

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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Henry Ryecroft’s Trick

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Recently while rereading Virginia Woolf’s essay, “The Sun and the Fish,” and enjoying once again her ingenious use of mental associations, I was reminded of a passage in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* which had arrested my attention some years ago. In it Ryecroft speaks of “a trick of mind” which could transport him in time and space and bring before his eyes scenes from earlier years, and not their sights only but also the moods that had accompanied them. I recall that this passage struck me with particular force on first coming across it as it seemed to me then that Gissing had hit upon the same Bergsonian relationship between

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perception and memory (1) used so effectively by Proust, but only to note it as a curiosity and pass on without making any further use of it. But this last was a mistaken impression as a subsequent rereading of *Ryecroft* assured me. The divisions of the book entitled Summer and Autumn make considerable use of such associations, and there is a further instance in Winter, the last division.

The passage in *Ryecroft* referred to above is the first one in the Autumn division, and is so unmistakably a conscious use of the mental phenomenon that it commands especial attention. Section III opens: “Everyone, I suppose, is subject to a trick of mind which often puzzles me. I am reading or thinking, and at a moment, without any association that I can discover, there arises before me the vision of a place I know.” He suggests that if he is busy doing something else the triggering device must be “an object seen, an odour, a touch”; and indulges the speculation that “perhaps even a posture of the body suffices to recall something in the past.” (2) Then Ryecroft reports the experience that gave rise to this reflection: he had been talking to

his gardener and all at once found himself looking upon the Bay of Avlona. He was not able to determine what had triggered this experience, but the remark about bodily posture perhaps being the effective connection in some of these experiences is a striking one, especially to the reader who recalls the incident in *The Past Recaptured* when Proust's Marcel, stepping backward out of the Guermantes' driveway to avoid being hit by an oncoming automobile, suddenly finds himself in Venice. He realizes later that on one occasion when in Venice he had moved backward in order to look up at St. Mark's and stepped on a broken paving stone, and that when he had stepped out of the way of the automobile he had also stepped on a broken curb stone, and that this was the connection. (3) It becomes even more striking when one remembers that Gissing's book was written about a dozen years before even the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past* was published, and over twenty-five years before the publication of *The Past Recaptured*. (4)

This passage from Part III of the Autumn division is far from being an isolated instance of Bergsonian association employed in *Ryecroft*, though it does contain the most extensive discussion of the phenomenon. There are at least six clear uses of the device. I use the term

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"device" because it seems definitely established that *Ryecroft* is sufficiently other than Gissing himself to lead to the conclusion that while most of these instances stem from Gissing's own experience they are not found in *Ryecroft* in the form in which Gissing experienced them or are only in a general way based on his experience. (5) Gissing may of course have experienced the phenomenon of "association" as presumably everyone has. I recall most vividly a fascinating, even weird, transportation to New York harbor by the sound of a ferryboat whistle heard far inland where locomotives had for some reason been equipped with them. The phenomenon itself needs no proving.

There are three instances of the use of this type of association in the Summer division of the book. Indeed, this division begins with one as though Gissing had the matter in mind and had decided to make use of this device. Pure conjecture, true, but this was 1900 (or at the latest early 1901) and Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896) had been out for four years and must have been discussed at least to some extent, particularly in France where Gissing was living at the time, (6) though there is no mention of Bergson in his commonplace book nor in books about Gissing of which I have knowledge. The Summer division opens: "Today, as I was reading in the garden, a waft of summer perfume – some hidden link of association in what I read – I know not what it may have been – took me back to schoolboy holidays; I recovered with strange intensity that lightsome mood of long release from tasks, of going away to the seaside... I was in the train..." (p. 77). The next instance, also in this division of the book, involves a flower, the restharrow: "Now I have but to smell it," he says, "and those hours come back again. I see the shore of Cumberland, running north to St. Bee's Head..." (p. 90). More specifically pointed up is the next instance: "By some trick of memory I always associate schoolboy work on the classics with a sense of warm and sunny days... My old Liddell and Scott still serves me, and if, in opening it, I bend close enough to catch the *scent* of the leaves, I am back again at that day of boyhood... when the book was new and I used it for the first time.

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It was a day of summer..." (pp. 91-92).

The striking opening of Section III of Autumn has already been discussed. The beginning of Section XV of this division is interesting, but is a questionable instance of association: "Blackberries hanging thick upon the hedge bring to my memory something of long ago" (p. 152). It is questionable in that *Ryecroft* goes on to speak of having had a meal without paying, something so unusual in his experience of days of poverty in London that he remarks upon it, but this is only indirectly connected with association in the sense in which it is being

used in this paper. (7) Section XIX of *Autumn* is more closely akin: “I was at ramble in the lanes, when, from somewhere at a distance, there sounded the voice of a countryman – strange to say – singing. The notes were indistinct, but they rose, to my ear, with a moment’s musical sadness, and of a sudden my heart was stricken with a memory so keen that I knew not whether it was pain or delight... The English landscape faded before my eyes. I saw great Doric columns of honey-golden travertine...” He was seeing Paestum (pp. 160-161). It is interesting, even instructive perhaps, to compare this passage with its original in the commonplace book: “This afternoon (Sept. ’92) walking near Heavitree, a still, autumnal air, I heard a man shout far off in a field, and his voice had a note like that of a peasant singing at Paestum. It was terrible!” (8). The changes introduced in order to be able to employ an actual experience as another of those mental “tricks” seem to argue that Gissing here makes conscious use of the device. It is difficult to explain the alterations on any other basis, except to suggest that perhaps the original offended against the total tone of *Ryecroft* and was therefore “doctored” to bring it into harmony with the rest of the book by being rendered more pleasing.

In the final division, *Winter*, there is one more instance of the use of the device. Section V begins: “Walking along the road after nightfall, I thought all at once of London streets, and, by a freak of mind, wished I were there. I saw the shining of shop-fronts, the yellow glistening of wet pavement, the hurrying people, the cabs, the omnibuses – and wished I were amid it all’ (pp. 180-181). This, indeed, may be pure nostalgia, and succeeding paragraphs would support this;

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nevertheless, the germ, the kernel, of association is there – “by a freak of mind” is equivalent to “trick of mind” and there is the give-away “thought all at once” – surely indicative of the device being employed yet again.

These, then, are the instances. How to account for them in the absence of anything but conjecture to go on – that is the problem we are left with. We can suspect that Gissing had experienced and reflected upon similar (or even in given instances the same) happenings in his own life, but his commonplace book does not truly support any such idea, though it does contain the germ of *Ryecroft*, a suggestion for a book to be called “Thought and Reverie.” (9). A sounder conjecture, it seems to me, is that Bergson’s ideas about memory were being discussed in France, at least to a limited extent in intellectual circles, for some time before Gissing began *Ryecroft*, and as Gissing was then living in France with Gabrielle Fleury – a woman of some intellectual pretensions – these ideas may have been known to him and may have suggested to him the use of the device in his experiment in semi-autobiographical fiction. While there is nothing which can be used to demonstrate the truth of this explanation, neither is there anything (to my knowledge) which can be used to refute it, and the circumstances can be adduced as support for it. However this may be, it is still interesting, and perhaps even noteworthy, that these instances of association exist in *Ryecroft* and antedate Proust’s celebrated use of the same device.

Notes

1 - A few lines from Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* may be useful here: “While external perception provokes on our part movements which retrace its main lines, our memory directs upon the perception received the memory-images which resemble it... Memory thus creates anew the present perception; or rather it doubles this perception by reflecting upon it either its own image or some other memory-image of the same kind... Personal recollections, exactly localised, the series of which represents the course of our past experience, make up, all together, the last and largest enclosure of our memory. Essentially fugitive, they become materialized only by chance, either when an accidentally precise determination of our bodily attitude attracts them, or when the very indetermination of that attitude leaves a clear field to the caprices of

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their manifestations.” Trans. Nancy M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York, 1911), pp. 122-23, 129.

2 - P. 131. All page references to *Ryecroft* are to the Everyman’s Library ed., 1964.

3 - Chapter 3, near the beginning of the chapter.

4 - The bulk of *Ryecroft* was written between Sept. 1 and Oct. 24, 1900, with additions being made for some months thereafter. It was first published serially as “An Author at Grass” in the *Fortnightly Review* from May 1902 to February 1903, and as a book under its present title in January 1903. *Swann’s Way* was published in 1913, and *The Past Recaptured* in 1927.

5 - The notes in Pierre Coustillas’ *Les Carnets d’Henry Ryecroft* (Paris, 1966) indicate that Gissing drew largely on his own experience for the material of most of these instances, but there is no indication that he himself recalled them in the manner attributed to Ryecroft. For a general discussion of the Gissing-Ryecroft relationship see Jacob Korg’s *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* (U. of Washington Press, 1963), pp. 240-245; for an analysis of Gissing’s use of his commonplace book materials in *Ryecroft* see his Introduction to *George Gissing’s Commonplace Book* (New York Public Library, 1962).

6 - Gissing wrote most of *Ryecroft* at St. Honoré-les-Bains, and returned to Paris in Dec. 1900. Opposed to the above conjecture is the fact that Bergson’s celebrity did not come until publication of *Creative Evolution* (1907); in the Introduction to *Selections from Bergson* (New York, 1949), the editor Larrabee says that *Matter and Memory* appeared “to the immediate applause of only a few savants.” (p. xiv).

7 - A similar occurrence and reflection may be found in the commonplace book, p. 21 of the New York Public Library ed. Many entries in this book were used in *Ryecroft*, usually in considerably altered and expanded form.

8 - *Commonplace Book*, p. 64.

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9 - *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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To George Gissing

Jack Zucker

[Mr. Jack Zucker, who teaches creative writing and English literature at Marietta College, Marietta (Ohio), has published some twenty poems during the last three years. They have appeared in such journals as *Southern Poetry Review*, *Literary Review*, *Epos*, *Laurel Review*, *California Review*, *Folio*, *Lyric* and other literary magazines. Readers of the *Gissing Newsletter* will also remember his article, “Gissing’s Tragic Thought,” in the April, 1966 number].

They said you hated working men,
And they were right.
Could they endure the prostitution,
The cockney, the fits? Did they
Stumble like Biffen
Over drunks in narrow stairwells
And listen to landladies
Demanding rent?
Did they idealize working men
And live to repent? The real
You saw, and did not care to gloss.
You knew the trickle of gin

Down steep stairways, the exact timbre of blows,
The precise phrasing of rage.

They said you pitied yourself, George Gissing
(And were contemptuous), and you did.
But how many could bear the gibes
Of Edith and come out
Whole, telling the world exactly how
The inferno scorched, delineating the
Stripes, the spot seared red

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And still remember, as in a dream,
The shores of silver and the
Lapping, non-existent sea.

Some Student Reaction to *New Grub Street*

James Haydock
Wisconsin State University

Last spring, for the first time, I included *New Grub Street* in my course on the nineteenth-century English novel. I placed it on a reading list comprised entirely of novels long recognized as the century's best. In such illustrious company it seemed out of place, not in the same league, and yet I wondered whether my students would view it that way. I was curious to know their response to this novel, how they would judge it in relation to the other novels, the "great" ones. On the final examination there would be a question requiring them to rank the novels, one through nine, and to justify their ranking.

Perhaps I should say something about my students. They were all residents of Wisconsin (except a young woman from Kenya), fairly intelligent but not well read, and mostly from a rural or small-town background. They went to high school to please their parents and to college more for training than for an education. All were undergraduates, either juniors or seniors, and only six in the class were males. Most of the twenty-three females looked forward to becoming wives or teachers. Many of my students wanted a course titled "The American Short Story," because it was American and short, while the course they ultimately got was Victorian, English, and long. Yet it seemed better than any offering with "poetry" in its title, and once resigned to a good deal of reading they worked industriously. It was on the whole a good class, by state-university standards, and several made A's.

The examination was comprised of two essay-type questions. The one that interests us here, borrowed from Professor Morton Cohen (see the *Kipling Journal* for June, 1968), was worded as follows:

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List the nine novels you were required to read this term, putting the one you think best at the top of the list, the worst at the bottom, and those of descending excellence in between. Then write an essay defending your list.

Some were irritated by the question, but others, afterwards, termed it “provocative” and “stimulating.” It called for a bit of independent thought, or at least the expression of personal feeling, and it was the kind of question that demanded involvement. For more than two hours they worked with unusual concentration, and for the whole examination virtually every student filled a bluebook. Some had trouble finishing the question in time to answer the other.

The student ratings, when tabulated, showed how the class as a whole ranked the nine novels. A word as to how the data yielded results is perhaps necessary. Following the lead of Professor Cohen, I assigned the number 1 to the novel rated best on each student’s list, the number 9 to the one rated worst, and the appropriate numbers in between for the other novels. Then twenty-nine student ratings of each novel were added for a total figure, the lowest total representing what the class felt to be the best novel and the highest the worst. When these figures were arranged in ascending order of magnitude, the result was a list of the novels in descending order of excellence. The list, with indicative figures following each title, looked like this:

<i>Tess of the D’Urbervilles</i>	73
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	77
<i>The Return of the Native</i>	109
<i>Great Expectations</i>	138
<i>New Grub Street</i>	170
<i>Vanity Fair</i>	177
<i>Bleak House</i>	180
<i>Middlemarch</i>	183
<i>Emma</i>	198

The ranking, almost wholly on the basis of personal appeal, indicates that *New Grub Street* was surprisingly well received. It secured a place exactly in the middle of the master list,

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with four titles above it and four below. I thought surely my students would rate it ninth. Its competition was formidable, and it came at the end of the course when there was too little time for thorough discussion. Indeed, half the class ranked it lower than fifth place, but the other half put it fairly high on their lists. Three students ranked it number one, a distinction given none of the titles on the bottom half of the master list. Seven placed it ninth, but mitigating the effect of this were many who placed it third or fourth.

Some who rated the novel low on their lists revealed, nonetheless, a strong reaction to it: “Jasper Milvain was the most horrible, selfish, conceited individual I have ever encountered in literature, and Alfred Yule the most tyrannical.” Others admitted that its coming at the end of the course, when time was running out, negatively influenced what might have been a good opinion. Several justified low ratings on the basis of tone, subjectivity, and technique. The novel was too somber: “I rated *New Grub Street* ninth for the personal reason that I have an aversion to depression. I thought things would look up for Reardon, but they didn’t.” Gissing revealed too much of himself and thereby intruded upon the narrative: “The mind of the artist must be a mirror to reflect life with as little distortion as possible; when self gets in the way this is not possible.” His technique was lacking in subtlety: “The world of *New Grub Street* was very realistic, but the story was transparent – no involved symbolism, no complex imagistic patterns, no echoes of deeper meaning – and that’s why I would have to rate it lower.”

Many of my students had never heard of Gissing before taking the course, and they were pleased to discover so durable a writer. Said one who ranked *New Grub Street* second: “Gissing, while not a great novelist, surely created a piece of lasting art.” Another commented: “I find it hard to believe that he was not popular during his time and still is not considered a really great artis.” Several were surprised to meet this “novelist of quality” in their last year of study.

Practically all were pleased with Gissing's realism: "This seemed the most realistic of the nine novels studied. I liked the book, enjoyed it very much." "The novel held my interest to the end.

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Its characters were real, and I could easily identify with them." "Gissing has a real knack for getting to the real thing. There's no beating around the bush with him, he tells it like it is." And the word "relevant" appeared in many comments: "Gissing has something to say even now. He speaks to us directly, to any person striving to be heard. His novel is strong, sincere, relevant, and convincing. I was glad to be introduced to him and intend to read more of his work."

As I have said, my students judged *New Grub Street*, and the other novels, almost wholly on the basis of personal appeal. In the remarks of a few I could see a deliberate, almost painful attempt to view the book objectively and critically, but in the long run personal preference won out. Their comments, while entirely subjective, were sometimes forceful and always honest. They liked *New Grub Street*, and they liked it better than *Vanity Fair*, *Bleak House*, *Middlemarch*, or *Emma*. They convinced me that Gissing, represented by at least one novel, belongs in my course.

* * *

Marriage and Class in Gissing's Novels

P. F. Kropholler

"One thing that often gives the clue to a novelist's real feelings on the class question is the attitude he takes up when class collides with sex."

This is a quotation from George Orwell's essay on Dickens. He compares the attitudes some typical Victorian authors take up as regards marriage between different classes.

It may be worth looking at the way Gissing deals with the question in his novels. In the first place "class" is an important element in his work. Secondly, he could speak from experience, considering that he twice married women who were definitely his social inferiors.

How did Gissing regard a marriage in which the man is socially inferior? Orwell pointed out that in this case Dickens retreats into the middle-class attitude, considering such an associa-

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tion either repulsive or treating it as a joke.

Gissing seems to have shared this dislike. The most striking example in his work is that of Mutimer and Adela in *Demos*. There can be no doubt about Gissing's disapproval here: "Only by violent wrenching of the laws of nature had they come together." Gissing continually hammers on the fact that Mutimer is socially inferior. His table manners are uncertain. In spite of a fair amount of reading he remains an uneducated man. He does not even speak the same language as his wife when "club" suggests "Pall Mall" to Adela and a "sick club" to her husband. After Mutimer's death Adela is rewarded with her husband's old enemy, Eldon, who belongs to her own class.

In *Born in Exile* marriage to a woman of a superior class is a symbol of Peak's desire to rise in society. Things become more complicated when he really falls in love with Sidwell. Even so, mercenary motives are at the bottom of his action and though Peak is certainly not an unsympathetic character he stands condemned. His ultimate downfall can be seen only as retribution for essentially base behaviour.

There is less excuse for Dyce Lashmar in *Our Friend the Charlatan*, who lacks even Peak's moral scruples.

Gissing's novels contain rather more examples of a man marrying a social inferior. The reason may be that he had more experience of such a union. Perhaps also such cases were (and are) more frequent in real life.

His very first novel *Workers in the Dawn* describes the utter failure of marriage between Golding and the socially inferior Carrie. The same theme is dealt with in *The Unclassed*, published four years later. Here Waymark and Ida are allowed to be happy together. Waymark, however, is his wife's social superior by conventional standards only. As the title indicates, both stand or claim to stand outside the traditional class system.

In *Thyrza* Egremont falls in love with Thyrza, who comes from a far lower class. Curiously enough, a few years' education makes her too refined for Egremont. When the latter finally marries in his own circle, we are expected to consider this an acceptable solution.

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A Life's Morning describes the successful marriage between Athel and the humble Emily. Perhaps this is not quite a convincing reflection of Gissing's views since originally he seems to have aimed at a version in which Athel and Emily are not united.

In *New Grub Street* the failure of Alfred Yule's marriage is due to a difference in class and even more to an intellectual gap between himself and his wife.

To sum up, judging by his novels, Gissing seems to dislike a man marrying a social superior. It may be connected with what Orwell calls the "Victorian notion of a woman (woman with a capital W) being 'above' a man," at least in theory.

The reverse situation – a man marrying below him – receives only qualified approval. Waymark's union with Ida is represented as being wholly admirable. This may be partly wishful thinking. The effect is, in any case, somewhat neutralized by the failure of Golding and Carrie in an identical situation.

Gissing was often a sceptic with regard to the possibility of marriages being at all happy. If really satisfactory marriages do occur in his novels the couples concerned are more often of roughly similar social backgrounds. In *The Paying Guest* Louise's marriage with a young man of her class is obviously regarded as a satisfactory solution to an awkward situation.

Such couples as Kingcote and Ada (*Isabel Clarendon*), Eldon and Adela (*Demos*), Egremont and Annabel (*Thyrza*), Otway and Irene (*The Crown of Life*), Gammon and Mrs. Clover (*The Town Traveller*) or Ruddiman and Miss Fouracres ("The Pig and Whistle") are widely different. What they do share is a common social status with their respective partners.

In a short story called "In Honour Bound" the scholarly Filmer is about to marry his landlady. When he finds he is too late he comes to feel a "blissful sense of relief and freedom."

On the other hand, Shergold ("A Lodger in Maze Pond") marries the landlady's daughter in spite of his friend's attempts to save him. Characteristically enough, he is represented as weak and inefficient.

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"Like to like" may come nearest to expressing Gissing's point of view after all.

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Book Review

Shigeru Koike
Tokyo Metropolitan University

Sanmon Bunshi, a Japanese translation of *New Grub Street*, with notes and postscript by Osamu Doi. September, 1969. 522 pp. Price: 1,700 yen. Kitazawa Publishing Co. Ltd. (address:

5, 2-chome, Kanda-Jimbocho, Chiyoda- Ku, 101 Tokyo).

The publication of this long-awaited translation means a very remarkable step (or, one giant leap, if you like) in the history of Our Master's reception in Japan, where, in spite of the great popularity of *The Rycroft Papers* and of the short stories during half a century, none of his major novels has been introduced to the ordinary reading public who have no command of English. To such readers Gissing may hitherto have appeared to be a fine essayist, well-read in the classics, but who had little contact with the actual world around him. But now Professor Doi's excellent translation, with a long postscript in which he gives an account of Gissing's life and work with appropriate references to the contemporary literary scene, will help to establish the author as a *novelist* in the strictest sense of the word.

The Japanese title, *Sanmon Bunshi*, which means, if literally rendered into English, "a three-penny man of letters," seems a very good one to me. Some may think it is a foreign expression imported into our language with, say, Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*, but this is not so; it is a native phrase familiar to every Japanese ear and has a peculiar overtone to it. In our literary history there were many who called themselves three-penny hack-writers, or journeymen, and professed that literature was a very ignoble business; but it will be easy to detect that their self-depreciation was just a reversal of intense self-respect – they felt sure that

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they were the chosen few, high above the Philistines who could but assess their sacred works as "three-penny worth."

It is undeniable that such proud writers as disdain to cater for the popular market are getting scarcer and scarcer and are driven away by those who can assert that literature nowadays is a trade, and a very thriving trade, even in our country. So I am not quite sure that young readers in Japan, or for that matter in any country, will deeply sympathise with Reardon or Biffen. They will more easily understand Milvain and Amy as the "real" people in our age. But I believe many will be interested to know that there were the same three-penny men of letters in England almost a century ago and that there are Grub Streets elsewhere than in present-day Japan. The situation Gissing described here has proved to be more universal than he himself might have supposed, as is often the case with great works of art.

Professor Doi now teaches English literature at Kyôritsu Women's College, Tokyo, and he has already translated George Eliot's *Silas Marner*. His interest in Gissing was aroused when he read *Sleeping Fires*, which was recommended by a school-teacher when he was in his teens. Later he wrote some short stories under the pseudonym of "Jôji Gishin" (spelt, of course, in Chinese characters), which he adopted out of admiration for the novelist. During World War II he began to translate *New Grub Street* without any hope of publishing it. Peace was finally restored, and the interest in English literature grew every year, but he had to wait more than twenty years until the opportunity to introduce Gissing's work to the Japanese came through the offer of one daring publisher, and now we can see the fruit of his long patience and application.

* * *

Arthur Morrison and Gissing

P. Coustillas

Literary historians find it convenient to place the work of Arthur Morrison (1863-1945) in the wake of that of Gissing, probably because they both dealt in a realistic manner with subjects

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which were commonly regarded as belonging to low life. Morrison never achieved a vast

popularity but nearly three quarters of a century after he made his mark, he is not forgotten and still has admirers. His masterpiece, *A Child of the Jago*, first appeared in volume form in November 1896, at a time when Gissing had turned his back on the proletarian novel, and the new edition of the book introduced by P. J. Keating which appeared last September is a compelling invitation to take a fresh look at it. The story describes very graphically the brutal, miserable life of a section of the East End outside the bounds of regular society, and belongs to the literature of crime as much as to the social novel. Gissing had read Morrison's previous book, *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894), and noted the fact, but not his critical reactions, in his diary for December 18, 1894, that is about a fortnight after the publication of his ruthless narrative of middle-class suburban life, *In the Year of Jubilee*. Morrison's tales had been widely reviewed and Gissing, who was very observant of the evolution of the literary market and the mushroom reputation of some novelists, had not failed to read *Tales of Mean Streets*. He had no faith in the judgment of the average reviewer and trusted no opinion more than his own. It seems most unlikely that he admired the book, for if he did, his diary should bear some brief token of esteem. Similarly, a strong dislike would probably have been recorded, however briefly. It is reasonable to suppose that Gissing appreciated Morrison's undisputable knowledge of the environment and mentality he described, but that he did not greatly care for a kind of story-telling that resembled a verbatim transcript from conversations heard on the spot. I incline to think that Gissing's cool estimate of Morrison's book was due to the different notions the two men had of the novelist's art. But, whatever the truth may be, he felt moved to read *A Child of the Jago* soon after its publication, and found it "poor stuff" (Diary, December 25, 1896). A re-reading of the story confirms what one had suspected from the first – the judgment is severe, if not unfair. Morrison's narrative is short, well-balanced and absorbing from end to end. It has a further quality for which Gissing had little use in his shorter stories – it is dramatic; but it would be unrewarding to seek in it the many dimensions – historical, autobiographical, philo-

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sophical, artistic – which any Gissing novel has. With *A Child of the Jago* we have a "document," cleverly presented, but we do not feel, as in Dickens, Hardy or Gissing, the presence of a remarkable personality behind the narrative. Yet it should be read as an example of a special type of realism, akin to that of Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*. One can even say that no one should boast a thorough knowledge of late Victorian society without an acquaintance with it. To classify it once for all as a social novel dealing with a marginal class would be misleading. It is part of the literature of roguery, which attained popularity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with books like *Jonathan Wild*, *Oliver Twist* and *Jack Sheppard*. Already, with Wilkie Collins, one is moving towards the detective novel and one's surprise is all the greater to find the tradition continued or revived as late as the last decade of the last century.

Gissing scholars and readers cannot fail to be arrested by the dedication of *A Child of the Jago* to Arthur Osborne Jay, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch. Jay, who appears in the novel as Father Sturt, was the man who had plagiarized *The Nether World* in his book *The Social Problem and Its Solution*. And of this precisely Mr. Keating reminds us in his introduction, but only to rebut the charge of plagiarism. He rightly notes that Morrison was accused of having plagiarized Jay and that Jay exonerated his friend Morrison of the charge, and that later "Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* was described as a plagiarism of Morrison's *Jago*," but when he refuses to believe that Jay had borrowed from *The Nether World* without acknowledging his debt, he overlooks the facts. The accusation came from Gissing himself, who wrote to *The Times* about his discovery. Jay admitted that he had misappropriated a passage of *The Nether World*. He said he had meant to indicate his source, but sheepishly acknowledged that he had asked a friend to read the proofs of his book, whereupon the printer wrote to *The Times* accusing himself of having suppressed certain quotation marks! And for a few days the London press carried many sarcastic paragraphs on the affair. Consequently, the charge brought against

the Rev. Jay cannot be regarded, according to Mr. Keating's suggestion, as a refusal on the part of critics "to believe the widespread nature of the life described," in succession, by Gissing, Jay

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and Morrison. The remark can only be applied to Morrison and Maugham.

This being said, the twenty-five page introduction to this most welcome new edition of *A Child of the Jago* (MacGibbon & Kee, 45s.) is as remarkable by its substance as by its tone. Mr. Keating has put together as many facts as are known about Morrison's mysterious life, and if his narrative of necessity rests on many assumptions akin to those of a detective, he has perhaps reconstructed as much of the author's life as will ever be known, since Morrison destroyed all he could destroy that might shed light on his origin and personality. He was certainly very different from Gissing. He ran no risk of being fascinated by his material and indeed, when he had written a few further stories more or less in the same vein, he turned to collecting and dealing in Japanese prints and English watercolours, and thrived on the occupation. His good-bye to Grub Street shows that there was in him more of Whelpdale and Milvain than of Reardon and Biffen. Ultimately, Gissing's rather surprising attitude to Morrison's best book can easily enough be elucidated – in his article on "Realism in Fiction" (*The Humanitarian*, July 1895), he had clearly stated his preference for a personal, humane realism, that of Reardon rather than that of Biffen, with which in the mid-nineties he doubtless came to equate Morrison's art. Time does not seem to have given him the lie.

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Gissing entries in *The New York Times*

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Twice on Sunday, October 5th, 1969, the name of George Gissing arose in the pages of the Book Review Section of *The New York Times*. This occurrence is unusual according to the memory of this reader, who seldom if ever finds Gissing referred to in the columns of the *Times*. On this occasion, however, our author is mentioned among a number of writers garnishing a

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prominent review by Steven Marcus of John Gross's *Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. And George Gissing is in bold relief in the reference, not present by sufferance. He is also mentioned in a capsule review of *A Traveller in Southern Italy* by H. V. Morton. The reviewer, unknown, speaks of Morton's exploration of "the lesser known regions of the South in the steps of Norman Douglas, Edward Lear, George Gissing, Henry Swinburne and other doughty Englishmen who braved bandits and malaria to consummate their passion." It was a good day for Gissing in the pages of the *Times*.

It has not always been so for him in that august body. While his name pops up occasionally in a piece, it is ever so occasionally. I speak here of analyses not directly connected with Gissing works, but of such coverage that the reader might expect in connection with the appearance of the author's name. Pamela Hansford Johnson on March 12th, 1967 in a discussion of John Galsworthy's chances for re-emergence speaks of Gissing and Meredith in a similar vein, though not with any sanguinity. Such appearances of the Gissing name have been rare. But it is in direct connection with Gissing works that omission of the author has been very noticeable and glaring. Jacob Korg's biography was given summary treatment in review in 1963 by a capsule analysis, which by virtue of its relative slightness was never included in the *Times Index*. This oversight will be corrected in the future as a result of intercession by this reader.

The following are the total references to George Gissing directly over the last thirty years.

- 1942 - Discussion by Philip Brooks of the Adams donation of a Gissing book collection to the Yale University Library. Mr 1, VI, 18:4.
Box announcing the Yale exhibition of the Adams acquisition. Je 21, II, 5:3.
- 1949 - Announcement of sale of Gissing letters and manuscripts in New York City. N 11, 8:3.
- 1953 - Announcement of exhibit of Gissingiana on the fiftieth anniversary of the author's death, New York Public Library. D 28, 23:2.

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- 1954 - Review by Carlos Baker of Mabel Collins Donnelly's biography. Mr 28, VII, 4:4.
- 1963 - Capsule review by Morton N. Cohen of Jacob Korg's biography. N 24, VII, 26:5.
The harvest has been starvation level. We need more nutrition from the *New York Times*.

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Recent Publications

New Grub Street, translated into Japanese by Osamu Doi, published by Kitazawa Publishing Co. Ltd., Tokyo, 1969. A fine volume in black cloth with gilt titling in a cardboard slipcase. The frontispiece reproduces the photograph of Gissing which first appeared in the volume of his correspondence with H.G. Wells.

Isabel Clarendon, edited with a critical introduction by Pierre Coustillas, The Harvester Press, Brighton, Sussex, 1969. In two volumes, blue cloth with gilt titling.

The Odd Women, Stein and Day, New York, 1968. Introduction by Frank Swinnerton. Green cloth with gilt titling. No. 9 in the Doughty Library.