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Edited by

Rebecca Hutcheon

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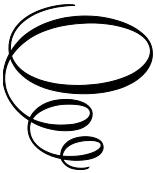

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

REBECCA HUTCHEON

What might we mean by the place of realism? In Gissing's essay of the same name, which interrogates realism as a term and practice, 'place' refers to realism's position as a literary method. But, as Gissing examines artistic perception and representation of the world, 'the place of realism' might just as easily include the spatial aspects of fiction. With this in mind, *George Gissing and the Place of Realism* adopts just this kind of dual focus: situating Gissing's writings in realism but also the spatialities of his fiction. This kind of concentration on place in realism isn't as habitual as it might seem. In literary theory, realism has been habitually understood in one of two ways: in its opposition to romance or idealism (a reactionary movement to its Romantic predecessor), or in its commitment to historical veracity.[1] So what is generally emphasised, in both interpretations, is teleology. Realism is often understood as documenting or reflecting the here and now: "*the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to the descriptions of similar experiences in non-literary texts of the same culture*. Realistic fiction, being concerned with the action of individuals in time, approximates history" (Lodge, 1989).[2] Action, causality, time, history – here realism depends on teleological movement.

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[1] David Masson's book, *British Novelists and their Styles* (1859), which identifies 'realism' and 'idealism' as two opposing trends in the nineteenth-century novel, is just one example of the contemporaneous critical debate initiating the long-lasting binary. The debate continued throughout the period. See, Andrew Lang, "Realism and Romance," *Contemporary Review* 52 (1887), Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", 375-408 in *Partial Portraits* (1888; repr. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970), and Stevenson's reply, "A Humble Remonstrance" (1884) in *A Victorian Art of Fiction: Essays on the Novel in British Periodicals*, 3 vols, ed. J C Olmsted (vol 1: 1830-1850; vol. 2: 1851-1869; vol. 3: 1870-1890) (New York: Garland, 1979), 285-306; 342-9. For its persistence as a theory, see M H Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 303, Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London: Vintage, 2015), 9-10.

[2] David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonym, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (1989; repr. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 32, italics original. See also Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious:*

But, and as this volume seeks to address, realism is just as concerned with the 'here' as the now. For Gissing, as Bouwe Postmus has succinctly demonstrated, imagination has a strong spatial grounding.[3] And, as a letter in which Gissing instructs his brother in novel writing registers, rooting narrative in place is also a key aspect of good artistic practice. "Begin", Gissing advises, "describing Bamburgh under sunset" – start, in other words, with setting and develop characters and action from there.[4] Gissing's spatial descriptions have been periodically associated with a variety of places. For contemporary critics he was the author of slums *par excellence*. The eminent Victorian sociologist Charles Booth praised Gissing for the efficacy of *Demos* (1886) as an accurate representation of working-class London, and Arthur Osborne Jay, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch, borrowed – though without recognition – Gissing's description in *The Nether World* (1889) of winter in Clerkenwell for his own book *The Social Problem and Its Solution*.[5] Where propounders of social science and charitable intervention recognised their regions in his prose, Gissing was also, to other contemporaneous reviewers, "the author of the suburbs", with one reader dubbing him "the English Balzac of middle-class suburban life".[6] And, as though that weren't enough, Augustus John Cuthbert Hare used Gissing's description of the village of West Dene in his 1894 guidebook for Sussex.[7] The sheer volume of detected corollaries alone suggests that there is something about Gissing's prose that captures the essence of place. But the situational, narratorial, and stylistic variety – slum and suburb, city and county; diegesis and mimesis; polemic, high realism, guidebook – also suggests that, when we speak of Gissing's *place*, we might more accurately say Gissing's *places*.

The 'here' in literary criticism may routinely have been interpreted as a setting and, as a result, understood as less central than time – the 'now'.

Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), ix, where he cites "Always historicise" as the "moral" of the book.

[3] Bouwe Postmus, "George Gissing's Scrapbook: A Storehouse of 'Elements of Drama to be Fused and Minted in his Brain," in *Gissing and the City*, ed. John Spiers (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2005), 199-211.

[4] Pierre Coustillas, Paul F. Matthiessen and Arthur C Young, eds. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* in 10 vols (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-97), 2 (1991), 178.

[5] Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* in 3 vols (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2012), vol. 2, 192.

[6] "Unsigned Review of *The Paying Guest*" 264-5 in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 264.

[7] Augustus John Cuthbert Hare, *Sussex* (London: George Allen, 1894), 115-16.

But the now well-established spatial turn, produced by a pan-disciplinary crossover of ideas, has meant that literary place is understood as more complex than a passive backdrop against which action happens. Instead, place and space are seen as dynamic products of cultural movements, encounter and variance. According to Edward Soja, the spatial turn meant a "reassertion of space in critical social theory" and "an uncovering and conflation of hidden spatial narratives persisting under the dominant historical imagination".[8] The present volume aims at just this kind of "uncovering", exploring as it does the hidden spatial narratives of Gissing's oeuvre, engaging with the 'here' as well as the 'now' of his novelistic worlds.

The "dominant historical imagination" is evident in early Gissing criticism in readings that were quick to identify him as a realist and, in doing so, drawing attention to the rigorously contemporaneous aspect of Gissing's work. To H G Wells, Gissing's novels are "deliberate attempts to present in typical groupings distinct phases of our social order", their interest being "strictly contemporary".[9] To George Orwell they are "tied more tightly than most […] to a particular place and time" [10], and for Arnold Bennett they are concerned with "all the usual meanness of our daily existence".[11] Typicality, distinctness, social order, particularity, the usual, the quotidian; all this suggests an identifiable, pragmatic and authentic quality in Gissing's prose and what it describes. There is also, with "strictly", "order", and "tightly [...] tied", a sense of restriction along with an implicit lack of imaginative freedom innate in the form.

The recognition of presentness also indicates universality and comparativeness – both Wells and Bennett use the collective pronoun ("our social order", "our daily existence"). Gissing, they suggest, writes about the here and now, and that here and now is an experiential commonplace. This finds a parallel in what David Lodge describes as the late realists' "assumption that there is a common phenomenal world that may be reliably described by the methods of empirical history" – as expounded in the fiction of Bennett and Wells.[12] In their criticism, Gissing's realist critics are pursuing signs of a shared whole that aligns with their own artistic practice.

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[8] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London: Verso, 1989), 12.
[9] H G Wells, *Contemporary Review*, pp. 298-306 in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, 298, 305.
[10] George Orwell, "'Not Enough Money'**:** A Sketch of George Gissing", *Tribune,* 2 April 1943, 45-47 in *Works* XV: *Two Wasted Years*, 45.
[11] Arnold Bennett, "Mr George Gissing, an Inquiry," 361-364 in *The Critical Heritage*, 362.
[12] Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, 47.

After all, according to Bennett, realism, as opposed to idealism and romanticism, means taking "the common grey things which people know and despise, and, without tampering, to disclose their epic significance, their essential grandeur" (Bennett, 362). Such profundity is realised in Gissing's ability to perceive and portray "a large coherent movement", to evoke "from the most obscure phenomena a large ominous idea", and to see "broadly, in vast wholes" (Bennett, 363). "[W]ithout tampering" is key. To Bennett, Gissing's art is successful because it condenses snippets of commonplace material into a collective unit without the interfering influence of idealisation. But when Bennett complains that Gissing's "pictures have no cynosure for the eye", that his narratives are a "maze of episodes each interrupting the others", he identifies a measured narrative programme and isolated singularities at odds with traditional realist structures.

Modernist critics, however, far from recognised their own means of aesthetic and formal innovation in Gissing's works. Virginia Woolf asserts that Gissing "reverenced facts and had no faculty it seems (his language is meagre and unmetaphorical) for impressions".[13] Woolf's response appears principally determined by a modernist rejection of outmoded ways of writing and its seeming devotion to material culture, akin to the criticism levelled in essays such as "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" and "Modern Fiction".[14] In an effort, perhaps, to emphasise the difference between Gissing's art and her own, Woolf constructs an amplified binary between fact and impression. But, for all the geographical specificity and documentary exactitude of Gissing's prose it is all, of course, only an impression of the real. The reader, such as Woolf, may be coaxed into accepting his writing as referential but any such "facts" are selected, selective, subjective and personal. What's more, the 'real' is frequently disrupted by the self-reflexive tendencies of Gissing's fiction that register a limitation to omniscience. Gissing's reputation as a composer of documentary-style pseudo-fictions, then, is at least in part a result of a clash between realist and modernist agendas. As John Sloan explains, "his place continues to be that of a literary curiosity who stands between two major periods of literary art".[15]

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[13] Virginia Woolf, "George Gissing," 222-23 in *The Common Reader*, Second Series (London: Hogarth Press, 1932), 223.

[14] Woolf, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," 32-36 in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), and "Modern Fiction," 157-165 in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4: 1925 to 1928*, ed. andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984).

[15] John Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 1.

Henry James, having traversed the now well-trodden ground that Gissing's acquaintance with the lower classes make him "*the* authority […] on a region vast and unexplored", moves on to examine that age-old distinction of dialogue and narrative. His complaint is that Gissing "overdoes the ostensible report of spoken words".[16] To James, "colloquy", or the mimetic reportage of speech, is a problem because it smothers the author's voice. A vote from James, then, for diegesis and authorial control. But Gissing's use, or overuse, of direct speech certainly doesn't mean that the narrative voice has been banished. In fact, the over-saturated quality, and the jarred impression of an author in exile that James identifies, registers an uneasy tension between diegesis and mimesis that is a leitmotif of Gissing's late realism. In any case, the tendency to rely on dialogue, whether internalised or not, was a stylistic issue that Gissing also registers. *New Grub Street* (1891), Gissing's self-referential novel about writing, is disparaging of the overreliance on dialogue as a means of fleshing out the hefty three-volume realist novel. Experiencing writer's block, protagonist Edwin Reardon resorts to:

> [d]escription of locality, deliberate analysis of character or motive, demanded far too great an effort for his present condition. He kept as much as possible to dialogue; the space is filled so much more quickly, and at a pinch one can make people talk about the paltriest incidents of life.[17]

Later, Harold Biffen's project to reproduce the diction of the working-class "verbatim" receives ironic treatment at the hands of the narrator.[18] This draws attention to the artistic vacuity of speech-for-speech's sake. It also suggests, *contra* Woolf and James, that Gissing understood successful art, even in the realist tradition, as something quite different to simple "saturated" and unimaginative reproduction. Moving from imaginative exploration to theory, Gissing claimed elsewhere that realism isn't just "the laborious picturing of the dullest phases of life".[19] He recognised that the word itself was a slippery term:

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[16] Henry James, *Harper's Weekly*, 31 July, 1897, 754, 290-95 in *The Critical Heritage*, 291; 292

[17] George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (1890; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 110-11.

[18] Ibid, 128.

[19] George Gissing, "The Place of Realism in Fiction", 217-21 in *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative from the Works of George Gissing, with Biographical and Critical Notes by His Son*, ed. Alfred Charles Gissing (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1929), 218. All further references will be from this edition and given in the text as "Place of Realism".

> I observe that the word realistic has, in journalistic language, come to mean simply 'revolting' or 'painful'. In the *Star* of to-day, March 18, '89, is an account of a *Lancet* report on Cradley Heath, & the foll. examples of the word occur:
>
> 'The realistic description of this region is *accurate*.' This is not mere tautology, you see. And again: 'Here is an account, equally *realistic*, of a house in this blighted region'.[20]

To Gissing, the term 'realism' is overused and misused, having become a synonym for either dreary mimesis or crudeness. And his essay concludes that "it signifies nothing more than artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life" ("Place of Realism", 220). The imperative of Gissing's fictional aesthetic, one that he repeats in his letters, journalism and writings on Dickens, is the vital importance of "sincerity". Sincerity doesn't mean a universal accuracy or the presentation of objective truth. There is, after all, "no science of fiction" ("Place of Realism", 220). Nor does it mean pandering to "the habit of mind which assumes that a novel is written 'to please people'" ("Place of Realism", 221). Like Bennett, Gissing views idealism as contrary to realism. Artistic value depends on subjectivity as much as sincerity: "depicting some portion of human life as candidly and vividly as is in the author's power" ("Place of Realism", 219; 220). This is a point that Gissing reiterates again and again: the artist sees "only a part of the actual", "a world of his own", "that world as it exists to him" ("Place of Realism", 221). "[A] true artist", Gissing later contended, "gives us pictures which represent his own favourite way of looking at life".[21] This personal vision of the world is in many ways at odds with the impression of a shared reality that Bennett and Wells conjure up from Gissing's writings.

In fact, Gissing's writing on writing suggests a commitment to something more layered than material realism's preoccupation with "the common things" or Woolf's "facts". A serious novelist's aim should be "to expose the secrets of the mind, to show humanity in its external combat with fate" ("Place of Realism", 218). The external world alone is not a sufficient subject for art since the surface constitutes only part of the real; sincere realism concerns how individual perception conceives of it. The aim to "show", or to "expose", the mental landscape corresponds with James's own belief that fiction must have an "air of reality" connected to "the atmosphere

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[20] George Gissing, *Commonplace Book: A Manuscript in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library*, ed. Jacob Korg (New York: New York Public Library, 1962), 41.

[21] Simon J. James, ed., *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, Vol. 2, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, (Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2004), 231.

of the mind". Both novelists contend that "the only reason for the existence of the novel" is its "attempt to represent life".[22]

Despite all his arguments for personality in the mode of realism, Gissing advocates elements of the impersonal in its execution. "The artist", he explains "must not come forward among his characters".[23] He frequently expressed frustration at critics that read novels as political polemics, complaining that, in reviews, "the novelist is often represented as holding an opinion which he simply attributes to one of his characters".[24] Elsewhere, Gissing expounds his views on narrative detachment in his advice to his brother Algernon on writing:

> omit the *instructive* part of the description. Hints of association are of course needful, but let them only fill up the background […] the secret art of fiction is the *indirect*. Nothing must be told too plumply […] don't give hints of what's to come […] never treat your story as a story, but as a simple narration of facts.[25]

In his definition of the "secret art of fiction", Gissing warns against the most diegetic form of writing and the overbearing narratorial technique of self-reflection. This is an instance of Gissing distancing himself from the older school of realism. The newer method of realism, he wrote elsewhere, is "[f]ar more artistic […] merely suggesting" and

> dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies. The old novelist is omniscient; I think it is better to tell a story precisely as one does in real life, - hinting, surmising, telling in detail what *can* so be told, & no more. In fact, it approximates to the dramatic mode of presentation'[26]

He may, like James, have esteemed the art of suggestion but showing alone is not enough. In 1892, when approaching "the complex life of to-day", Gissing asserts that:

> [t]o talk about being "objective" is all very well for those who swear by words. No novelist was ever objective or will ever be. His work is a bit of

[22] Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", 375-408 in *Partial Portraits* (1888; repr. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970), 390; 378.
[23] George Gissing, "Why I Don't Write Plays", *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, 10 Sept. 1892: n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 9 November 2020.
[24] *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 5 (1994), 176.
[25] *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 2 (1991), 178-79.
[26] *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 2, (1991), 320.

> life as seen by *him*. It is his business to make us feel a distinct pleasure in seeing the world with *his* eyes'.[27]

Unlike the full impressions attempted in fact reporting or in the linearity of unabridged biography, then, the novelistic world is one transmuted by the artistic gaze. That "bit of life" consists of a multitude of fragments, consciences, and styles drawn together in one of many possible views. The author is the first among equals, claiming neither truth nor objectivity, but a certain, consciously idiosyncratic take on the world.

With this in mind, the chapters in this volume address the difficulties faced when locating Gissing's writings, their places and how they interrelate. It is a less usual theme, perhaps, since Gissing criticism has tended towards focus on class and gender frequently – though not always – with a biographical slant. You'll find these themes and approaches in this volume, but with a markedly spatial incline, alongside discussions of Gissing's position in the history of literature and ideas. Where the first part of the book concentrates on Gissing's places, and the second on Gissing's place, the two halves work in tandem. This is because, as Finch's chapter on Gissing and the slum novel makes clear, discussions of place are often inextricably tied up with discussions of realism. In *George Gissing and the Place of Realism*, the entire span of Gissing's career is addressed, from Russo's examination of the early American stories of Gissing's time in America through to later works as discussed by Tait and Lage. The volume also covers the array of Gissing's places – nationally, in the slums and the city, the suburbs, the provinces – and internationally as, for instance, Olivieri examines *By the Ionian Sea*. Just as wide is the scope of form, with chapters on short stories, on travel writing, on pseudo-autobiography, three-volume novels and novellas. These chapters include new angles on and approaches to Gissing's most renowned fictions, such as Mackenney's reading of newness in *New Grub Street* and Hutcheon's take on the oddness of *The Odd Women*, yet also celebrate many of Gissing's lesser-known works such as Lage's examination of the New Woman trope in *Our Friend the Charlatan* and Villa's piece on provincial-set texts like *A Life's Morning* and *Denzil Quarrier*. What these chapters collectively illustrate is that Gissing, though attentive to contemporary issues, is neither uncomplicatedly realist nor are his writings uncomplicated historical records of place.

This volume begins with four chapters on Gissing and what Henri Lefebvre has defined as 'spatial practice', the movements of everyday life,

[27] George Gissing, 'Why I Don't Write Plays', *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, 10 Sept. 1892: n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 9 May 2019

or, in de Certeau's terminology, space as 'tour'.[28] Richard Dennis' chapter, "George Gissing, Geographer?", examines Gissing's perception and depiction of place alongside the geographical discipline that emerged in his lifetime. In asking what Gissing's use of real and thoroughly researched locations signifies, Dennis notes Gissing's acute sensitivity to the nuances of place, concluding that the novelist can be understood as a natural rather than a theoretical geographer. In terms of space, and its depiction, Dennis focuses on Gissing's employment of maps and atlases, both in his own practice and in their use by his characters, partly as ways of authenticating their behaviour, and partly as forms of unspoken communication.

London's geography, and how characters move within it, is the key focus of Jason Finch's chapter "*Workers in the Dawn*, Slum Writing and London's 'Urban Majority' Districts". To Finch, the balance of report and invention, of energetic and precise research and its creative rendering in fiction, and – central to the paradox of realism itself – of fact and fiction, creates the ambiguity so frequently identified in Gissing's works. Finch's account of the 'urban majority' and its interest in the many can help answer for and explain this obliqueness. Where Dennis's analysis traces movement across space, Finch's moves inwards examining what has been called the "mania for slumming" of the late 1870s and early 1880s.[29] In his appraisal, Finch positions *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Unclassed* in the literary and geographical context of the slum. The whole matter, Finch suggests, is closely intertwined with the period's debate over the label "realism".

Continuing the kinetic theme, José Diaz Lage's "Four Lady Cyclists" examines Gissing and movement by way of the bicycle. Where Dennis and Finch concentrates on the early novels, and the walkable and walked city within – the chance encounters, the permeable boundaries – Lage's chapter shifts the focus to the latter half of Gissing's career. Here, Lage asserts, mobility encourages a crossing of boundaries or, perhaps, an unconscious challenge to their implied restrictions. The bicycle is identified as an emblem of modernity connected with the New Women. In Gissing's narratives Lage recognises a distinction between forms of mobility: the circular movement of exercise and rationality, and the more linear routes of exploration. The latter, associated with independent travel, has more contentious undertones. But, Lage argues, despite being a tool of emancipation, and – in *Our Friend the Charlatan* specifically – contributing

[28] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans by D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, S. Rendall, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117-22.
[29] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 208.

to the surprisingly positive image of the New Women, its potential democratisation is simultaneously undermined – a liberating commodity nevertheless remains a commodity.

If, in Gissing's later works, movement can symbolise caveated freedoms, the post-movement of exile is synonymous with stasis, as Michele Russo explains. In examining Gissing's early years in America and the writings he composed there, Russo's chapter "Gissing's Literary (Mis)Fortunes in America: Exile and Transculturalism in the American Short Stories" registers the displacement of the artistic nucleus. What emerges through Russo's analysis is that the spatial structure in Gissing is often figured in the juxtaposing forces of the centre and the periphery. In exile, a persistent leitmotif of Gissing's works, the centre and the self are disconcertingly subverted; England remains at the subjective and artistic centre, and America lies at the alienated peripheries.

For Adrian Tait, such propensity to escape is one of inward- rather than outward-looking tendencies. Where the preceding chapters follow the thread of movement in Gissing's works, Tait's chapter is concerned with the intrinsic stillness of retirement and the act of scrutiny. From an ecocritical point of view, Tait explains, the keen botanical alertness of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is less about forgetting others as it is about forgetting the self and can counterbalance contemporaneous (and contemporary) anxieties of the loss of the natural world. Approaching Gissing's creation from an eco-critical perspective allows Tait to consider how and in what ways Ryecroft truly learns how to 'dwell', but also to ask whether the "lustrum of quiet contentment" is itself more accurately regarded as the wishful dream of a deracinated and troubled writer.[30]

The botanical thread and the spatial construct of the periphery continues in Luisa Villa's long chapter "The Quarries on the Heath: The Imprint of Place and Gissing's Wakefield Stories". Here Villa examines earlier portrayals of the provincial north, offering a re-reading of the marginal places in *A Life's Morning* (1888), *Born in Exile* (1891), and *Denzil Quarrier* (1892). Through her analysis of *A Life's Morning*, Villa expounds the novel's perspective as essentially that of the returning native. In the portrayal of the atypical provincial and traditional town of Dunfield, with its emphasis on the trivial and partiality, the idea of the local takes on connotations of narrowness and limitation. Yet, Villa posits, another aspect of the provincial emerges in Gissing's writings: that of the botanist and local scientist. This facet is rendered spatially in the topographies of the quarries, which come to take on elements of the geological sublime.

[30] George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (London: Constable, 1929), x.

The spatial constructs of nostalgia also inform Marco Olivieri's chapter "The Imaginative Delight: A Geography of the Dream in Thomas Hardy and George Gissing". Where the provincial is caught up in personal history, Olivieri examines the spatialisation of collective memory via a comparative analysis of George Gissing and Thomas Hardy. Both writers look to the ancient world not only as an intellectual desire, but as a unique 'dream' moment of History: Gissing retraces the cultural signs of Magna Graecia in a memorable journey to southern Italy told in *By the Ionian Sea* (1901); Hardy conceives of Wessex and the vestiges left by the Romans as a magical and ritual mindset in which the natural cycles of Time blend with old legends and superstitions. Hardy's Wessex and the Magna Graecia as described by François Lenormant (whose path Gissing faithfully follows), become the archetypical scenario acting as a symbolic remedy against the threat of the new technological inventions that undermine the traditional values of the past. To Olivieri, the constantly changing geography of human agency is actually connected to the heterotopy of imagination, a place that unravels myths, reinvents them, and finally avoids the catastrophe of History that forgets itself harnessed by the new demands of modernity.

The following two papers return focus to Gissing's London locations, starting with a reappraisal of suburbia in Rebecca Hutcheon's response to the uncanny domestic in *The Odd Women* (1893). Here the conflict between movement and stasis come into sharp relief when positioned along the often-gendered lines of the late-Victorian city. Hutcheon pitches the novel's meticulous depictions of public spaces, streets, and parks against the private spaces of the home from which, when read alongside Gissing's narrative of place as diegesis, metaphorical qualities arise. In *The Odd Women* domestic space is particularly multifarious, at times idealised, at times demonised, but most frequently rendered with an irony with draws these seeming antipodes together. This eliding of opposites results in a fraught spatial dialectic, alive with hostilities and subversions and, with it, the divided and often strange identities of the characters are embodied and revealed.

Francesca Mackenney's chapter "'The Way to Literature': Gissing, Dickens and the Place of Influence" also explores conflict, this time between newness and originality, recognising in the former a recurrent parody of the new sitting uncomfortably beside a post-Darwinian anxiety of lack of originality which manifests itself, in part, in the intense ambivalence of the latter. Focusing on *New Grub Street* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Mackenney explores how Gissing's invocations of Charles Dickens in his descriptions of London reflect his developing interest in the nature of literary association and artistic influence, and the artistic value of

'newness' and 'originality'. In both his writing on Dickens and his fiction, Gissing turned his attention to what he calls, in his essay on 'The Homes and Haunts of Charles Dickens' (1902), Dickens's own "way to literature": the places and literary 'associations' which had in turn shaped him as a writer. Although Gissing's narratives have been read as signalling a 'new' approach to the 'new' London of the late nineteenth century, this chapter will discuss two novels which reflect Gissing's developing scepticism with regard to a market-led demand for new and yet newer books.

Also locating Gissing, though this time in the history of ideas as well as of literature, Jeremy Tambling's closing chapter, "Art for Art's Sake and the World as an Aesthetic Phenomenon: Gissing and Ruskin" gives a monumental account of the double spanning Gissing's literary career from *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) and *The Unclassed*, via *New Grub Street* and *By the Ionian Sea*, and ending with *Ryecroft*. Tambling demonstrates how the infinite splitting of the self, prevalent in the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, is also a persistent and enduring theme in Gissing's works. Gissing's artist characters – Golding, Waymark, Reardon – in their search for the desire for beauty – undergo a Schopenhauerean division and subsequent weakening of the will which leads to a rejection of the possibility of social improvement. To Tambling, a passage in *Ryecroft* perfectly explicates Gissing's divergence from the Ruskinian emphasis on the social importance of art:

> One obvious reason for the long neglect of Turner lies in the fact that his genius does not seem to be truly English. Turner's landscape, even when it presents familiar scenes, does not show them in the familiar light. Neither the artist nor the intelligent layman is satisfied. He gives us glorious visions; we admit the glory – but we miss something which we deem essential. I doubt whether Turner tasted rural England; I doubt whether the spirit of English poetry was in him; I doubt whether the essential significance of the common things which we call beautiful was revealed to his soul. Such doubt does not affect his greatness as a poet in colour and in form, but I suspect that it has always been the cause why England could not love him. [31]

Ryecroft notes a strangeness in Turner's sense of place, as compared to Constable's – something that is not quite English and for this reason Turner's art cannot be termed patriotic. Perhaps this sense of strangeness can be said, too, of Gissing's places. At times, and particularly from exile, England or home is celebrated and coveted for its homogeneity and stability

[31] Gissing, *Ryecroft*, 149.

and yet, elsewhere, it is ironised. Any sense of constancy, in Gissing, is fundamentally unachievable.

Together, the chapters of this volume register how discussions of Gissing's writings are bound up with place and placing: in time, in space, in perception. *George Gissing and the Place of Realism* re-examines Gissing's work and world as "that bit of life seen by him", a writer alert to the very real geographical or spatial implications of class, gender and selfhood, and how place and realism are received and conceptualised critically. It recognises that there is more to Gissing's artistic worlds than a mere transposition of the commonplace. These chapters reveal that frequently in Gissing's works locations are charged with recurring emblematic significance, modified by imagination and fraught with irony. This multitudinous aspect has been aptly identified by Christine Huguet. On the one hand, Huguet explains "the reportage elements in Gissing's vision […] bear witness to his lifelong allegiance to realist art" as seen in the "veridictory modalities" of his writings. But, as Huguet goes on to clarify, such "real" elements "coax the reader into acceptance of the mimesis" thus constituting a "referential illusion".[32] Shaped by subjectivity, the "conscientious empiricism" of Gissing's worlds are, of course, all a guise. And, more than this, "the world as it appears to *him*" is not always the world according to Gissing. Subjectivity, it emerges, is not simply a case of uncomplicatedly presenting the perspective of writer. In fact, it is mobile, shifting between different consciences so that the sincerely wrought "parts of the actual" are imagined perspectives exposing the secrets of the mind.

[32] Christine Huguet, "'Muddy depths': The Thames in Gissing's Fiction," 162-170 in *Gissing and the City*, 162.

CHAPTER 1

GEORGE GISSING, GEOGRAPHER?

RICHARD DENNIS

Half a century ago, C.J. Francis, then a regular contributor to the recently established *Gissing Newsletter*, penned a series of short essays on "Gissing's Characterisation," in which he addressed themes of "Heredity," "Environment," and "Temperament".[1] Discussing "Environment," Francis was most concerned with the social and psychological circumstances with which Gissing surrounded his characters, especially penury (or wealth) in the case of the early "slum novels," and "religious upbringing," for example in the case of Miriam Baske in *The Emancipated*. These were circumstances which constrained characters' behaviour if not determined their fate. Francis contrasted "the romantic novelist, who believes, for instance, that virtue will always triumph over adversity, and the realist who believes that constant adversity will eventually diminish virtue." Francis highlighted "the special effect of poverty" and in particular its "depressing and disabling effect" as common to the interests of "most realists," among whom he counted Gissing.[2]

The environments in which Gissing set his stories were not abstractly "rich" or "poor," or "liberal" or "puritanical"; they were physical landscapes and cityscapes. In these cases, environment was variously natural, socio-economic, and also geometric. Gissing's letters, diaries and scrapbook as well as his fiction offer substantial evidence of his sensitivity to weather, flora and fauna, geology and the morphology of landscape. They also demonstrate his acute awareness of the status connotations of place, both as he observed them himself and as they were recorded by social investigators such as Charles Booth, whose *Life and Labour of the People*

[1] C.J. Francis, "Gissing's Characterisation: I. Heredity," *Gissing Newsletter* 3, no. 1 (April 1967): 1-5; "II. Environment," *Gissing Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (June 1967): 3-7; "III. Temperament," *Gissing Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (September 1967): 1-6.

[2] Francis, "Environment," 4.

in London was published when Gissing was in mid-career.[3] Gissing was also meticulous in plotting spatial relations – the distances and routes between locations, their relative accessibility, the time and the transport networks needed to get between different places.

All of this suggests an intimate link between Gissing as a realist novelist and geography as a subject concerned with the "real": the hard facts of environment and space. Yet, as the historical geographer Hugh Prince noted in 1971, long before the "cultural turn," geography is concerned not only with "real" but also with "imagined" and "abstract" worlds.[4] More elaborately, Henri Lefebvre's discussion of "the production of space" highlighted three ways of thinking about space: as conceptualised, perceived and lived.[5] In his novels, Gissing was a consummate "producer of space" and he recognized symbolic, unstable and personally differentiated characterisations of space. In his own volatile spatial history, and at a variety of scales, environments that at one moment seemed ideal quickly became oppressive. Moving into 7K Cornwall Residences, a purpose-built flat behind Baker Street Station, Gissing first expressed his enthusiasm for flat-living but soon discovered the downside and ended up (in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, but certainly expressing his own opinion) by castigating flats and their inhabitants.[6] Near-slums in which he lived in London in the late 1870s acquired the patina of nostalgic sanitation by the time he wrote *Ryecroft*. Even if we deny the equivalence of Ryecroft with his creator, there are numerous instances of Gissing contradicting himself in his correspondence with his friends and family. "Myriad-voiced London," which "every year" offered him "more opportunity for picturing" was simultaneously a place he hated more and more, from which he longed to escape.[7] He moved to Exeter, to a situation which "could not be better," and a city with "a fairly good Public Library, […] a more than fairly good Museum, [and] tolerably alive to intellectual interests," but within months

[3] Kevin Bales, "Charles rswe's survey of *Life and Labour of the People in London 1889-1903*," in *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective 1880-1940*, edited by Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales and K.K. Sklar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 66-110.

[4] Hugh C. Prince, "Real, imagined, and abstract worlds of the past," *Progress in Geography* 3 (1971): 4-86.

[5] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

[6] Richard Dennis, "Buildings, Residences, and Mansions: George Gissing's 'prejudice against flats'," in *Gissing and the City*, ed. John Spiers (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 41-62.

[7] Paul F. Matthiessen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1996), 3, 139 (July 25, 1887).

he was lamenting the lack of books, the cold and wind, and the "unintellectual population".[8]

Writing on "The Place of Realism in Fiction," Gissing himself acknowledged that "What the artist sees is to him only a part of the actual."[9] Mary Hammond, discussing *Ryecroft*, concludes that "true realism is actually all about individual perception."[10] Aaron Matz, paying most attention to Gissing's practice, especially in *New Grub Street*, but also alluding to his essays on Dickens, "The Hope of Pessimism," and "The Place of Realism," explores the tensions and complementarities between realism and satire, and between "realistic" and "idealistic" modes of writing. With regard to "place" we might argue that Gissing uses both real and "imagined" places, realistically described, to legitimate his satire – "The realism of detail thereby leads to a satire of scope."[11] For example, it was no coincidence that he chose the real Adam & Eve Court to open his first published novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, or that, in *Thyrza*, he approached Lambeth by way of the equally real Paradise Place, noting that "[t]he name is less descriptive than it might be." But if no appropriate toponyms were available, he was not averse to inventing them – "Litany Lane" and "Jubilee Court" in the slums of Westminster in the first edition of *The Unclassed*.[12]

Gissing was clear that his kind of realism did not imply objectivity. At the very least, writers select places appropriate to their needs, and they select the attributes of those places worth conveying to their readers. In Matz's words, "Realism does not have to be a synonym for objectivity; it can be another name for a writer's very personal and even partisan audacity."[13] Nor does the use of "real" places described in factual detail imply an absence of moral idealism: "showing" – exposing inequality and "hideous injustice" – implies the need for reform, even if Gissing is unsure, and indeed cynical, about the range of possible solutions.[14] Recently,

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[8] *Collected Letters*, 4, 261 (January 20, 1891), 257 (January 19, 1891); 5, 83 (December 30, 1892).

[9] George Gissing, "The Place of Realism in Fiction," in *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 219.

[10] Mary Hammond, "'Amid the Dear Old Horrors': Memory, London, and Literary Labour in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*," in *Gissing and the City*, 177.

[11] Aaron Matz, "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59, no. 2 (2004): 212-48, 232.

[12] Richard Dennis, "'Would you Adam-and-Eve it?' Geography, Materiality, and Authenticity in Novels of Victorian and Edwardian London," in *The Materiality of Literary Narratives in Urban History*, edited by Lieven Ameel, Jason Finch, Silja Laine and Richard Dennis (New York: Routledge, 2019), 158-76.

[13] Matz, "Realism," 222.

[14] Matz, "Realism," 242.

Rebecca Hutcheon has explored the complexity of Gissing's writings about place, questioning a received wisdom that Gissing's work can be categorised chronologically into successive phases of writing about slums, suburbs and the rural, and arguing against both "biographical" readings of Gissing's fiction and a cartographic mimesis which elevates "real streets and buildings" over "imaginary locations".[15] In doing so, she aligns her critique with the new cultural geography exemplified by geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph, Denis Cosgrove and Ed Soja.[16]

All of this suggests that Gissing was, in practice, an imaginative and well-informed cultural geographer, but it is to assume a twenty-first-century understanding of geography. My aim in this essay is to situate Gissing in the context of nineteenth-century theory and practice of geography, a subject which was much closer to the "absolute realism" which Gissing satirized, but also to an environmental and spatial determinism which attracted an earlier generation of literary geographers to the regional novels of, for example, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, and D.H. Lawrence.[17] Drawing on Gissing's observations about the use, and drawing, of maps, and aligning his own practices of walking and note-taking (in his *Scrapbook*, *Commonplace Book* and sometimes very lengthy diary entries) with geographical practices of fieldwork, I note how these practices were transferred to characters in his fiction. Finally, I consider an extreme example of an "imaginary location" – Polterham in *Denzil Quarrier* – as an illustration of how Gissing created "realist(ic)" environments for his stories.

Gissing and School Geography

What would Gissing have thought of as "Geography" and would he have self-identified as a geographer? At Lindow Grove School, Alderley Edge, aged 14, he gained a certificate for "Physical Geography (first class,

[15] Rebecca Hutcheon, *Writing Place: Mimesis, Subjectivity and Imagination in the Works of George Gissing* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[16] For a useful survey of cultural geography, see Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (London: SAGE, 2003). For an alternative literary perspective, see also Jason Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016).

[17] See the bibliography of "literary geographies" online at https://literarygeographies.wordpress.com/. Early works on Hardy and Bennett include H.C. Darby, "The Regional Geography of Thomas Hardy's Wessex," *Geographical Review* 38, 3 (1948): 426-43; John Barrell, "Geographies of Hardy's Wessex," *Journal of Historical Geography* 8, 4 (1982): 347-61; B.J. Hudson, "The Geographical Imagination of Arnold Bennett," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 7, 3 (1982): 365-379.

elementary stage)".[18] The following month he sat (and was placed 12th out of 1,082 candidates, but first of all the candidates in the Manchester district) in the Oxford Junior Local Exam, in which Geography and English History were components.[19] However, Pierre Coustillas interprets "[t]he certificates for geography, acoustics and theoretical mechanics which he received" not as evidence of his flair for these subjects but "in the light of his grim determination to succeed."[20] Two years later, sitting his Matriculation Exam at Owen's College, Manchester, which would qualify him to be a non-residential student of the University of London, Geography was again a required element. He wrote to his friend, Arthur Bowes:

> Can you inform me of a plan of getting up Geography in a night? I find some is required for Matric., & longer than two hours I cannot possibly devote.[21]

This suggests a disdain for school Geography on a par with that of the young Jack Bunce, in *Thyrza*, who much prefers his private chemistry tuition with Ackroyd to his homework for school:

> "Lessons! Do them in half a crack before breakfast. Why, there's nothing but a bit of jography, and some kings, and three proportion sums, and a page of -----."[22]

Much later, in 1893, when Gissing's sister Ellen wrote seeking advice on the teaching of Geography, he replied at length, admitting that "[t]he geographical question is a very difficult one." He was not aware of "any small book that is of much use for your purpose" and this seems to conform to the consensus of opinion at the time.[23] The Oxford historian, J.R. Green, in his "Introduction" to *A Short Geography of the British Islands* (1879) observed that:

> No drearier task can be set for the worst of criminals than that of studying a set of geographical text-books such as children in our schools are doomed to use. […They] are simply appeals to the memory; they are

[18] Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857-1888* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 333, n.17.
[19] Coustillas, *Heroic Life I*, 64.
[20] Coustillas, *Heroic Life I*, 61.
[21] *Collected Letters*, 1, 32 (May 24, 1874).
[22] George Gissing, *Thyrza: A Tale* (London: Smith, Elder, 1892), 411.
[23] *Collected Letters*, 5, 170 (December 31, 1893).

> handbooks of mnemonics; but they are in no sense handbooks of Geography.[24]

Gissing's prescription is worth quoting in full:

> 1) Never let geog[y] be learnt from a book alone, but *always* from the map. Let maps be constantly *drawn* by pupils.
> 2) Absolutely no learning by *rote*. It is useless. No profit in saying off lists of bays, capes, &c.
> 3) Take one country – or continent – at a time, & spend weeks over it. Talk with pupil of imaginary journeys, from England, & in the country itself. Get a Bradshaw, & make use of the list of steamboat voyages at the end. *Insist on clear ideas of distances*. Make it under[stood] how long a steamer takes to cross the Atlantic, for instance. (This you will find in Whitaker's Almanack, stated at the end of his information about each foreign country.)
> 4) Do not separate geography from history. No use in learning about *places* merely as places.
> 5) Get, from the Mechanics' or elsewhere, *books of travel* concerning the country in hand. Read them, & *talk* about what you learn therefrom. Your ideas will be much clearer & more interesting than any to be gathered from professed treatises on geography.[25]

Much of this is reflected in his own practice, both in fiction, where his characters frequently consult timetables, maps and atlases, and in writing to his own young son, Walter, who was by then living with his aunts and grandmother. One letter described a trip Gissing had made to Boston in Lincolnshire, concluding "someone will show you Boston on the map"; and when a visit by Walter and one of his aunts to Budleigh Salterton, where Gissing was currently staying, was proposed: "Ask grandmother to show you on the map the way that you will come from Wakefield into Devon."[26] More challenging for a child not yet five was his father's account of the strong winds then buffeting his house in Epsom: "These winds are the equinoctial gales; they blow at the end of March, & the end of September, which times are called the equinox, because then the day & night are just of the same length. […] Aunties will tell you more about this"![27]

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[24] J.R. Green and A.S. Green, *A Short Geography of the British Islands* (London: Macmillan, 1879), vii-viii. See also Rex Walford, *Geography in British Schools 1850-2000* (London: Woburn Press, 2001), 35-48.
[25] *Collected Letters*, 5, 170-71 (December 31, 1893).
[26] *Collected Letters*, 6, 152 (July 11, 1896), 262 (April 3, 1897).
[27] *Collected Letters*, 6, 173 (September 26, 1896).

His advice also echoed the prefaces of many contemporary textbooks which then, in practice, *did* offer long lists of factual information and "exercises" which demanded rote learning. Robert Sullivan's *Geography Generalized*, first published in 1842, but still in print after numerous revised and expanded editions when Gissing was at school in the 1870s, was reviewed at length in *The Athenaeum* in January 1843:

> This is a good schoolbook, and is particularly entitled to commendation, as more bad books have been written on geography than on any other subject; and the very worst are those destined for the use of schools. Mr Sullivan treats geography as a science, which, like all sciences, must be taught on the principles of classification and comparison.[28]

Sullivan claimed to be against "the old and absurd method of teaching Geography by rote." He provided "Questions for Examinations" which teachers should expect their students to answer in their own words.[29] He also distanced himself from the interminable listing of facts and statistics:

> Instead of dividing the attention, and oppressing the memory of the young student, by obliging him to learn and recollect the unconnected facts and innumerable details with which this, the most extensive of all the sciences, abounds, the essential facts and leading principles have been presented to his view under general and separate heads.[30]

Yet, even Sullivan's book, and even more so, his briefer *Introduction to Geography*, mainly consisted of lists and classifications – lists of islands, sand banks, capes, bays and roadsteads, mountains, etc., and classifications of the world's rivers into ten classes by length, and of mountains into ten classes by height.

The 92nd edition of Sullivan's *Introduction*, by now extending to 216 pages, appeared in 1869, about the time Gissing would have needed a geography textbook. We know that he was familiar with the book thanks to a somewhat opaque comment in his *Commonplace Book*, dated by the editors to around 1896-7:

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[28] *Athenaeum*, no. 794 (January 14, 1843): 37.
[29] Robert Sullivan, *An Introduction to Geography: Ninety-second Edition* (Dublin: Sullivan, Brothers, 1869), vi.
[30] Robert Sullivan, *Geography Generalized: Twenty-seventh Edition* (Dublin: Marcus and John Sullivan, 1861), iii.

> "Sullivan's Introduction to Geography." My old expectation of finding the end of the *Introduction* & beginning of the *Book*.[31]

Long before, in December 1878, barely a year after arriving in London, and living in two rooms in Gower Place, Bloomsbury, one of the first books Gissing requested from home was his "large illustrated *Geography*": "I shouldn't think anyone is using it at home, & it would be of very great use to me."[32] Sullivan's book hardly meets this description: it contained maps and line drawings, but at 5¾ inches x 3¾ inches it was hardly "large". Instead, we might speculate that the "large illustrated *Geography*" was an atlas, an illustrated gazetteer, or a travel book. In his 1893 letter to his sister, Gissing had especially commended Annie Brassey's *A Voyage in the 'Sunbeam'*, which recounted – and lavishly illustrated – a journey around the world in 1876-77.[33] But this was too newly published to be the book requested in 1878.

In September 1887, midway through his tenure in 7K Cornwall Residences, Gissing took receipt of "my Hogarth & Atlas," delivered by his brother, Algernon, on a visit to London.[34] These books, originally in his father's library, were especially treasured by Gissing. Pointing to a reference in Gissing's *Scrapbook*, coupling together "The Hogarth and Keith Johnstone," Bouwe Postmus infers that the family's atlas was one of the atlases published by Edinburgh mapmakers, W. and A.K. Johnston.[35] Their *Royal Atlas*, first published in 1861, would seem to have been the most likely, its issue corresponding to Thomas Gissing's growing prosperity and status in Wakefield in the 1860s. Moreover, the atlas was always titled on its embossed cover as *Keith Johnston's Royal Atlas of Modern Geography*.[36]

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[31] Jacob Korg, ed., *George Gissing's Commonplace Book* (New York: New York Public Library, 1962), 38.
[32] *Collected Letters*, 1, 135 (December 17, 1878).
[33] Mrs Brassey, *A Voyage in the 'Sunbeam': Our home on the ocean for eleven months* (London: Longmans, Green, 1878).
[34] *Collected Letters*, 3, 149 (September 11, 1887).
[35] Bouwe Postmus, ed., *George Gissing's Scrapbook* (Amsterdam: Twizle Press, 2007), 467.
[36] Alexander Keith Johnston, *The Royal Atlas of Modern Geography* (Edinburgh: W. & A.K. Johnston, 1861). The 1879 edition is available online at https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/10450850.

Maps and Atlases

Maps and atlases feature prominently in several of Gissing's novels, even as instruments of flirtation. The materiality of the map was something dear to Gissing, not only atlas plates, but also more functional Ordnance Survey maps. When he first became infatuated with the Surrey countryside, courtesy of the time he spent at the Harrisons' out-of-town home, Sutton Place, near Guildford, he wrote to Algernon asking how, and at what price, he could obtain the Ordnance Map of Surrey.[37] His request was penned from home – Chelsea at the time – and for somebody so familiar with London bookshops, we might have thought he would have known where to get an OS map. Perhaps, at this early stage in his career, he was familiar only with secondhand and antiquarian booksellers, or perhaps he thought that Algernon's interests in the countryside would make him more familiar with topographical maps. Later, planning a trip to the north, his next request of Algernon was for the loan of "any decent Lake-guide, – the less bulky the better" – evidently intended for consultation in the field.[38] Elsewhere in his correspondence, there are references to Baedeker guides to Italy, to the map of Naples in Cook's Guide, and to Charles Dickens Junior's Dictionary of London, of which Gissing owned copies for both 1880 and 1883. On his return to London from Exeter in 1893, he borrowed a more up-to-date Guide to London from Clara Collet. But most poignant was his regret expressed to Algernon that before leaving London for Exeter, "in the time of great stress at the end of last year all my ordinance [sic] maps had to be sold."[39]

Isabel Clarendon, written in the context of Gissing's invitations to the Harrisons' and Gaussens' country houses, opens with Kingcote on the road to Winstoke. Despite "rambling aimlessly" and "loiter[ing]" in Salcot, he is also sufficiently prepared to set off after tea on the next stage of his ramble "after a survey of his Ordnance map." As he walks, he continues to consult the map: "When he had been walking for a couple of hours, his thoughts began to turn to his plans for the following day; he took the map out again, and examined it as he proceeded." Then, realising he has had his money stolen when he was jostled leaving a public house in Salcot, "[h]e reopened his map, and began to calculate the possibility of walking straight on to London. There was no possibility in the matter."[40]

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[37] *Collected Letters*, 2, 141 (June 22, 1883).
[38] *Collected Letters*, 2, 237 (July 24, 1884).
[39] *Collected Letters*, 4, 311 (July 25, 1891).
[40] George Gissing, *Isabel Clarendon* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886), Volume One, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.

At the end of *Thyrza* we encounter Egremont, returned from America to Brighton and planning a visit to Eastbourne: "the thought of going thither on foot came to him as he glanced at a map of the coast whilst at breakfast. The weather was perfect, and the walk would be full of interest." As he proceeds – through Rottingdean, Newhaven, Seaford and across the Cuckmere – he checks the "notes of his track" that he had made earlier.[41] In practice, the walk proves not only interesting but climactic. And perhaps Gissing is remembering the loss of his own Ordnance Survey maps when, in *Born in Exile*, he describes Peak's reception in the Warricombe household outside Exeter, where "a small canvas on which a landscape [painted by Sidwell Warricombe, the object of Peak's infatuation] was roughed in" casually "lay on a side table […] half concealed by an ordnance map, left unfolded."[42] To misquote Anthony Powell, "Maps do furnish a room."[43]

The humble OS map also plays a vital, if understated, part in Everard Barfoot's wooing of Rhoda Nunn when they meet at Seascale on the Cumbrian coast, a place familiar to Gissing from family holidays in his childhood. Everard proposes an elaborate day out:

> "A man I talked to in the train told me of a fine walk in this neighbourhood. From Ravenglass, just below here, there's a little line runs up Eskdale to a terminus at the foot of Scawfell, a place called Boot. From Boot one can walk either over the top of Scawfell or by a lower track to Wastdale Head. It's very grand, wild country, especially the last part, the going down to Wastwater, and not many miles in all. Suppose we have that walk to-morrow? From Wastdale we could drive back to Seascale in the evening, and then the next day -- just as you like."
>
> "Are you quite sure about the distances?"
>
> "Quite. I have the Ordnance map in my pocket. Let me show you."
>
> He spread the map on the top of a wall, and they stood side by side inspecting it.[44]

The phrase "Let me show you" hints at the masculinity of the map. And over the following pages, as they discuss their future together, "[d]elighting in her independence of mind, he still desired to see her in complete

[41] Gissing, *Thyrza*, 482, 484 (Chapter 41).
[42] George Gissing, *Born in Exile* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1892), 172.
[43] Anthony Powell, *Books do Furnish a Room* (New York: Little, Brown, 1971).
[44] George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893), Chapter 25.

subjugation to him" and "must have the joy of subduing her to his will." Yet, to Everard, Rhoda had "made him her obedient slave."[45]

In other novels, too, if more benignly, men show women, just as adults show children, where places are. Gilbert Grail has been teaching Thyrza history – she had learnt about the Battle of Hastings, and that William the Conqueror came from Normandy in France – and he has shown her France on the map. Yet that was a "dry symbol" compared to the reality of visiting Eastbourne and understanding that France was "right over the sea yonder."[46] Grail needs only a map to bring history to life; Thyrza needs to see the places for herself.

In *The Whirlpool*, Alma's invitation to Harvey to show her where he is contemplating moving to – somewhere "far off, but not too far" – initiates the dialogue leading to their engagement:

> "Didn't you say you were going to some beautiful spot in Wales?"
>
> Harvey reflected.
>
> "I wonder whether you would like that -----"
>
> "We are only supposing, you know. But show me where it is. If you wait a moment, I'll fetch a map."
>
> She rose quickly. He had just time to reach the door and open it for her; and as she rapidly passed him, eyes averted, the faintest and sweetest of perfumes was wafted upon his face. There he stood till her return, his pulses throbbing.
>
> "This is my old school atlas," she said gaily; "I always use it still."
>
> She opened it upon the table and bent forward.
>
> "North Wales, you said? Show me -----"
>
> He pointed with a finger that quivered. His cheek was not far from hers; the faint perfume floated all about him; he could imagine it the natural fragrance of her hair, of her breath.
>
> "I see," she murmured. "That's the kind of place --- far off, but not too far. And the railway station?"
>
> As he did not answer, she half turned towards him.
>
> "The station? --- Yes. ----- Alma!"[47]

In the following chapter, the atlas continues to mediate between them, but now under Alma's control. She is "reluctant to fix a day, or even the month, for their wedding." Harvey responds that the house will be ready by early December:

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[45] Gissing, *Odd Women*, Chapters 25 and 26.
[46] Gissing, *Thyrza*, 184-85.
[47] George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1897), 121.