dispassionate approach to Gissing's attitude to women. Elaine Showalter opportunely reminds us that, in his own eyes, he was not a misogynist, and she quotes



from a letter to Gabrielle Fleury a passage which is crucial to an understanding of his position: "The truth is, of course, I detest women of a certain kind all the more because my ideal of womanhood is so very high." His bitterness was the natural consequence of his unfortunate experiences, in and outside matrimony, of "women of a certain kind." The conclusion of the novel, with Rhoda saying of Mary and herself: "We flourish like the green bay-tree," is an index to Gissing's confidence in his odd women, in the future as he defined it in his oft-quoted letter to Bertz of 2 June 1893: "My demand for female 'equality' simply means that I am convinced there will be no social peace until women are intellectually trained very much as men are. More than half the misery of life is due to the ignorance and childishness of women."

Unlike some latter-day out-and-outers, Elaine Showalter sees the complexity of Gissing's attitude, and she stresses his irony, this quality which he despaired of seeing recognized by

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critics: "*My motives are too subtle. You know that I constantly use irony; and this is never understood; it is all taken in the most stupid literal sense*" (letter to Gabrielle Fleury of 16 March 1899). Her assessment of Rhoda's strengths and weaknesses, of Everard as a seducer who can sometimes be as cool and cynical as Alec d'Urberville, but at other times genuinely delighted by Rhoda's intelligence and energy; the taking into consideration those anecdotes he comes up with, in the early part of the novel, about the failed marriages of his brother Tom, Poppleton and Orchard; but also her comment on Monica's use of stereotypic terms being as vapid as her husband's clichés — all this testifies to a determination to take into account both the weaknesses revealed by all the characters, male and female, and Gissing's own hesitant attitudes. That the book is an artistic success surely owes much to the narrator's capacity to rouse our sympathy at crucial moments for characters whom we do not greatly like, notably Widdowson whose bewilderment and pathetic feebleness are so finely conveyed. Widdowson is a true victim of circumstances, that is, of education and temperament as well as of the quandary into which sex-starvation has thrown him. He must have had a number of equivalents in actual life at a time when a great difference in age between partners could mean a much greater difference in mentality than earlier in the century. Seen in this light, the suggested comparison with Sue Bridehead's husband, the schoolmaster Phillotson, is very interesting, but whether Hardy read Gissing's novel is uncertain. His notebooks and memorandum books edited by Richard H. Taylor and Lennart A. Björk give no clue.

It is to be hoped that this edition will enjoy, like the others currently available, a great success. Elaine Showalter's introduction will doubtless help a good deal. It is a valuable contribution to the growing body of criticism on *The Odd Women*. The book, so reasonably priced, should be on the shelves of all readers of Gissing. — Pierre Coustillas

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George Gissing, *Thyrza*, translated by Bianca Zamfirescu, and with a preface by Stefan Stoenescu, Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1985.

Of Gissing's novels *Thyrza* is the second to have been translated into Romanian. *New Grub Street* preceded it by seven years in a version by the same translator, Bianca Zamfirescu. It seems that once aroused, the Romanian reader's interest in Gissing will continue to grow, and the translation of some of his other novels will follow in due course. This is certainly proof of the novelist's appeal to the present-day reader; proof of the kind that endorses Fredric Jameson's estimate of George Gissing as "an incomparable writer whose unique novels have only begun to be rediscovered in the present decade" (*The Political Unconscious*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 186).

With regard to Gissing's reception in Romania, it is discovery rather than rediscovery that is the suitable word; yet, in a critical sense, the latter term can hardly be less appropriate. The Gissing to whom the reader is introduced in the Romanian version of *Thyrza* is the novelist of

deep sociological insight that recent criticism has felt bound to explore. No longer in need of supplying bibliographical information — enough material of the kind is embedded in the comprehensive commentary in the preface to *New Grub Street* — Stefan Stoenescu, who writes the preface to *Thyrza*, has the greater advantage of focusing on the work. Well-read in the field, he takes stock of such contributions as those of Mabel Collins Donnelly, Jacob Korg and John Gross, following in the wake of Q. D. Leavis's crucial essay of 1938. This last is duly considered.

In addition, Stoenescu brings along familiarity with Victorian and modern literature to bear on his subject, as well as a keen sense of the forces shaping novelistic forms. By placing the novelist alongside his contemporaries Meredith and Hardy, and, on the other hand, alongside the moderns Conrad and Lawrence, he is able to highlight Gissing's particular achievement.

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Gissing's affinities with French and Russian writers, especially Turgenev, enlarge the context against which his contribution is defined.

His more general claims are further substantiated by the commentary on *Thyrza* which occupies the largest part of this densely packed preface. Without challenging *New Grub Street* as Gissing's masterpiece, Stoenescu's approach to the earlier writing tends to do it more justice than do the critics with whom he is acquainted. One even senses his reluctance when admitting lapses in the novel so insistently brought to notice by previous criticism. *Thyrza* simply strikes him as "an impressive epic construction of ingenious architecture achieved by unexpected articulations and ways of access from one plot level to another." The ways in which Gissing controls his novel, narratively speaking, stand proof of his "tactfulness." *Thyrza* is no exception to the moralizing tendency underlying Gissing's work; it is notable, however, that the main characters, Gilbert Grail and Walter Egremont, gain sensibly in autonomy and take over a good deal of the weight of the argument.

In focusing on these two characters, Stoenescu brings home to the reader the point that both of them are projections of two related sides of Gissing's personality. The writer largely transfers to them "his concern with the development of anthropology and the history of religions in which his agnosticism is grounded." The status of the proletarian and of the intellectual of the leisured class, which Gissing ascribes to his characters respectively, sets their relationship in a cultural as well as social perspective. By taking into account a number of historical references — 1880, the time of action, *Sesame and Lilies* and its impact on the readers, the Education Act of 1870, thereby fixing the historical dimension, Stoenescu calls attention to the historical awareness that informs the beliefs of the characters and determines the course of action.

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Of these it is *Sesame and Lilies* that arouses his special interest. Egremont's view of literature as a means of social reform and his abortive attempt to put it into effect are looked upon as an implicit commentary on Ruskin's book. Light is shed on "the relation of subtle irony" in which *Thyrza* stands to *Sesame and Lilies* and, generally, to the trend in Victorian thought that made a point of bringing together "Hellas" and "Lambeth."

Scrutinized with as deep insight, the space dimension of the novel yields a remarkable power of suggestiveness. Not only London topography, but Egremont's itinerary from Ullswater to Eastbourne, from London to America turns out to be integrated into a pattern of contrasts that largely contribute to the significance of the novel.

An approach to *Thyrza* along the lines suggested by the commentary on the setting might result in shedding light on the romantic quality of Gissing's writing. For, it is the belief of the present writer that to a great extent *Thyrza* depends for its effect on elements commonly associated with the romance rather than with the realistic novel. This is not to deny the historical awareness with which the work is informed, but only to call attention to the kind of imaginative projection that history is given in *Thyrza*.

The weight carried by the atmosphere may well bear out this point. Mainly a matter of chromatic interplay, it takes its distinguishing note from a too-sharply outlined contrast between “lights and shadows” as from the pervasive shadows. The lights in Gissing’s novel are those of dimly-lit rooms; and this gives “Lights and shadows,” a chapter title in *Thyrza*, a meaning utterly different from “Sun and Shadow,” the opening section of *Little Dorrit*, which it recalls.

To respond to the romantic quality of *Thyrza* is also to advance a different view of the part played by Mrs. Ormonde, and consequently to exonerate Gissing from giving her such an

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extensive treatment. Her role as stepmother/godmother, which Stoenescu mentions in passing, brings her close to a figure of romance. That her functions (donor/villain) are the reverse of each other turns out to be particularly relevant when notice is taken that they involve the characters’ intentions and, on the other hand, the effects they have when carried out. Besides, in assuming the part of Providence in her relation to *Thyrza* and Egremont, she has some reason other than apprehension that the marriage of the two young people will be an unhappy one. “A third reason is — that I have long ago made up my mind whom he is to marry” (XXVIII), she confesses to Mr. Newthorpe, and her determination on this point appears as strong as Mrs. Gereth’s on a similar scheme in Henry James’s novel *The Spoils of Poynton*. (In fact analogies between *Thyrza* and James’s novels do not stop here; Hyacinth Robinson, for instance, resembles Gilbert Grail in many respects.) Moreover, Mrs. Ormonde’s association with death and loss, evident in the black clothes she is wearing, reflects ironically on her name Ormonde. It is a way of suggesting that the promise held in view by the world of gold, “The Golden Prospect,” may be deceptive and even potentially destructive. Gilbert Grail — the name, too, has romantic overtones — has his share of them; and so does *Thyrza*. That in his relation to Grail, Egremont reduplicates Mrs. Ormonde’s role as Providence (“You become a sort of providence to a man” (XIV), Annabel Newthorpe warns him) is further proof of the significant part played by Mrs. Ormonde within the overall pattern of the novel.

Last but not least, it should be added that the Romanian version hardly fails to do justice to the original. Bianca Zamfirescu’s experience in the field — she has become known to the Romanian reading public as a translator of a number of volumes, including among others Hardy’s *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Dreiser’s *Jennie Gerhardt* — and, more especially, her previous rendering of Gissing’s masterpiece, have told

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most happily on the present achievement. As a result, the Romanian reader has no difficulty in taking measure of the book’s stylistic register.

The highly marked referential quality of Gissing’s prose that leaves little room for metaphors, while raising few problems of metaphorical equivalence, is no less challenging in some other respects. Despite the apparent slow-paced narrative flow — the effect of well-balanced sentences — *Thyrza* is not lacking in variety. For the most part this is due to the shift in tone. As the preface underlines, the narrator’s commentary ranges from sympathetic involvement with the ideas he cherishes to cold lucidity in arguing their validity. The Romanian version has faithfully rendered this variation, just as, through corresponding structures of indirect interior monologue, it has given an accurate transposition of the moments of crisis in the lives of the characters. The translator’s eye for the heavily charged functional word in the descriptive passages and her gift in finding a Romanian equivalent as functional make it possible for such human landscape as Lambeth market-place or the Caledonian Road to emerge in all their vitality and repugnant squalor respectively. (Contrary to what Fredric Jameson is tempted to believe, the city in *Thyrza* has not yet been completely drained of vitality.)

What to the present writer seems to be a loss in the Romanian version is the impossibility in a number of instances to preserve intact the significance of a key-word. The character’s name is a case in point: similarly, the imagery taking its force from the interplay of light and shade has

been sometimes sacrificed for the sake of clarity or some other reason. This is to be regretted, especially in a chapter title like "The Golden Prospect."

However, the merits of the Romanian version by far surpass its lapses or, rather, the loss frequently inherent in any rendering from one language into another; and when all is given due consideration, Bianca Zamfirescu's achievement positively deserves to be praised. — Geta Dumitriu, University of Bucharest.

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### New Grub Street in Germany

P. F. Kropholler  
Paris

The publication of *New Grub Street* in Germany under the title *Zeilengeld*<sup>1</sup> received a good deal of attention in the German press. Several newspapers devoted detailed accounts to the novel and the general consensus was that the publication is fully justified. One reviewer (*Südwest Presse*) went so far as to say that a long-standing obligation has now been fulfilled. There is also agreement on the main theme of the novel, namely the commercialization of literature in the 19th century. This appears from headlines such as "Against a surrender to the masses," "The miseries of literary prostitution" and "Writing for survival." As is to be expected, opinions are more divided on other aspects of the novel.

The following is a selection of some of the views put forward by the German reviewers.

*Die Rheinpfalz* considers this the perfect choice for the series "Die Andere Bibliothek." The novel shows the defeat of creative talent (Reardon) as against the triumph of business methods (Milvain). Biffen's fate is even more tragic. Unlike Reardon, he makes no concession to popular taste. His suicide is not an act of despair. It shows his sense of reality. As he does not aim at success, he cannot be said to have failed.

The *Nürnberger Zeitung* also looks upon Reardon as the man who was unable to satisfy the taste of the 19th century market, which was dominated by the half-educated. Both he and Biffen might represent Gissing. Also Alfred Yule, snobbish, old-fashioned, and ashamed of his lower-class wife, might stand for his creator. Milvain is of course the most adaptable figure (in the sense of Darwin, Adam Smith and Spencer). This does not make him despicable and therefore he may even be right when he deplores his fellow-writers' lack of practical skill.

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Gissing's grasp of his art appears from the way in which these characters are interrelated.

*Der Tagesspiegel* is exceptional in criticizing the physical production of the book. It describes Gissing as an epigone of Dickens (without the latter's irony and humour). The novel is very readable, but the author seems to be guilty of exaggeration. Even in the late 19th century things cannot have been as bad as that. The reviewer wonders whether there are any omissions in the translation. The editor Clement Fadge never appears *in propria persona*.

The Berlin *Tageszeitung* makes some wide-ranging remarks about the situation of the free-lance writer after the industrialization of literature. Even *New Grub Street* does some "puffing up" inasmuch as Gissing describes his own working-methods in the character of Reardon. He has exposed the everyday barbarism of the literary trade.

The *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* looks especially at the story of Reardon's difficulties. It is obviously based on Gissing's personal experience but seems exaggerated. Reardon's relations with Amy are naive and sentimental. However, the reviewer praises the description of literary activity. The book retains its topical interest since conditions have hardly changed.

The *Stuttgarter Zeitung* calls it a novel about novels. Reardon and Biffen are opposed to

Milvain, the trendsetter. Though long-winded the novel is fascinating. The more text, the more money. This is perhaps even more true today than in late Victorian London.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* stresses the importance of personal experience for the writer and consequently the interest of the biographical approach to literature. Gissing is the most autobiographical of English novelists. *New Grub Street* can be best appreciated if one knows something about the author's personal circumstances. In the style of French naturalism

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Gissing describes the struggle for life among second-rate authors. There follows an outline of Gissing's career in which he is said to have made an unsuccessful attempt to study at Jena. He went through life with the unsuccessful outsider's feelings of rancour.

This novel is summed up in the defeat of the artistic conscience. It is of profound interest to all who are engaged in the literary trade. At the same time the reviewer considers it long-winded and lacking in humour. Gissing, who was a follower of Dickens, must have been a man full of complexes and prejudices. At times his complaints about human depravity contain an unpleasant mixture of sentimentality and complacency.

The situation of the journalist has not improved since the late 19th century. All in all Gissing's standpoint is that of a pessimist. The reviewer complains of wooden dialogues and slow-moving action. The characters are in no way revolutionary firebrands. The pictures of the clever essayist and the pliable widow deserve praise.

There are many novels about authors but hardly any that set forth with such monotonous clarity the corrupting influence exerted on the author's mind by the urge to write.

Gissing may not be an English Balzac, but this novel is a social document with a remarkable power of expression. The reviewer finally congratulates the editor of the series on his excellent choice.

A Swiss newspaper, the *Zürcher Zeitung*, devotes considerable attention to this publication. The reviewer points out that the struggle for life among books is now as fierce as that among human beings. He regards Milvain as a central figure. His (Milvain's) words on the literary industry might have been spoken in our time.

Gissing has remained almost unknown in German speaking countries. His life-story is a guarantee for the truth of what he has to say on the literary industry. He, too, was a marginal

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figure in contemporary literature. This accounts for the ambivalence in *New Grub Street*. The novel means much more than its — superficially speaking — trivial plot suggests. It is a merciless exposure of the literary trade. The influence of Dickens and Balzac is evident from the description of the characters and their setting. Accordingly the action shows plenty of variety, to such an extent even that the fundamental contrast — unscrupulous commercialization versus artistic conscience — is not sufficiently placed in the foreground. The situation is, however, summed up in Marian Yule's reflection about the burden of too many books which only lead to many more books.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* praises the description of the conditions that prevail in the literary market. The anti-heroes fail as a result of these conditions, each in his own way. Gissing himself had known the hardships he describes. Those who dream of literary success without private means may profit from a reading of this novel.

The *Frankfurter Rundschau* devotes considerable space to the novel. Its article, headed "Lost illusions," describes Gissing's personal situation when he wrote it. Among the principal characters, it is Reardon who has most in common with the author. The main theme of the book is the idea of money. Its second theme is rooted in Gissing's own life, namely the effect of financial troubles on love and marriage. The reviewer here thinks of Alfred Yule. However, while being deeply involved in his novel, Gissing does not lose his self-control. Here the reviewer points to a connection with Ibsen, an author whom Gissing admired, though he thought

Ibsen might have made a greater impact as a novelist. The dialogue of the characters, especially the women, is excellent. They display a very English self-control and self-assurance. Indeed the author shows himself to be a keen observer of women. Among them Marian Yule is the most impressive. In her love-scenes with Milvain the formalized tone of English conversation is maintained throughout. Deep down Gissing is something of a dramatist in that each character

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presents a certain aspect of the author.

Though the structure of the novel is so clear-cut there is nothing stiff or set about the characters, especially linguistically.

A parallel is drawn between Gissing and the German author Arno Holz, who also deals with the situation of the starving artist. It is especially in England that the author has to contend with the pressures of industrialized literature because the novel there first became an industrialized article of commerce. While it was held on the Continent that riches corrupt, Reardon's conclusion is that all vices stem from poverty. Obviously the latter view is Gissing's own. It shows the author's ambivalent attitude vis-à-vis his characters. It also helps to explain Milvain, in whom good and bad are blended.

The reviewer in the newspapers which form part of the *Südwest Presse* points out that the novel first appeared on the threshold of cultural industrialization. Although it criticizes the conditions of the literary market, it follows the conventions of the 19th century novel. The chief characters — Reardon and Milvain — both aim at literary success. The latter's victory is emphasized by his marriage to Reardon's widow. Although Gissing is aware of what the market requires, he presents a literary programme in the success of which he does not believe. This programme is set out by Biffen, who aims at absolute realism. The editor of the series has suggested that this kind of realism was achieved thirty years later in *Ulysses*. The reviewer would rather go back to Gissing's 18th century predecessors, Sterne and Swift. He considers the English title — *New Grub Street* — as a further indicator of the 18th century.

Reardon's tragedy lies in the conflict between his self-esteem and his actual living conditions. As for Biffen, when he is caught in a fire, his first thought is to save his manuscript rather than a drunken neighbour. Herein the author shows his link with the bourgeois class

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whom he despises. What we find in Gissing is a contemporary form of historicism overflowing with self-pity. The supposed criticism of the social effects of industrialization soon turns into a transparent façade. Gissing declares that "the difference between the life of well-to-do educated people and that of the uneducated poor is not greater in visible details than in the minutiae of privacy." He forgets to add that prosperity leads to education and not the other way round. In addition, Gissing intensely disliked the arrival on the scene of the modern woman, whose coming coincided with the development of the new journalism. However, even modern woman is not immune from the stirrings of the heart.

The novel does not reach its height in a formal conclusion but in a subsidiary episode, when Milvain's shadow, Whelpdale, has hit on the idea of a popular paper called *Chit-Chat*, intended for the quarter-educated. The reviewer remarks that it is always a pleasure to be present at the fulfilment of a Utopia.

1. George Gissing: *Zeilengeld*, Die Andere Bibliothek, Nordlingen: Verlag Franz Greno, 1986.

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Letter

The publisher of the *Gissing Newsletter* has received the following letter from Mr. J. R. Hammond, Vice-President of the H. G. Wells Society:

Dear Mr. Kohler,

Pierre Coustillas quite rightly takes Anthony West to task for the factual errors about Gissing in his biography of his father, H. G. Wells. However, I have just been reading John Halperin's much lauded biography of Gissing and feel I must point out some equally misleading

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errors about Wells.

On page 237 of the paperback edition (Oxford University Press) we are told that Wells "had once been a struggling author who lived in a flat in Mornington Road near Regent's Park and had a wife named Amy (since divorced)." Reference to any standard biography of Wells would have told Mr. Halperin that Amy was Wells's *second* wife, not his first. It was his first wife, Isabel, whom Wells divorced in 1895. On page 349 we learn that "the death of George Ponderevo in Wells's *Tono-Bungay* is a highly personalised picture of Gissing's last days." In fact George Ponderevo is the narrator of the novel: the death described is that of George's uncle, Edward Ponderevo. On page 360 we learn that "Wells lived until 1945." In fact he died in 1946.

Apart from these errors of fact the references to Wells seem to me to be grossly unfair to his memory. Most unfair of all is Mr. Halperin's assertion that "Just a week after Gissing's death, Wells began the campaign of vilification in which he was to persevere for the next four decades." All the evidence I have seen shows that, on the contrary, Wells went out of his way to sustain Gissing's literary reputation and did all he could to ensure that adequate financial support was forthcoming for Gissing's family.

The published correspondence between the two novelists shows that theirs was a warm friendship and that Gissing was greatly indebted to Wells. In Gissing's own words (in a letter to Mrs. Wells): "I regard H.G. as the friend of a lifetime; I can't do without him; he *must* be his old self again. My debt to his kindness, his good humour, his wit, is infinite."

Yours faithfully,

J. R. Hammond.

Editor's Note: Mr. Hammond is of course quite right concerning the factual errors in *George*

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*Gissing: A Life in Books*. They should be corrected, together with others which do not concern H. G. Wells. John Halperin was quite willing to make corrections for the recently issued paperback edition. However, the trouble is that Oxford University Press — a practice not uncommon with publishers — has ignored the author's request.

As regards what John Halperin calls Wells's "campaign of vilification," there have always been two opposite points of view. On the whole biographers and critics of Wells on the one hand, of Gissing on the other, have tended to emphasize the conflicting aspects of the relationship. I, for one, see the affair as a very complex one. I would not like to minimize Wells's generosity to Gissing until the latter's death — there is abundant evidence of it — but Wells was not as tactful with Gissing's relatives as he could have been. There is a wealth of unpublished correspondence and other material on Gissing's side which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to accept without serious reservations the image of Wells as the generous friend, faithful to Gissing's memory, who only met with ingratitude from Algernon and Ellen Gissing, Clara Collet, Gabrielle Fleury and others. There is in particular a painful account by Gabrielle

Fleury, in a letter to Eduard Bertz, of Wells's behaviour at Gissing's deathbed. In December 1903 Wells still had in mind the image of the underfed man who had stayed with him two years and a half before, and he doubtless meant well when he disregarded the doctor's instructions. Besides one cannot help feeling that Wells's rejected introduction to *Veranilda* was just the sort of piece that was bound to embarrass, if not antagonize, Gissing's relatives and friends. And neither the review of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* he published in *Rhythm* nor *Experiment in Autobiography* gives a congenial image of Gissing. But Wells certainly did his best to ensure that Gissing's sons were granted a pension on the Civil List in 1904, and he bravely supported Algernon Gissing's application for a grant from the Royal Literary Fund.

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Gissing's own words (in a letter to Mrs. Wells) quoted by Mr. Hammond reflects the sunny side of the Gissing-Wells relationship. Most certainly they should, in any assessment of it, be borne in mind.

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#### Notes and News

A book recently published and well worth buying is *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. I 1904-1912, edited by Andrew McNeillie for the Hogarth Press. This nicely produced volume has one, possibly two, surprises in store for anyone interested in Gissing. An article on the Gissing-Woolf connection will appear in our next number. Volumes III and V of this collected edition of the *Essays* will also contain essays on Gissing.

Readers who were dismayed or angered by the account of Gissing given by Anthony West in his *H. G. Wells* will welcome the new biography of Wells by David C. Smith. Patrick Parrinder writes that this is "a biography based on exemplary scholarship," whose author, a Professor of History at the University of Maine, Orono, "has perceived a gap in the available literature on Wells and has amply and magisterially filled it." David Smith, in his passages on Gissing, is conscious of venturing where Wellsians fear to tread and he does stumble several times, but his book will be read with profit. His knowledge of the literature on Wells and Gissing is remarkably up to date.

The first printing of the paperback edition of John Halperin's *Gissing: A Life in Books* offers the same text as the hardback edition for the simple reason that it consists of sheets that

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had been left unbound in 1982. This means for instance that where readers are confronted with a portrait of Margaret Gissing they are in fact looking at her sister Ellen and vice versa. No one who is familiar with publishers' practices will expect them to throw away 1,000 copies in sheets because reviewers and readers have pointed to a number of factual mistakes in the book as it first appeared. Many people, including some publishers, think money more valuable than truth or at least an honest concern for accuracy. It was hoped that when the book was reprinted, as it was last month, Oxford University Press would offer the public a revised edition, but no change has been made in the second printing. This is a deplorable situation.

The Macmillan Press will be publishing next June a collection of essays by John Halperin, *Jane Austen's Lovers and Other Studies in Fiction and History from Austen to Le Carré* (£27.50). This volume will contain "How Gissing Read Dickens."

A regrettable error, for which the editor disclaims all responsibility, was made in our



January number, on p. 45. What Dennis Shruballs had said was that Hudson arrived in England on "3 May 1874, not 1876."

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### Recent Publications

#### Volumes

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Marcia R. Fox, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, [1986]. Pp. x + 336. Pictorial paperback, \$3.25. This is the ninth impression of the Norton edition, first published in 1971, and the format is the

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same as that of the eighth impression, A note on the copyright page reads: "Published simultaneously in Canada by Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario L3R 1BA."

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Margaret Walters, London: Virago, 1987. Pp xiv + 336. Pictorial paperback, £3.95. This is the fourth impression of the Virago edition, first published in 1980.

John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books*, London: Oxford University Press, 1987. Pp. xvi + 426. Pictorial paperback, £6.95. The hardback edition was published in 1982.

#### Articles, reviews, etc.

Ivan Melada, *Guns for Sale: War and Capitalism in English Literature, 1851-1939*, Jefferson and London: McFarland, 1983. Chapter V is devoted to Gissing and *The Crown of Life*.

Deirdre David, "Ideologies of Patriarchy, Feminism and Fiction in *The Odd Women*," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. X, no 1, Spring 1984, pp. 117-39. This is one of the most perceptive articles that have been published on *The Odd Women* in the last two decades.

Andreas Braun, "Ware Literatur: George Gissing's *Zeilengeld*," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 3 March 1986. Other reviews of the German translation of *New Grub Street* appeared in the *Tageszeitung* (Berlin), 4 April (Michael Braun); the *Tagesspiegel*, 13 April (Heinz Ohff); the *Schwäbische Donauzeitung*, *NWZ Göppingen* and *Geislinger Zeitung*, 6 May (same review by Peter Gössel); the *Rheinpfalz*, 28 May (Detlev Janik); the *Nürnberger Zeitung*, 6 September (Joseph Schiessl); the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 11 November (Wolfgang Bittner).

Mary Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. XXX, no. 1, Autumn 1986, pp. 51-76. Refers to *The Odd Women*.

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Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century British Novel*, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, Second Series. London: Edward Arnold, 1986. Two essays contain references to Gissing.

Andrew McNeillie (ed.), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. I, 1904-1912, London: The Hogarth Press, 1986. Contains three essays of Gissing interest. Andrew McNeillie has also

edited the new edition of *The Common Reader* in Volume II of which Virginia Woolf's best known essay on Gissing (beginning "Do you know ...") appears on pp. 220-25.

David C. Smith, *H. G. Wells, Desperately Mortal*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. Gissing's relationship with Wells is reviewed at some length and one of his 1901 portraits — that which was apparently first published in the 1935 edition of *Workers in the Dawn* — is reproduced between pp. 172 and 173, together with portraits of Arnold Bennett and Joseph Conrad.

Anon., "Paperback Choice," *Observer* (Observer Arts and Book Review), 18 January 1987, p. 23. Notice of John Halperin's *Gissing: A Life in Books*.

M. S. Vogeler, "Language and Literature," *Choice*, January 1987, p. 761. Review of David Grylls's *The Paradox of Gissing*.

Anon., "Fiction," *British Book News*, January 1987, p. 16 of the yellow pages. *In the Year of Jubilee* is briefly described.

Pierre Coustillas, "Reviews," *The Library*, March, 1987, pp. 75-77. Review of Michael Collie's *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study*. A shorter piece by the same reviewer on the same book was published in *Études Anglaises* for January-March 1987, pp. 94-95.

Ian Fletcher (ed.), *British Poetry and Prose 1807-1905*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. Contains "The Foolish Virgin," a well-known short story, which was originally published

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in *The Yellow Book*. Gissing also appears in the Introduction and in the biographical and critical material at the end of the book.

