

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

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

Volume XXVI, Number 3
July, 1990

-- 1 --

CONTENTS

Morley Roberts and Eduard Bertz on Gissing and Whitman, by Paul Mattheisen	2
Book Reviews	9
Notes and News	20
Recent Publications	26

Editorial Board

Pierre Coustillas, Editor, University of Lille
Shigeru Koike, Tokyo Woman’s Christian University
Jacob Korg, University of Washington, Seattle
Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor:
10, rue Gay-Lussac, 59110 La Madeleine, France,
and all other correspondence to: C. C. KOHLER,
12, Horsham Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2JL, England.

Subscriptions

Private Subscribers: £5.00 per annum
Libraries: £8.00 per annum

-- 2 --

Morley Roberts and Eduard Bertz
on Gissing and Whitman.

Paul F. Mattheisen
State University of New York,
Binghamton

On September 8, 1883, George Gissing wrote a letter to his brother Algernon which did not appear in the 1927 edition of letters to his family. Portions of it were finally published in *George Gissing on Fiction*,¹ where the editors quite rightly cite it as an example of Gissing’s

attempt to steer Algernon away from the writing of fiction and into the more practical form of the essay. Still, even if that were his intention, the letter is quite startling in the extraordinary evaluation he gave to his brother's essay style, speaking of "a terseness, a sturdy vigour, a delightful purity of language, which I cannot sufficiently admire or praise," and asking for a second copy which he could send to a woman who "would not be shamed by your own ideal." Gissing commented elsewhere on his brother's writing, but never again with this access of high praise. Here the occasion was a letter which Algernon had written to the *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, and now that Clifford Brook has given us the text of it,² we can see that Algernon's "ideal" was a somewhat high Victorian view of the purity of women which his older brother must have found at least discouraging, and so we are led to admire Gissing's ability to separate his brother's style from the topic which engaged his exertions. It is clear, as he said, that he stressed Algernon's "advance upon earlier compositions," and it is to his credit that he never encouraged his brother quite so lavishly in writing fiction.

When the full text of Gissing's letter is published in the second volume of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, currently in progress by the Ohio University Press, Gissing readers

-- 3 --

will be more interested perhaps in another paragraph, one which introduces the still unresolved question of Gissing's early acquaintance with the works of Walt Whitman. It is in fact the earliest evidence of Gissing's attitude towards the American writer, and it records an unexpected degree of enthusiasm towards the poet, if not towards the poetry:

I think the only news I have to send you is, – that since my illness I have ceased the torture of shaving, & shall henceforth obey Walt Whitman, whose ideal is the "bearded" man, & with whom "shaven" is an epithet of contempt. An amazing man that Whitman. I suppose you don't know much of him?
(MS Yale University Library.)

Since his friend Eduard Bertz, as we are now aware, had read Whitman even before he went to England, and continued to develop his strong attachment to the *Leaves of Grass* during his two-year residence in America (1881-1883), Gissing probably had been influenced by Bertz, on his recent return to England, in this enthusiasm for the "unshaven" poet. But in later criticism that important aspect of Gissing's friendship with Bertz remained unrecorded and unexplored, leaving a vacant field wide open to the tread of anyone who cared to rush in with a claim to an early formative influence. On two occasions it was Morley Roberts who claimed to have been such a critical instrument in Gissing's reluctant conversion to the barbaric American. In *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* he made only a brief statement: "The only very modern writer that he took to was Walt Whitman, and the trouble I had in getting him to see anything in him was amazing, though at last he succumbed and was characteristically enthusiastic" (p. 297). No date, of course, was assigned to that event. Many years later, in his introduction to the 1927 reprint of *Thyrza*, this modest statement became far more elaborate and then was directed specifically to that novel. Roberts had returned from America very late in 1886, while Gissing

-- 4 --

was still at work on *Thyrza*, and in this introduction he claims to have had "a certain influence" upon the character of Egremont, in the chapter entitled "Three Letters" – letters which Egremont "is supposed to write from the United States." He provides the following description of it:

I had, however, the good fortune to bring *Leaves of Grass* to Gissing, with

many doubts as to what he, so prosodically learned, would think of Whitman's unconventional, rhymeless, and revolutionary work. It always took some courage to force upon him anything in any way out of the great literary tradition. He took the volume with visible distaste. Yes, he had heard of the man. Was he really any good? Of course my opinion was not wholly without value, but was I not sometimes too enthusiastic about new things? He recalled such a case. But, and here he sighed, if I insisted on reading something aloud I might do so. His consent was grudging, his whole attitude discouraging. And yet when I had read bits of Whitman for about ten minutes without any obvious signs of weariness in the listener, and looked up for his opinion, he held out his hand for the book, and presently said that he would like me to leave it with him. The result may be seen in the beginning of Egremont's second letter.

Roberts then quotes that portion of Egremont's letter to Mrs. Ormonde which supposedly supports his claim:

"I am sending you Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass.' I see from your last letter that you have not yet got the book, and have it you must. It is idle to say that you cannot take up new things, that you doubt if he has any significance for you, and so on. You have heart and brain, therefore his significance will be profound."

Careful scholars have long been aware of the difficulties in determining the factual

-- 5 --

authenticity of Roberts's fictionalized biography, and even at the time it was published H. G. Wells denounced it as "downright bad, careless in statement, squalid in effect, poor as criticism, weakly planned and entirely without literary distinction."³ There are other instances of Roberts's tendency to self-aggrandizement in writing of his friend: in his introduction to the 1928 Nash and Grayson edition of *Demos*, for example, he spins out an elaborate theory as to how he gradually came to identify, through traits of style, his friend's authorship of this anonymous novel, which he found by accident in a San Francisco bookstore, although his letter to Gissing of July 5, 1886, establishes the fact that he knew the authorship of it even before he entered the store.⁴ But in the case of this introduction to *Thyrza*, even the least skeptical reader must view with caution such a freshly detailed recollection, written twenty-four years after Gissing's death and forty-one years after the event, in which every nuance of Gissing's attitude is dramatically represented, even to the exact moment of the sigh. After having stirred up the literary world with his account of his friendship with the more famous author, Roberts would of course have an interest in so enhancing his own reputation as an influence on the creation of the very novel for which he was now writing an introduction. But since he unaccountably (perhaps even conveniently) lost most of Gissing's early letters to him we cannot look to the correspondence for corroboration.

For Gissing's interest in Whitman, however, we can turn to Eduard Bertz, who had taken an extraordinary interest in Whitman's poetry ever since he first read a German translation, and who in later years wrote a good deal about Whitman and something about Gissing's early response to the American poet. To Gissing scholars it is certainly not without significance that Bertz had been greatly impressed by Whitman's poetry even before he took up residence in England:

Walt Whitman's name first became known to me early in 1876 through the

-- 6 --

fourth volume of Freiligrath's "Collected Poetry,"⁵ in which, serving as an introduction for the translations of the "Drum-Taps," appeared the earliest German essay on the American prophet. Whitman's picturesque appearance, as Freiligrath sketched it, impressed itself deeply on my memory, but even more so the remarkable statement that this spokesman of the new democracy was to his admirers not only the first and only poet of America, but also the only poet at all in whom the *Times* [Zeit], struggling, searching, seeking to be born, had found a voice; the Poet par excellence; *the* Poet. This I recalled after I had taken up my temporary residence in the United States, and so in the spring of 1882 I asked that a copy of "Leaves of Grass" be sent to me from the North to my wilderness home in Tennessee.⁶

It passes the bounds of credulity to think that Bertz, having read Whitman as early as 1876, never mentioned him to Gissing during the early years of their friendship, nor ever wrote about him in a letter during his American stay (that is, like Egremont's, a letter "from the United States"), nor even discussed the poet with Gissing during the two-and-a-half years between his own return to London and that of Roberts late in 1886. It is clear that Bertz's early acquaintance with Whitman was in German translation, but since Gissing during his own year in America had contemplated a translation of Heine, his knowledge of the language was certainly adequate to meet such a challenge. Unhappily, the conscientious Bertz was later moved to destroy his early letters from Gissing, which would have begun when Bertz's removal to America made correspondence necessary, but since he clearly had no need unduly to exaggerate his own influence on his friend, we can doubtless rely more safely on his generalized account of Whitman's appearance in *Thyrza*. This appears in an article entitled "Walt Whitman, Ein

-- 7 --

Charakterbild," written and published in Germany only two years after Gissing's death:

For me the impression which was deepest during my stay in the United States, the most significant one which America could give me, came in the spring of 1882 through Whitman's poetry. When I returned to England a year later I was still always completely full of Whitman's spirit, to the surprise of my friend George Gissing, who in December 1903 left the intellectual world, a profound and truthful English portrayer of manners, who had toward the American prophet a significantly cooler attitude. Gissing took my inner experience as worthy poetical matter and fashioned out of it an episode in his 1887 published novel "Thyrza," in which the hero, like me during a two-year stay in America, learned to know Whitman's poetry and was powerfully influenced by it.⁷

This is a good deal less vivid than Roberts's story, but it is on that account more convincing. It seems clear that part of Bertz's extraordinary experience was reading Whitman in the original during his two years in America, and since on his own admission he "was powerfully influenced by it," he inevitably would have impressed such a decisive event on his friend, and surely done it in a way that is grossly misrepresented by Roberts's slightly arrogant characterization of Gissing in the phrase "Yes, he had heard of the man." To some extent it is this smug tone which

makes Roberts's account seem more self-serving than credible. In his letters to Gissing at this time, he comes home to us as a man of a somewhat aimless and superficial mind given to dabbling in the arcane, but in this introduction he speaks from the high plateau of a man of wide and ranging intellect bent on liberating his benighted friend from the bondage of tradition. Unhappily, there is no way of determining whether Egremont's letter was based on a lost letter

-- 8 --

from Bertz during the American adventure, but it cannot reasonably be doubted that Bertz introduced Gissing to Whitman long before his sojourn to America, and that he certainly discussed the poet enthusiastically after he returned to London in June of 1883, as indeed he says he did – and as this letter of September 8 amply proves. It is, of course, true that Gissing did not introduce Whitman into any of his novels before *Thyrza*, but then there is no need to deny that Roberts's dramatically circumstantial account, redolent as it is of the classic drawing-room conversion myth, may well have contained at least a kernel of truth. Probably he talked to Gissing about Whitman. What we can say, however, is that even if Roberts had been an auxiliary *proximate* cause of Gissing's use of Whitman in the fall of 1886, yet in writing *Thyrza* Gissing created for his hero an experience drawn from that which Bertz had undergone much earlier. Bertz's account dispels the myth that Gissing did not seriously encounter Whitman's poetry until late in 1886 and that Roberts himself was the sole agent in a conversion of his erstwhile friend.

1. London: Enitharmon Press, 1978, ed. Jacob and Cynthia Korg.
2. "Notes on Some items of Correspondence from George Gissing to his Brother Algernon, 1880-1885," *Gissing Newsletter*, 19, no. 2 (1983), pp. 20-30.
3. He made this statement in a review of *Maitland* and of Frank Swinnerton's *George Gissing: A Critical Study*, in the *New York Times Book Review*, January 12, 1913, p. 10.
4. Roberts's letter is in the University of Pennsylvania Library and will be published in the third volume of the collected letters of Gissing.
5. Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876) was an important German poet who began a career as a

-- 9 --

businessman and a conservative, but whose first book of poetry was so successful that he gave up his commercial life and soon became an ardent spokesman for political liberty and championed the cause of democracy, spending a good number of years in exile in Switzerland and London. He took an early interest in French and English poetry, much of which he translated into German.

6. *Der Yankee-Heiland* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1906,) p. 5, my translation.
7. *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität*, VII. Jahrgang I. Band, 1905, pp. 170-171, translation by A. C. Young.

* * * * *

Book Reviews

John Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1989. John Halperin, *Novelists in their Youth*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1990. Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1989.

Although widely different in nature and purpose, these three books have one point in

common – they are studies of Gissing’s work in context. John Sloan’s volume is essentially a critical discussion of the novels up to *The Whirlpool*, John Halperin’s chapter, “Gissing Agonistes,” offers a bio-critical survey of the years of apprenticeship until *Workers in the Dawn*, and the pages of Peter Keating’s social history of the English novel in the late Victorian and

-- 10 --

Edwardian period that are devoted to Gissing show the professional writer at work as a unit in the social framework. The first and third books favour an interdisciplinary approach while the second, though it takes into account social and sociological factors, owes its unity to the author’s determination to see the novelist’s life and his work as a whole. So although the word “context” inevitably brings to mind Adrian Poole’s fifteen-year-old thematic discussion of Gissing’s fiction, none of the new volumes duplicates it in any way. Those critics – some of them still alive – who for decades tried to circumscribe any possible discussion of Gissing’s works to that of one special case – his own – are once more given the lie direct.

The publication of *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge* was preceded by the appearance of articles in *English Literature in Transition* and this journal, also by the defence of a doctoral thesis of which the present book is a revised, updated version. Dr. Sloan’s aim, as stated in his introduction, is “to provide a perspective from which the continuing cultural challenge and disturbing artistic significance of [Gissing’s] work can be located.” Methodologically his careful, thought-laden analysis can be defined as an attempt to consider Gissing’s stories of Victorian life from the standpoint of the historian of ideas, which perhaps inevitably involves a degree of abstraction likely to put off the uninitiated, especially in the early chapters. Gissing’s novels, the blurb warns us, “have always disturbed readers whose taste is for sympathetic identification.” Their outstanding merit, it is claimed, may well lie in what those readers find disturbing, that is in qualities which were acknowledged by both Henry James and Virginia Woolf, even though I, for one, would be prepared to prove that neither really did Gissing justice and understood the most cogent reasons for his cultural relevance. Undoubtedly

-- 11 --

John Sloan gives Gissing’s novels a new dimension, which implies an unstinting and respectful recognition of his achievement, while taking the full measure of his culturally truthful ambiguities. In his evaluation of the cultural contradictions of Victorian England and of the place of the Gissings in Wakefield, Sloan has nicely integrated elements derived from Clifford Brook’s study of Gissing in Wakefield with his thorough knowledge of the Victorian period. The Gissings’ marginality on which George superimposed his own behavioural antics doubtless largely accounts for the originality of his stories. It is this originality which is critically taken to pieces, but not from a purely intellectual point of view (Gissing’s intellectual and artistic culture and the values they imply are a subject that will some day have to be discussed at length), rather from a socio-cultural one. In the territory explored by John Sloan, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin and Pater are the salient landmarks, not the influence of the classics or the affinities with Gibbon, Samuel Johnson and Charles Lamb. Still *Workers in the Dawn* is seen mainly in its Hogarthian aspects which, if one bears in mind that John Sloan also pleasurably introduces some concepts from Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, George Lukács and Raymond Williams, contributes to give the book a highbrow tonality that few extensive studies of Gissing’s work have hitherto had to the same degree. *Gissing: The Cultural Challenge* is obviously not a book for browsers, possibly not even a book to which it will be easy to turn again for reference from the index. So closeknit is the network of ideas within which Gissing’s thoughts and art are placed that no part of the debate is likely to retain its full sense if separated from the whole. Still

the author occasionally descends from the intellectual plateaux on which his thought likes to dwell. Thus when, defining the broad lines of Gissing's specificity, he remarks that "the creation in [his] works of vivid intellectual types fretfully immersed in the struggles of modern urban life

-- 12 --

constitutes Gissing's major contribution to the English novel. It is one which closely links his works in a unique way to the traditions of the great European realists." Reacting against those insular critics who have over-stressed Gissing's Englishness, I would agree with Dr. Sloan that "Gissing's radical critique of the new 'bourgeois' social order is rooted, as in European realism, in an intellectual and cultural utopianism that is firmly social and materialistic in its innermost perspectives" (p. 11). Confirmation of the soundness of this point of view is supplied by the difficulty English critics – with the brilliant exception of Charles Swann and the less striking one of Walter Allen – have had in realizing the greatness of *Born in Exile*, a novel which, as John Sloan observes, has been far better understood by foreign critics (Emile Henriot and Jacob Korg in the forefront of these) than by English commentators. The same valuable notion recurs when, near the end of the chapter on *Workers in the Dawn*, is mentioned the sense of inner deadlock, abundantly illustrated in Gissing, of a subjective self rotting from within, that is so perceptible in late nineteenth-century realism. "Gissing's exiled intellectuals cannot be divorced from that whole process of social and literary change which produced the 'superfluous man' of Russian literature, or the subjectively created world of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*" (p. 27).

Clever insights abound in this tersely written critical study which, while it has little use for biographical considerations, occasionally introduces some with perceptive appropriateness. The very positive assessments of *Isabel Clarendon* and *A Life's Morning* will, it is hoped, give the continuing debate on these so-called minor novels a fresh impetus. Residues of romance they may be, but the human and cultural tensions they scrutinize enable us to get to the heart of Gissing's world as much as *Demos*, of which Dr. Sloan writes: "It is one of the novel's paradoxes that what is clearly meant to support its thesis that working people given instant

-- 13 --

wealth will be corrupted should so nearly become a criticism of the alienated life-style of the owner of capital, and a recognition of the real human contact and community enjoyed by the urban poor" (p. 64). As one reads on, one tries to define for oneself that challenge so promisingly emphasized on the title page, for indeed the word occurs but infrequently in the book. Surely the answer lies in Gissing's rejections of all panaceas and utopias, in his showing up of all *ignes fatui* of which his novels and short stories offer such an impressive record. *The Nether World* is as good an example as any with its plot which involves "a wholesale subversion of the philanthropic romance." Assuredly here more than elsewhere Gissing clear-sightedly rejects the old Victorian values organically associated with Dickens's fiction. The philanthropic romance is cast to the winds with a force and earnestness which invites us to see Dickens's art as not only childlike but childish as well. Perhaps Dean Farrar's condescending assessment of this novel makes better sense as an indirect revelation of embarrassment than as an objectionable example of clerical hauteur.

With the discussion of *The Emancipated* the nature of Gissing's challenge becomes clearer than ever before. It is the spiritual bankruptcy of industrial society that is the butt of the novelist's assault. Even more disturbing because of its wider compass is the subversive representation of the literary world in *New Grub Street* with its "ideological opposition of art and trade" and its "series of related dualisms – leisure and work, the self and the world, male and female identity." With this novel, then again with *Born in Exile*, the challenge becomes an intellectual one. The old bourgeois doctrines were bankrupt, Gissing had come to think as early

as his Owens days, but nowhere had he gone as far in illustrating this as in the story of Godwin Peak.

The Odd Women and *The Whirlpool* are also most stimulatingly discussed. The parallel between the former novel and *The Bostonians* is not as new as it would appear to be according

-- 14 --

to the blurb, but it seems that John Sloan is unaware that he had a predecessor, Nan Bauer Maglin, in the early 1970s. The excellent commentary on *The Whirlpool* is reached with the sense of a summation: it is Gissing's "very incapacity to reassure the reader which constitutes the effectiveness of his work" (p. 144). The paragraph, on the previous page, on the common denominator between aestheticism and imperialism will repay close reading. It is encapsulated in Redgrave's acknowledgment of the kinship between his own ideal of Paterian sensuality as a form of escapism and the brutal philosophy of territorial expansion blazoned forth by Carnaby. Unexpectedly one finds Kipling, the satirist of the aesthetes, bracketed with Oscar Wilde, both fugitives from the camp of traditional "culture." This is more than Wells, in his 1897 article on Gissing's novels, proved capable of discerning – Wells, whose social fiction, like that of Bennett, was, all things considered, rather less "artistically adult" than Gissing's. John Sloan takes leave of his readers on this judgment, which he endorses.

While reading such a valuable critical study one is naturally led to note an occasional disagreement, usually of a factual nature. For instance, Thomas Waller Gissing had not published one, but three, volumes of verse before he settled in Wakefield, but few scholars have had an opportunity to read the first two, copies of which are not known to be extant in any institutional library. Nor was it on 8 February 1886 that William Morris was arrested. Less factually, I find it difficult to accept the comparison between Peak and Bertie Stanhope in Trollope's satire of clerical life in *Barchester Towers*; nor do I think Bruno Chilvers altogether atypical – a minority of careerists and charlatans have always been noticeable in the clergy, as history and literature testify. Chilvers is a butt of Gissing's irony which John Sloan declares to be "conspicuously absent" from *Born in Exile*. Also one suspects there were some problems in the production of the book, which was printed in the People's Republic of China. Several

-- 15 --

quotations (pp. 63, 100, 144) and some surnames have suffered slightly at the hands of the printers (Owens College, Fredric Jameson, Farrar, Alfred Waltham, Wilfrid Athel and Vissian). Should the book ever be reprinted, as it deserves to be, such slips and some others should be corrected, as well as several erroneous dates in the notes and the bibliography. It was not on 8 February 1877 that Gissing wrote to Bullen about *The Whirlpool* and Bennett's appreciative article on Gissing appeared in 1899.

A few typographical inaccuracies of the same kind have crept into John Halperin's chapter on Gissing in *Novelists in their Youth*, which deals with writers who were either known to Gissing (Henry James, Hardy, Conrad) or influenced by him in some indisputable manner (Edith Wharton and Somerset Maugham). Halperin stresses these links in his introduction, which does not invite the scholar to expect any revelation from the book: "The specialist may or may not find in these pages a new way of considering or approaching the work of my six authors; that he or she must decide individually." In the case of Gissing, whose portrait taken by Naudin in 1884 will be known only to those readers who have seen it at Yale, nothing hitherto unfamiliar will be found in this adaptation of Chapter Three in *Gissing: A Life in Books*. Although a few discoveries have been made by other scholars since the latter volume first appeared in 1982 – notably concerning Gissing's benefactor in Chicago – no attempt has been made to update this new narrative of the years 1863-1880. As it starts *in media res* on 31 May

1876 and relates the so-called Manchester episode in the present indicative, the account given here reads like a dramatized version of the old text, and the three quotations from Proust and Maugham printed as epigraphs are an apt preamble to the sad story: "It almost seems," Proust wrote in *Le temps retrouvé*, "as though a writer's works, like the water in an artesian well, mount to a height which is in proportion to the depth to which suffering has penetrated his heart." This Gissing chapter will be serviceable to anyone who wishes to read or reread a brief

-- 16 --

account (30 pages) of the prelude to the novelist's career. It will be profitably supplemented and in some respects corrected by some vital information to be found in William's letters to George (1875-1880) included in Volume I of the Collected Letters. The complex affair of the legacy which enabled Gissing to publish *Workers in the Dawn* at his expense has been cleared up by the present writer in collaboration with Clifford Brook. Its connection with Thomas Waller Gissing's death need no longer be viewed as in any way mysterious. As for the copies of Gissing's novels which John Halperin says were presented to Nell, no one should waste any time looking for them. At Nell's death, Gissing found in her room a copy of T. W. Gissing's *Margaret and Other Poems*, but no copy of any of his books.

The Haunted Study is an engaging, ably documented book on the business of letters, especially the art and trade of fiction writing from the mid-1870s to World War I. Together with such fellow writers as Bennett, Conrad, Hardy, James, Joyce, Kipling, Lawrence, Meredith, Stevenson, Wells and Virginia Woolf, Gissing occupies a prominent place in it. Peter Keating, whose contributions to Gissing scholarship are now receding into mid-distance, has very successfully attempted to analyze the complex network of relationships in which the novelist, at least in his own eyes, is the central piece. In an ever-changing world of publishers, editors, libraries, booksellers and readers, the writer's position, whatever his talent, is a notoriously insecure one and it is his relationship, direct or indirect, personal or impersonal, that the present book explores with much shrewdness and objectivity. In the period concerned the forms of fiction, the modes of publication and the amount of freedom enjoyed by the artist changed considerably, if slowly. The battles fought by Gissing and Moore were to be won, if at all, only by Lawrence and Joyce. The familiar subjects are reconsidered by Peter Keating from a less specialized point of view than in, say, James Hepburn's classic study on the literary agent – the

-- 17 --

buying and selling of fiction at all levels, the public and circulating libraries, literary censorship, the role of the Society of Authors, but also the evolution of public taste and the widening of areas that novelists could explore with impunity. The notes give a clear idea of the sources consulted – essentially printed sources – revealing also the limits of the commentator's enquiry. Some statements might have been less abrupt if access to unpublished sources had been possible. Gissing is more than fairly dealt with, yet one wonders whether Peter Keating would have called him "hopelessly impractical" if he had read his hundreds of unpublished letters to publishers and literary agents. They certainly alter the picture to be formed from his letters to his family and to such correspondents as Bertz or Wells. Nor is it quite true to say that Gissing never really followed the advice he gave to Algernon in 1883: "Simply present what you have, and without comment." The turning point in this respect was, it would seem, *Denzil Quarrier*. It is characteristic that when Gissing revised *The Emancipated* (1890) for the one-volume Lawrence & Bullen edition, he eliminated all traces of what he later called "the impertinent ego."

Other specialists will perhaps register similar disagreements of small importance. They do not affect the esteem with which one looks back upon this well-informed and eminently readable volume after reaching the last page of the serviceable index. It is a book to be placed

on the same shelf as those by J. W. Saunders, James Hepburn, John Gross and Bonham-Carter on this or that aspect of literary life. It is also a book destined to be quoted from for decades, and it is to be hoped that the publishers will find their way to publishing a cheaper (paperback) edition with a view to a much larger circulation. – Pierre Coustillas.

-- 18 --

George Gissing, *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina*, translated with an introduction by Francesco Badolato. Published by Herder, Rome, 1989, in the series “Quaderni dei Nuovi Annali della Facoltà di Magistero dell’Università di Messina,” pp. 232 + 26 plates.

A selection of extracts from Gissing’s *Diary*, focussing on his three visits to Italy, has recently been published in translation under the title *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina*. Though printed last December – some four months ago – this book received an official public presentation at the International Bookshop of Milan, on 2 April 1990. The event, announced in *Tutto Milano* (supplement to the national daily *La Repubblica*) and in *La Notte* (an afternoon newspaper), was organised by the Milan Provincial authorities through Dr. Massimo Gianluca Guarischi, councillor with responsibility for Cultural Affairs. Dr. Guarischi opened proceedings by remarking that the book, recording as it does the “on-the-spot” observations of an English novelist, can justifiably be regarded as a valuable aid to a better understanding of Italy at the end of the last century. Notes of a similar kind are unknown, a fact which makes *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina* a significant sociological document. The second speaker, Francesco Marra, drew attention to Dr. Badolato’s efforts in acquainting Italian readers with Gissing and his love for Italy. Francesco Badolato gave an account of Gissing’s life and art, and gave the reasons for choosing the book’s new title. The view of a working novelist was offered by Eugenio Corti, who highlighted some aspects of Italy noted by Gissing at the end of the nineteenth century which are still of great relevance. The presentation ended with a reading by Gabriella Piazza of some fine passages from the translation.

Dr. Badolato’s work is certainly very useful. He has not just produced a fine translation.

-- 19 --

In his substantial introduction, which includes biographical and bibliographical notes to assist readers in gaining greater knowledge of the writer, he gives an attractive account of Gissing’s visits to Italy and his attitudes to the country. Furthermore, he explains the new title: *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina* aptly encompasses Gissing’s itinerary throughout the Italian peninsula.

This volume is a selection of extracts from *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (edited by Pierre Coustillas, 1978), containing the novelist’s reflections during his three visits to Italy (viz., October 1888-February 1889, December 1889-February 1890, and September 1897-April 1898). This Italian translation, then, has appeared just a century after Gissing’s second visit.

In bringing together these impressions and reflections, the book gives a vivid account of the places Gissing visited and the people he met. This edition will also acquaint Italian readers with a distinctive characteristic of the way Gissing chose to record his impressions. In addition to writing descriptions, he was fond of drawing sketches. A unique feature of this book is the inclusion of many sketches. Of these, fourteen have never previously been published, and are taken from the manuscripts of the diaries in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. The other twelve were printed in the first and second editions of *By the Ionian Sea* (1901, 1905). These sketches mostly portray antiquities, archeological findings, commonplace human subjects,

and funerary stelae – reminding us that, in addition to his gifts as a writer, Gissing had a deep feeling for Nature and Humanity.

Reading Gissing's notes on Italy, we are provided with an accurate picture of his exchanges with simple people and of the things he saw, including the surviving ruins of the Magna Græcia period in Southern Italy and the paintings he admired in Florence, Venice and Rome (especially the 'Last Judgement' in the Sistine Chapel). Of considerable interest, too, are

-- 20 --

his observations on contemporary events that attracted his attention.

This is the second volume in translation that Francesco Badolato has produced for Italian readers, the first being *Un'Ispirazione ed altre novelle* (short stories by Gissing). He has also edited three school editions of Gissing's works (two collections of short stories and a novel), as well as a critical anthology on Gissing (1984). His other works include an essay on Gissing and Verga, and more recently he has explored connections between Gissing, Leopardi, Pater, Manzoni and d'Annunzio.

In an early article, Dr. Badolato pointed out that Gissing did not come to Italy – and still less to Calabria – as an observer of the economic and political scene, but as a devotee of the classical heritage of the country, thereby fulfilling an ambition he had cherished in his youth as a classics student.

Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina contributes to filling a gap of which Italian readers are specially aware. Combining this work with Margherita Guidacci's translation of *By the Ionian Sea*, they are handsomely provided with material preserving Gissing's impressions of a country at the centre of the classical world. – Martin Walsh, Renate, Milano.

Notes and News

Anyone who is aware of the bad condition of Gissing's grave in the cemetery at St. Jean-de-Luz will hear with satisfaction that it is to be restored through the instrumentality of the

-- 21 --

novelist's family. The condition of the grave had been a cause for concern for a decade or two. The small stone kerb which bounds the rectangle of gravel had been sagging, the cross was leaning and Gissing's name was hardly legible. Mrs. E. M. Eleanor Wood's article published in the April 1976 number of this journal might serve as a guide to anyone anxious to go and see what the French monumental mason of St. Jean-de-Luz will succeed in doing in the way of restoration. The cemetery itself can easily be found "only a little way outside the centre of the town ... Gissing's grave is on the extreme topmost edge, backing right against the stone wall that bounds it and divides it from the small road behind." Some day the story of the building of the grave in early 1904 will have to be told from some of Gabrielle's unpublished letters.

John Sutherland's latest volume, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Longman, 1988) has been reissued in paperback (£13.95). This is a book which all readers of Victorian literature should have on their shelves as its reliability is far superior to that of similar reference books. Sutherland's last sentence in his substantial entry on George (Algernon's life and work are dealt with more briefly in half a page) is a fair conclusion: "Gissing's fiction is notable for its agnosticism, realism and ironic pessimism." Entries on the following novels are to be found in this 700-page book: *Workers in the Dawn*, *The Unclassed*, *Demos*, *Thyrza*, *New*

Grub Street, Born in Exile, The Odd Women, In the Year of Jubilee, Eve's Ransom, The Crown of Life and *Our Friend the Charlatan*. It is a pity *The Nether World* and *The Whirlpool* were left out. Gissing also appears in entries on the Social Problem Novel, on the New Woman Fiction, the *Yellow Book*, Hubert Crackanthorpe, George Meredith, Morley Roberts, Smith, Elder & Co.

-- 22 --

and probably in others which still have to be discovered. Inevitably some unexpected omissions are to be found in the book. For instance, since a useful entry was compiled for Fisher Unwin's Pseudonym Library, one wonders why the Autonym Library was left out. Similarly since Ménie Muriel Dowie is included, why not Margaret L. Woods?

The University of Leicester has sent to the editor a leaflet about its new M.A. in Victorian Studies. While the "core courses" consist in "Victorian Literature: Theory and Practice" and "Victorian Society," one of the optional courses includes Gissing. Professor Vincent Newey will deal with "Victorian to Modern: Hardy, Gissing and Mark Rutherford," and discuss *Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure, New Grub Street, Born in Exile, Catherine Furze* and *Clara Hopgood*.

Among Italian academics actively interested in Gissing, the latest whose name has become known beyond the Alps is Professor Mauro Francesco Minervino of the University of Calabria. His booklet entitled *G. R. Gissing: Le Strade del ritorno. Viaggio al Sud* is essentially a study of Gissing's third Italian journey as recorded in his diary, in his correspondence and in *By the Ionian Sea*, which although written in 1899 did not appear in volume form until 1901. In the first part, entitled "The Temple and the Shambles: A Geography of Myths and Images of Modern Life in *By the Ionian Sea*," Professor Minervino offers an anthropological and critical discussion of Gissing's experiences in Southern Italy. In the second part he has translated some primary material such as extracts from the diary, letters to Algernon, Ellen and Walter of October to December 1897, while in the third part, entitled "Places, Memories, Visions," we have an anthology of Gissing statements on a variety of subjects ranging from literary and

-- 23 --

historical matters to personal recollections and obsessive concerns. Professor Minervino is currently preparing a more comprehensive study of Gissing and Italy which will also appear under the imprint of C. Marco Editore, but as Volume I of a series on travel literature edited by himself.

Professor Minervino was one of the many academics who attended the Congresso internazionale "Viaggio nel sud," organized by the CIRVI (Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerche sul Viaggio in Italia), at Capri, Reggio Calabria and Catania from 20 to 27 May 1990. He read a paper on "Il tempio e il mattatoio. Modernità e classicismo in *By the Ionian Sea*" at Reggio on 24 May, and was interviewed by Dr. Cimato of Italian Radio 1, during the weekly programme "La Telefonata," a live broadcast, on 27 May at 11.06pm. He explained the nature of his interest in Gissing and of his current research on the novelist's work. He has sent to the editor a booklet on the city of Paola in which photographs of various Gissing scenes, notably the Albergo Leone, mentioned in chapter II of *By the Ionian Sea*, can be seen. This 37-page guide for tourists, *Città di Paola* (1989), is largely the work of Mauro Minervino himself. It may be regarded as a companion to chapter II of Gissing's travel narrative.

Mr. M. D. Allen, who now teaches at the Pennsylvania State University, has discovered

references to three theses written locally and ignored by guides to dissertations:

- Theodore Jay Gates, "A Study of George Robert Gissing," M.A. thesis (1921).
- Fred D. Crawford, "Three Studies in English: The verse letter and Donne; Gissing's *New Grub Street*; Hawthorne's 'Roger Malvin's Burial'" (1972).

-- 24 --

- Margaret Ross Mason, "Three Studies in English: Milton's *Comus*; Gissing's ambivalence; Sarah Orne Jewett" (1970).

Boston Book Annex (705 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts 02130) has for sale an important collection of works by and about Gissing. The 149 items are divided into four sections. In Section A (works by Gissing) are to be found a few editions of exceptional interest, notably a first American edition of *The Unclassed* (New York: Fenno, 1896) in dust-jacket; a copy of the scarce 1888 Smith, Elder edition of *Demos*, the edition of which Gissing saw copies in railway stations; a first American edition of *A Life's Morning* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1888) in wrappers; a first American edition of *In the Year of Jubilee* (New York: Appleton, 1895) in wrappers; and one of the 48 copies of *An Heiress on Condition*, printed for the Pennell Club in 1923. Section B consists in works containing material by Gissing (items 114 to 128). Here we find some old periodicals such as *The Lady's Realm*, *The Anglo-Saxon Review* and the *New York Critic*, also very interesting auction catalogues of the inter-war years and the useful eighteenth part of *The Colophon* with the 8pp. facsimile of Gissing's autograph "Account of Books" for the years 1880-1898. Section C (items 129 to 146) consists in works about Gissing ranging from *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (1912) to a batch of fairly recent booksellers' catalogues. To most collectors and scholars the autograph material will probably be the pick of the bunch. A postcard to Kitton laid in a first English edition of *Henry Ryecroft* gives his new address at St. Jean-de-Luz. It was sent from Paris on 26 June 1902, where he had gone for the publication of the French translation of *New Grub Street*. The letter to Colles of 16 March 1895 has been known for some time as it was part of a batch of notes, postcards and receipts which

-- 25 --

first surfaced in Philadelphia some ten years ago. The most attractive item is a three-page letter to Walter Raleigh, dated 19 November 1897. It, too, has been known to be in existence for about a decade. It was sent from Cosenza, and Raleigh was sufficiently aware of its value to have kept the hand-addressed envelope. The price of the collection is \$12,500.00. Let us hope it will find a good home.

Evidence of some revival of interest in Eduard Bertz outside the framework of Gissing studies has been noticed of late. Surely the most unexpected aspect of it is an article which appeared in *Die Zeit* on 15 June, "Die Feinde des Fahrrads" It consists in ten long paragraphs from Bertz's *Philosophie des Fahrrads* (1900). No mention is made of the many activities of Bertz, who is oddly described as a philosopher. The illustration represents an angry cyclist brandishing a club at some invisible enemy. Thanks are due to Wulfhard Stahl for sending this singular document.

Francesco Badolato, upon whom the "diploma di benemerenzza" was recently bestowed by the President of the Italian Republic, has sent several reviews of his recent book, which is commented upon in the present number. These reviews are listed under "Recent Publications." He has also sent an article on the "message of reconciliation in the works" of Elizabeth Gaskell which is, in fact, a long review of various books on this author by Prof. Francesco Marroni (*Corriere di Roma*, 15 March 1990, p. 3), as well as an article on "some echoes from the Aeneid in Shakespeare's plays" (*Corriere di Roma*, 19 April 1990, p. 15). Dott. Badolato is currently reading the proofs of *Selections from The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* for schools (Società editrice Dante Alighieri). The book is to appear in the autumn.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, London: Penguin Books, [1990]. Edited with an introduction by Bernard Bergonzi. Pictorial stiff covers. 556 pages, £4.99. This is the third impression in the Penguin Classics, and the ninth impression under the Penguin imprint since 1968.

George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Tokyo: Sanseido, 1990. Translation by Masao Hirai. 300 pages + 4 pages of bibliographical data and advertisements. 460 yen. Light brown paper covers. White, pink and brown jacket. This is the 28th impression, dated 25 January 1990.

Paul Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume One: 1863-1880*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990. Off-white paper-covered boards with a grey tape binding and, on the spine, gilt titling on dark green panel. Dark green dust-jacket with pattern in light green, 1xiv + 335 pages. \$49.95. The volume includes a General Introduction subdivided into three parts: History of the project, the Gissing Collections and Editorial Procedure, an essay entitled "The Gissings and the Bedfords: A Genealogical Survey," a Chronology of Gissing's Life, Acknowledgements, an Introduction to Volume One, the letters, a Selected Index of Persons and a Selected index of Titles, Places and Miscellanea.

Mauro Francesco Minervino, *G. R. Gissing: Le Strade del ritorno. Viaggio al Sud (1897-1898)*, Lungro di Cosenza: C. Marco editore (Via Camicia Rossa, 12), 1990. Yellow card covers in white jacket. 47 pages. 7500 lire.

Articles, Reviews, etc.

W. Somerset Maugham, *A Traveller in Romance: Uncollected Writings 1901-1964*, edited by John Whitehead, London: Anthony Blond; New York: Potter, 1984. Contains Maugham's little known review of *By the Ionian Sea* in the *Sunday Times* for 11 August 1901, p. 1.

Christopher Hibbert, *Rome: The Biography of a City*, New York: Viking Penguin, 1985. Passages on Gissing in Rome appear on pp. 276 and 280.

Mauro Francesco Minervino, *Il viaggio, il superfluo e il necessario*, Paola: Edizioni del Pavone, 1986. Contains some passages on and quotations from Gissing on pp. 7, 12-14 and 23.

John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. The author mentions Gissing's life in and opinions on Italy on thirty occasions. The book was reprinted as an Oxford University paperback in 1988. John Pemble is Lecturer in History at the University of Bristol.

Nancy Fix Anderson, *Woman against Women in Victorian England: A Life of Eliza Lynn Linton*,

Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987. Quotes Gissing's judgments on *Ione* and *Under Which Lord?* in his diary.

Anthea Todd, "Reviews," *Literature and History*, Vol. XIV, no. 2. Autumn 1988, pp. 256-57. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*.

Patrick Brantlinger, *Rules of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Ithaca

-- 28 --

and London: Cornell University Press, 1988. Contains references to Gissing and *The Whirlpool*.

Mark Leigh Amdahl, "Literature, English," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. XLIX, no. 12, June 1989, p. 3729A. Abstract of a Ph.D. thesis entitled "Gissing and telling: Sex, class and art in selected fiction of George Gissing" (Washington State University, 1988).

Hans-Peter Breuer, "Recent Books – British and Irish," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. XXXV. No. 4, Winter 1989, pp. 792-93. Review of *George Gissing at Work*.

John Stokes, *In the Nineties*, New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. Passages on Gissing can be found on pp. 18, 136, 170 and 189.

Laurence S. Lockridge *et al.*, *Nineteenth-Century Lives: Essays presented to Jerome Hamilton Buckley*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Chapter 9, on writers and their readers in fiction of the 1890s, by Margaret Diane Stetz, is of special interest.

Maureen Duffy, *A Thousand Capricious Chances: A History of the Methuen List 1889-1989*, London: Methuen, 1989. Gissing and his two novels published by Methuen, *The Town Traveller* and *The Crown of Life*, are mentioned several times.

Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner, *England in the 1880s: Old Guard and Avant-Garde*. With an introduction by Jerome Hamilton Buckley. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989. This is the catalogue of an exhibition, "The English Avant-Garde of the 1880s," held at the University of Virginia Library from 2 February to 31 March 1985, but it is also an illustrated book on the 1880s with chapters on the Old

-- 29 --

Guard, the Aesthetes, the New Fiction, the Romance Writers, the Impact of Empire, Zealots and Eccentrics, Irish Voices, Women and the Woman Question as well as the theatre. Two hundred and forty-three items were on show, nos. 136 and 139 to 144 being Gissing items. These consisted of the autograph letter to Algernon of 29 April 1885, Rothenstein's sketch of Gissing as it appeared in 1898 in *English Portraits*, a hitherto unpublished letter to Algernon of 27 December 1882 mentioning Nell's departure for Brixton and his landlady at Oakley Crescent, Mrs. Coward, as well as a wealthy family, the Giffards. It is in this letter that George tells his brother that he has decided to omit the R in his "authorial signature." The other items on show were first editions of *Demos*, *The Nether World*, and *New Grub Street*.

Ronald P. Draper and Martin S. Ray, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Thomas Hardy*,

New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. Lists three entries about Gissing and Hardy.

Mark Paffard, *Kipling's Indian Fiction*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1989. Unexpectedly this volume carries some passages on Gissing.

Vittorio Gabaglio, "Viaggi: L'Italia dell'800 narrata dall'inglese Gissing," *La Provincia* (Como), 25 February 1990, p. 7. Review of *Da Venezia allo stretto di Messina*.

Anon., "Literary Lives: Man and Boy," *The Economist*, 14 April 1990, p. 129. Review of John Halperin's *Novelists in their Youth*, with a passage on Gissing.

Vivian Gornick, "Who says we haven't made a revolution? A Feminist Takes Stock," *New York*

-- 30 --

Times Magazine, 15 April 1990, pp. 24, 27, 52 and 53. A significant reference to *The Odd Women* appears at the beginning of the article.

R. Parolini Penati, "Un diario che racconta l'arte e la cultura classica italiana post unitaria: Da Venezia a Messina," *Brianza Oggi* (Monza), 29 April 1990, p. 29. Review of Francesco Badolato's recent book.

Eugenio Corti, "Un viaggiatore dell'800," *Studi cattolici* (Milano), April 1990, p. 280. Review of *Da Venezia allo stretto di Messina*.

Jodie Wainwright, "Novelist is finally bound for glory," *Wakefield Express*, 4 May 1990, p. 4. Long article on the formal opening of the Gissing Centre which was to take place the next day, with photographs of Douglas Hallam, the chairman of the Gissing Trust and of the model of Gissing's home, as well as the interior of the Gissing Centre.

Anon., "Centre Send-off," *Yorkshire Evening Post* (Wakefield and Five Towns edition), 8 May 1990, p. 3. With photograph of Douglas Hallam and Anthony Petyt, the Honorary Secretary of the Trust.

Anon., "Opening of George Gissing Study Centre," *Wakefield Express*, 11 May 1990, p. 3. With the photograph reproduced in the present number of the *Newsletter*.

Giuseppe Puma, "Da Venezia allo stretto di Messina," *Articultura* (Milano), May 1990, p. 55. Review of Francesco Badolato's book.

Francesco Badolato, "Gissing e l'Italia," *Il Serratore* (Corigliano), May-June 1990, pp. 41-42. With a view of Cosenza in 1845 and Lily Waldron's portrait of Gissing.

-- 31 --

Raymond Chapman, *The Language of Thomas Hardy*, London: Macmillan, 1990. Gissing appears on pp. 23-25.

Michael Millgate, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Selected Letters*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. Reprints Gissing's letter to Hardy of 1 July 1886.

