

## **Pedestrianism, Money and Time:**

### **Mobilities of Hurry in George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft***

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#### **1. Mobilities, Hurry and Literary Texts**

Novels and works of life-writing typically considered 'literary' provide in-depth case studies in the geographical mobilities of modernity seen from individuals' points of view. They neither unproblematically represent reality nor act as 'representations' operative only within text and ideology; they indicate actuality but in a way both complex and limited. The objective of this chapter is to highlight bodily and financial mobilities in George Gissing's 1903 book *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, concentrating on physical mobilities of pedestrianism driven by monetary *need*, and in the process to bring about increased dialogue between historical geographers and literary scholars. The study builds on literary scholars' recent interest in the often 'frenetic' mobilities of the Victorian city.<sup>1</sup> Such work has directly asked what a turn towards mobilities as an object of attention in the social sciences, and particularly in human geography,<sup>2</sup> would mean for literary studies, where a growing groundswell of interest in literary spatial matters is noticeable from the 1990s on. Among literary-spatial studies of Victorian literature, James Buzard has examined both the literal geographical paths of tourism and the role of literary authors such as George Eliot in producing 'metropolitan autoethnography' explaining a territory to its own inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Mathieson, more recently, has spatialized Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) in the world beyond Britain by tracing its characters' moves and relating these to a social-sciences

discourse of mobilities emerging in the 2000s and 2010s which focuses on the multiplicity of human ‘scales and modes of movement’, putting the small-scale alongside the global.<sup>4</sup>

Gissing’s writing in general exhibits an extreme sensitivity to the material pressures of the modern age. His renowned novel of the modern literature business, *New Grub Street* (1891), exemplifies this. In *New Grub Street*, the writer Jasper Milvain prospers thanks to his discernment of the market’s shifting tastes, while his contemporaries Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen sink towards poverty and death largely because of their naïve view that what one must do is write a great novel. As is apparent from *New Grub Street*, Gissing’s writing can seem to be reducing everything to a monetary account and therefore to be, in one sense of the word, materialistic. At the same time, his writing repeatedly presents characters who radically reject and protest against a money-driven modernity, often via the motif of disinterested classical scholarship which is opposed to writing for the market as Milvain does.

*Ryecroft* is a fictionalized memoir structured around the temporal gap between its time of writing around 1900, and that of the youth both of its author, George Gissing, and his autobiographical protagonist, Ryecroft, in London around 1880. Writing in rural seclusion, Ryecroft proclaims his past position as an urban pedestrian: ‘For more than six years I trod the pavement, never stepping once upon mother earth—for the parks are but pavement disguised with a growth of grass’.<sup>5</sup> These were times, he says, when public transport was beyond his means: ‘In those days I hardly knew what it was to travel by omnibus. I have walked London streets for twelve and fifteen hours together without ever a thought of saving my legs, or my time, by paying for waftage’ (35). In youth, then, Ryecroft pushed through a zone – the pavement, the carriageway for foot passengers – which has been described as one of ‘anarchy’, frequently ‘[c]ongested or obstructed’, in places divided from the area of wheeled traffic by a ‘verge’ less respectable than either, the territory of street traders.<sup>6</sup>

Gissing could seem an archetype of the struggling writer: longing to write principled, lofty and uncommercial texts, prevented from doing so by poverty. The pedestrianism fits into this view of him: the poor writer must trudge from editor to pupil and home again in order to put bread – or even lentils – on the table. Virginia Woolf sums it up sarcastically in her 1932 essay on Gissing: ‘The writer has dined upon lentils; he gets up at five; he walks across London; he finds Mr. M. [a wealthy pupil] still in bed, whereupon he stands forth as the champion of life as it is, and proclaims that ugliness is truth, truth ugliness, and that is all we know and all we need to know’.<sup>7</sup> Woolf herself never knew the financial hardship experienced by Gissing, who, as Frank Swinnerton writes, ‘lived among the poor [...] by reason of the most lamentable necessity’ for many years.<sup>8</sup> The view of Gissing publicized by Swinnerton and Woolf both romanticizes and caricatures him, as the text of Ryecroft indicates. The youthful Ryecroft’s London walks are not all acts of necessity driven by poverty. He recalls ‘an August bank holiday, when, having for some reason to walk across London, [...] unexpectedly’ he found himself ‘enjoying the strange desertion of great streets’: this, he writes, was an occasion when the defamiliarized city, empty and lit by the sun’s ‘noontide radiance’, ‘seemed to fill my veins with life (88).

Ryecroft’s memories are precisely localized in London. In the country lanes near where he now lives he experiences ‘by a freak of mind’ the wish to be back in the London of his youth, amid ‘the shining of shop-fronts, the yellow glistening of a wet pavement, the hurrying people, the cabs, the omnibuses’ (213). It is not some beautiful corner of the lost city which enters Ryecroft’s mind when recalls but somewhere extremely mundane: ‘the High Street of Islington, which I have not seen for a quarter of a century, at least; no thoroughfare in all London less attractive to the imagination’. What he recalls fondly is youth, as he recognizes, but he also recalls the true town-dweller that he once was, finding ‘pleasure in the triumph of artificial circumstance’ – light, warmth, human noise – ‘over natural conditions’ (214). He

recognizes too that were he to be ‘thrown back into squalid London’ needing to support himself, he would simply go out to work (215). Sometimes, he may summon up an urban image likely to be broadly unchanged 25 years on, as with Islington High Street. At another moment he knowingly conjures the ‘dear old horrors’ of a London scene now gone: ‘Some of the places, I know, have disappeared. I see the winding way by which I went from Oxford Street, at the foot of Tottenham Court Road, to Leicester Square [...]. The ‘labyrinth’ Ryecroft remembers passing through, lingering outside a pie shop when he had not a penny for food, disappeared with the construction of Charing Cross Road, completed in 1887.<sup>9</sup> As in the perspective on London developed in *Howards End* by Forster’s character Margaret Schlegel, the march of building and demolition here encapsulates the onward rush of the city. Yet unlike Margaret, profoundly disturbed by the impermanence this change points out to her, Ryecroft seems quite at ease with the knowledge that in details the city has altered,.

Work on nineteenth-century literary mobilities by Buzard, Mathieson and others focuses on canonically Victorian figures such as Dickens and George Eliot, and on the genre of the novel.<sup>10</sup> *Ryecroft*, in contrast, has a complex position on the frontiers of both the Victorian and the novel. Gissing’s satirical and brutally self-examining mid-period naturalist novels, such as *The Nether World* (1889) and *New Grub Street* (1891), and his 1890s fictional analyses of suburbs and gender relations are, in the 2010s, more widely read. *Ryecroft* is hard to place generically. It sits oddly at the end of both Gissing’s career and Victoria’s reign in a sub-period too early to be easily classifiable as ‘modernist’. When contemporary Gissing scholarship took off in the 1970s, *Ryecroft* was denigrated as ‘a piece of bogus autobiography and wish fulfillment’, guilty of ‘self-indulgent, self-caressing sentimentality’.<sup>11</sup> Since the 1970s, with a few exceptions, *Ryecroft* has largely been ignored.<sup>12</sup> But in the early decades of the twentieth century *Ryecroft* was one of Gissing’s most admired and successful works, reprinted no less than thirteen times before the First World War (iv). A review written for the

*Week's Survey* in 1903 described it as 'one of the most distinguished books written in the last ten dull years, years of an outstanding intellectual stagnation, brought about [...] by the commercialization [...] of literature'.<sup>13</sup> In the 1920s it was exported to newly independent European countries including Finland and Estonia by inclusion in sets of books representing modern English literature bought for university libraries by a forerunner of the British Council.<sup>14</sup>

*Ryecroft* could be understood in the terms proposed by Max Saunders as a work of 'autobiografiction', a genre widely practiced in England between the 1880s and the First World War, in which a complex, layered relationship between fictionality and the telling of recalled truth is developed.<sup>15</sup> In Gissing's case this happens via the figure of Ryecroft, whom the reader is clearly intended to compare, even conflate, with Gissing himself. The invitation is offered in a preface during which a certain 'G.G.' claims to be presenting an edition of 'three manuscript books', at first sight but actually a more reflective literary work, which he discovered among Ryecroft's papers after the latter's death (x). The reader is invited to see through 'G.G.', recognizing that, while these initials transparently figure George Gissing, it is the character Ryecroft who actually conveys the experiences and opinions of Gissing. Such complexity goes beyond even the intricate autobiografictional moves outlined by Saunders in his account of the book, which connect Gissing with other writers' presentations of him and of themselves. Ryecroft is a thoroughly ironized figure: the joke may in fact be on readers who admire Ryecroft, thinking that in him they meet the true Gissing.

In the present day of *Ryecroft*, the supposed time of writing of the reflections discovered by 'G.G.', the protagonist lives in retired comfort far from the city; the book is built around the contrast between this present in his city-bound youth. Ryecroft has decelerated, but only thanks to money generated in the economic foci of Victorian Britain. He remains umbilically connected to London through the trains which bring him books in Devon. These, and the

regular postal deliveries they make possible, multiple times every day, would also enable a writing career to be conducted from far outside London. Technical improvements or augmentations introduced in modernity had the potential also to introduce new hurry and stress: running to catch the post, for example.<sup>16</sup> When he makes Ryecroft reminisce about his past involvement in what this book identifies as architectures of hurry, Gissing demonstrates phenomenological aspects of the accelerated movements brought about in the new urbanity of the nineteenth century. Ryecroft's retrospective of 1870s and 1880s London is founded on his pedestrianism as an impoverished, newly arrived immigrant in what was then the world's biggest city. Inverting the shuttling movement from home to workplace and back again typically associated with employees, the young Ryecroft's freelance work as a badly-paid writer is remembered as keeping him seated in the garret room where he sleeps. Walks forth from here are only possible in intervals of leisure provided by the completion of work and the receipt of money. Yet his walks are not, in the decades past to which he looks back, leisured in the sense that they later become when he is able to retire to rural England. For one thing they are confined to the city, for another they are undertaken in a great hurry, and furthermore they are also often closely related to his working life in another portion of the book trade:

There came a day when I was in funds. I see myself hastening to Holywell Street (in those days my habitual pace was five miles an hour), I see the little grey man with whom I transacted my business—what was his name?—the bookseller who had been, I believe, a Catholic priest, and still had a certain priestly dignity about him. (34)

As in Islington High Street and in the 'labyrinth' later occupied by Charing Cross Road, the localization rewards attention. While mourned today as a 'picturesque' site of 'immense character', in the late nineteenth century Holywell Street, lined with decayed pre-Fire seventeenth-century buildings, had a reputation as one of the 'worst streets in London'.<sup>17</sup> By the time of Gissing's death in 1903, also the year of publication of *Ryecroft*, Holywell Street

was already doomed, it and the area around it slated to be removed as part of the construction of Aldwych and Kingsway, a broad new road development lined by public buildings commemorating the imperial present.<sup>18</sup> As such, Holywell Street in itself represents a signifier for the fast-moving, past-obliterating present in this passage.

E.M. Forster's notion of an 'architecture of hurry', adapted for the title of the present volume from Chapter XIII of *Howards End*,<sup>19</sup> would not have surprised Gissing. He died seven years before *Howards End* was published in 1910, but many times in his writing of the 1880s and 1890s Gissing thematized hurry, the subjective sense of pressure brought about by human time-space compressed by mechanization and the application to them of precisely calculated monetary values.<sup>20</sup> Nowhere is the centrality of hurry to Gissing's writing, and Gissing's importance to an understanding of the experience of hurry, clearer than in *Ryecroft*. Hurry seems stranger when viewed from a distance of decades and hundreds of miles, the distance, together with his later financial security, which provides the older Ryecroft with his perspective on a hurried, financially pressured youth.

The book is punctuated by references to the passage of time. These include reflections on the varying speeds with which time is experienced as passing during different phases of life, and verbs and time adverbials highlighting Ryecroft's habitual rapidity of movement as a struggling young man in London. Apart from 'hastening to' Holywell Street because is afraid that another purchaser may have spotted the volume he wants, Ryecroft remembers how he 'hastened back' to a squalid Islington garret overlooking the canal through thick fog following meals at a 'City Road coffee-shop' (34; 27). He later speaks of 'speeding home' from Battersea Bridge having been inspired by a sunset visible from 'the old picturesque wooden bridge' and turning the experience into copy which he 'straightway' sent to a newspaper, then finding the very next day that the newspaper has printed his sketch. It will pay him 'a couple

of guineas' for a piece of writing he 'enjoyed' doing (193). Time and money are thus in *Ryecroft* linked in ways that are multiple, complex and fraught.

## 2. Techniques for Reading Pedestrianism in Modernity

For architectural and even urban historians, the streets of London exist primarily as landscapes of buildings, as planned and platted conceptions, or as resulting from a succession of property transactions.<sup>21</sup> But the streets through which the ageing Ryecroft imagines his younger self trudging might be better understood through the varied and multiple human uses of and passages through them. In Ryecroft's London past, he is presented by Gissing as forever walking but also forever static. This is because, whilst in London as a hack writer, money prevented him from ever leaving the vast city. Contrasting with that trapped immobility in London is Ryecroft's later existence in the present tense of the book. This is leisured and situated outside London in the English countryside. Financial sufficiency has enabled Ryecroft to travel in his later years as he never could earlier, both in rural England and abroad in continental Europe (188–90; 258–62). Reduced hurry can thus be combined with greater range, and hurry can emerge in modernity as a quality of financial insufficiency, as part of a life-stage devoted to the gathering of money.

Techniques needed to take account of pedestrianism and *Ryecroft* include those developed in studies of urban modernity – specifically as it was enacted in London – and in work on Gissing. Theorists of urban modernity, examining the gendered walker of the nineteenth-century city, have focused on leisured pedestrians capable of taking their time precisely because their days were not required to be spent at a specific place of employment and nor were they chained to home by an occupation paid as piecework. Under the influence of Walter Benjamin, during the 1970s and 1980s Marshall Berman and Richard Sennett drew attention to the figure of the (typically male) strolling, loitering observer represented in

nineteenth-century Parisian writing and art as the *flâneur*; Janet Wolff, meanwhile, began critiquing the gendered exclusions and assumptions represented in such a figure.<sup>22</sup> By the 1990s Judith Walkowitz, in the words of Wolff, was indicating ‘the new spaces available for women in a redefined public domain in London in the 1880s’.<sup>23</sup> In the light of these critical discussions, it is worth stating that Ryecroft is not merely male, he seems unable to conceive of anyone female other than in the role of a housekeeper such as ‘[t]his poor woman who labours for me in my house.’ He repeatedly uses the locution ‘the man’ (in ‘any toiling man’, or ‘a young man fresh from class-rooms’, to take only two examples) to refer to those active in his world as other writers or putative readers. The urban poor he conceives of in an entirely masculine shape via ‘muscular toil, the swinking of the ruder man’ (43, 19, 37, 176). Attitudes similar to Ryecroft’s are latent in much of Gissing’s fiction.

Among the sparse readings of Ryecroft offered this century, Kevin Swafford relates Ryecroft to the late-nineteenth-century Aesthetic Movement and specifically the idea attributed to Gissing here that decorous mourning, ‘artistic integrity and sincerity of expression’ as presented in this particular later work are what he saw as the summit of his own literary achievement.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, a more directly material approach to Gissing could build on information now available about Gissing’s income during his first twelve years as a writer.<sup>25</sup> The vagaries – the mobilities – of wealth are important to a reading of *Ryecroft*. According to ‘G. G.’ in the playful preface to Ryecroft’s papers,

At the age of fifty, just when his health had begun to fail and his energies to show abatement, Ryecroft had the rare good fortune to find himself suddenly released from toil, and to enter upon a period of such tranquility of mind and condition as he had never dared to hope. On the death of an acquaintance, more his friend than he imagined, the way-worn man of letters learnt with astonishment that there was bequeathed to him a life annuity of three hundred pounds. (ix)

Fortune, for Ryecroft, can be understood in two parallel senses, in the sense of good fortune or chance and in the financial sense of ‘a fortune’, specifically meaning the amount of money on which one could live leisurely for life. Gissing lived and wrote in an era when wealth in Britain was more broadly distributed than previously but still held by a very small minority and transmitted, above all, by the instrument of the legacy and the writing of the will, which isolated the wealthy from others and protected legatees from the dangers of a pre-welfare society.<sup>26</sup> Identified by ‘G. G.’ as ‘the way-worn man of letters’ (ix), Ryecroft has carried out hard work over an extended period of time and bears the marks on a traveller of a journey that is extensive in spatial terms. Within this environment, Ryecroft has been freed from the necessity of either working or living in London through good fortune. As such he has in effect become ‘respectable’ for life at a time when many members of the commercial and professional middle class in Britain struggled to do just that.<sup>27</sup> Without spouse or children Ryecroft is not obliged, say, to live on considerably less than 300 pounds a year so as to save a legacy for others. Instead, he is free to enjoy and dispose this income, approximately double the three pounds a week which, Gissing himself told his brother Algernon in 1883, ‘would suffice to all my needs’.<sup>28</sup>

### **3. The Fast (Masculine) Business Walk: Discursive Histories of Pedestrianism**

Ryecroft’s pedestrianism does include moments of stillness and peace such as the August Bank Holiday walk in the sun at which he is able to appreciate the city at rest, temporarily empty, but these are exceptions. Typically, his pedestrianism is not that of a leisured flâneur: it involves physical hurry, bustle and the actual getting of money. It exists in the streets of London at a time when the poor still overwhelmingly travelled on foot, which was much less the case after the establishment of an extensive electric tram network with tickets priced for

the working classes at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> But Ryecroft chiefly walks the main roads and in the more sedate newer residential areas surrounding the West End of London. This zone should not be conflated with the noisy, smelly plebeian street environment which Gissing described on the northern fringes of the City of London in *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) or south of the River Thames in *Thyrza* (1887).<sup>30</sup> This topography has origins in Gissing's personal experience and in the actual social geographies of 1880s London, but Ryecroft's pedestrianism also has textual antecedents. Gissing wrote an important book about Dickens and has sometimes been seen as a late Dickensian writer, one of the last of the three-volume realists in English fiction as a new dichotomy between powerful demotic voices and art fiction emerged in the 1890s.<sup>31</sup> Alternatively, as for Peter Keating, he can seem a figure on the boundary between earlier and later modes of social problem fiction.<sup>32</sup> In the 1890s, Gissing was still writing novels energetically. But the Gissing scholar M.D. Allen looks to the twentieth century when calling him something different, 'the first of the very greatest Dickensians'. A deliberately Dickensian stance, after all, was a nostalgic position only emerging at the end of Gissing's life and just afterwards, for example in the writings of G.K. Chesterton, a patriotic, insular and politically conservative move.<sup>33</sup>

Walking in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is seen as, ideally, leisured, yet also as a proper and decent aspect of leisured English country life. Ryecroft nowadays need not go anywhere. He announces this early in the first section of the book ('Spring': the four sections are the four seasons): 'The exquisite quiet of this room! I have been sitting in utter idleness, watching the sky, viewing the shape of golden sunlight upon the carpet, which changes as the minutes pass, letting my eye wander from one framed print to another, and along the ranks of my beloved books' (3-4).<sup>34</sup> His rate of movement may have declined, but in the course of the book he details numerous country walks taken during the current phase of his life, supported by his annuity. These include both daily walks out from his Devonshire cottage in all seasons,

and trips to other parts of England on which he has walked between stays in inns. In Ryecroft's present what Adrian Poole calls 'a perfectly defined distance between Self and the World' (that of the financially comfortable man in his study, going for walks when he chooses) has been established.<sup>35</sup> But Ryecroft oscillates between accounts of these country walks (interspersed with reflections on the present-day world) and memories of his past. Earlier in life, his existence in motion was inescapably meshed into the squalor and struggle of 'the streets', of existence in 'a great town' (10, 175). Ryecroft's identity as a literary character includes his middle-aged crankiness and his reactionary views on democracy and gender, facets of personality explaining why Gissing critics since the 1970s have been so shy of talking about him. But like Georg Simmel's famous essay published in Berlin in the same year *Ryecroft* was published in London, Gissing's book is a study connecting 'The Metropolis and Mental Life'.<sup>36</sup>

In *Ryecroft*, leisure and work are both repeatedly conceptualized in relation to pedestrianism. As revealed by Roger Milbrandt's study of Gissing's financial position in the 1880s, tutoring in the West End of London involved him in a complex network of pedestrianism as he moved from one house to another across main roads and the boundaries of districts.<sup>37</sup> Later in the book, in Chapter VI of 'Winter', Ryecroft's meditative, sitting position at teatime seems something earned, just as the agricultural or industrial worker is entitled to sit beside the fire in his armchair when he has completed a day's labour (215–17). Here, Ryecroft highlights 'One of the shining moments of my day [...] when, having returned a little weary from an afternoon walk, I exchange boots for slippers [...]', reflecting that 'it is while drinking tea that I most of all enjoy the sense of leisure' (215). He has his housekeeper, who serves him his tea with care, bring him the tea table at the fireside 'so that I can help myself without changing my easy position'. Then she retreats, most of her day's work done, 'to enjoy her own tea, her own toast, in the warm, comfortable, sweet-smelling kitchen' (217).

But in an earlier stage of his life, the walk was not the day's work but the leisure that succeeded the day's work. In Chapter V of 'Winter', immediately before the Devon teatime scene, when Ryecroft feels his pang of nostalgia for Islington High Street 25 years earlier, he sees himself setting out from lodgings after a day of writing in a garret room, 'walking with the quick, light step of youth' to the theatre (213). And the contrast is not just between the walk now and the walk then, but between different experiences of tea-drinking now and then. Tea, Ryecroft remembers, had earlier to be 'gulp[ed] down', 'hurried, often harassed, by the thought of the work I had before me', the tea-drinker 'quite insensible of the aroma, the flavour' of the tea (215). The teacup, too, could be an architecture of hurry.<sup>38</sup>

Walking to Holywell Street at five miles an hour for a book, Ryecroft is not a *flâneur*, nor a rural stroller, nor again an urban commuter-on-foot. His fast, masculine and business-like walks, undertaken as part of his life in the book trade, have precedents in Dickens. Ralph Nickleby, uncle to the titular character of *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), is a moneylender based on the unfashionable side of the West End in Golden Square, east of Regent Street. Early in the novel he announces that he is walking from there into the City of London (where he himself has dealings with richer financiers) that morning. His clerk, Newman Noggs, must if a certain letter arrives come and meet him on foot on the way back: 'I shall leave the city about that time and walk to Charing Cross on the left-hand side of the way; if there are any letters, come and meet me, and bring them with you'.<sup>39</sup> Ralph epitomizes the fast-moving early Victorian man of business, and not in a good way. He is contrasted with the Cheerybles, merchants whose mobility is not that of fast pedestrianism but of personal stasis lost in a 'quiet, little-frequented, retired' square in the City of London, small and unmodernised by railings or gravel, whilst their house makes fairy-tale fortunes doing business across the sea with Germany.<sup>40</sup> Ralph's business life, by contrast, is defined by moves between the West End, where his customers who aspire to fashion are and on the fringes of which his own house

lies, and the City of London, the source of money for him, where he must go to raise it.

Another Dickens creation is *Bleak House*'s Mr Bucket, a detective with masterly knowledge of London's characters, secrets and byways. He exerts pressure via the lawyer Tulkinghorn on Mr Snagsby, a law stationer who relies on Tulkinghorn's business to join him on a walk of 'a couple of hours'' duration, to and from the notorious slum of Tom All Alone's in search of information from the boy crossing sweeper Jo.<sup>41</sup> Ryecroft's own business walking in his remembered London years involved walks to and from editors, booksellers and pupils. It is precisely from such movement that Ryecroft has retreated. His later country walks fall into a different category. All of these walks exemplify mobilities articulated in modernity, specifically that of the gigantic London of the nineteenth century, pulsating with commerce, in which most must work for money for as many hours as necessary, and some are freed from this need by the possession of enough capital.

Feminist cultural studies of walking in the Victorian city have pointed out that leisured walking and observation was by no means confined to men, as the theory of the flâneur seemed to imply.<sup>42</sup> But the working pedestrianism of nineteenth-century women remains under-examined. Ralph Nickleby, arriving at the lodgings of his brother's widow on the Strand just east of Charing Cross tells his niece Kate the following: "Now," he said, taking her arm, "walk as fast as you can, and you'll get into the step that you'll have to walk to business with, every morning." So saying, he led Kate off, at a good round pace, towards Cavendish Square'.<sup>43</sup> Given the chance, Ralph would terrorise others by means of the walk.<sup>44</sup> He would terrorize Kate via the presumed genteel femininity of hers which would be likely to mean that he can walk harder and 'faster' and further than her – and then abandon her at a street corner.<sup>45</sup> Kate in the novel proves herself able to face this challenge, however, just as she is able to fight off the sexual predator Sir Mulberry Hawk. The massively multiple toil of the city resounds through *Nicholas Nickleby*, even more than through *Bleak House*, and at

every stage it is tied up with rapid pedestrianism. The literary business, for Gissing's Ryecroft and Jasper Milvain in the 1880s and 1890s is entirely analogous with the more openly rapacious business Dickens presented Ralph Nickleby operating half a century. And yet there are differences, for while Newman Noggs, Kate and Snagsby are all oppressed by a business superior (Ralph or Tulkinghorn) through the instrument of the business walk, Ryecroft does his alone.

These examples raise the question of whether the fast business walk, carried out in more or less of a hurry, ought to be read via notions of gender, or class, or both. Given that *flânerie* as a gendered activity has been deconstructed by feminists such as Wolff, why consider the sort of walk which Ralph and Ryecroft, and indeed Kate, take for monetary reasons, as masculine at all? One answer would be that Ralph brutalizes Kate precisely by forcing her to enter a male-dominated street environment regularly, as a male commuter does. Numerous Victorian commentators, as Lynda Nead shows, were concerned that women walkers in the streets of London, if they did not fall victim to assaults on their physical bodies, would repeatedly have their being as women attacked by the visual images that would confront their eyes, for example in the notorious book shop windows of Holywell Street near where Kate and her mother lodge.<sup>46</sup> Still in 1903 Gissing is able to have Ryecroft recall his business walks of youth in a way that separates them entirely from questions of decency and respectability, focusing entirely on matters financial and existential, ways that perhaps would not at that stage yet have been available to a woman writer.

#### **4. Town and Country Pedestrianism: Walks for Work, Walks for Leisure**

In his own Ryecroft, Gissing presents a number of parodies and distortions of the business walks of Ralph, Newman, Kate, Bucket and Snagsby, in his own Ryecroft, ironized protagonist and hater of the modern business world. On one such walk he goes to and fro

along the City Road, Pentonville Road, Euston Road and Marylebone Road of today (the mid-eighteenth century's first London bypass, called the New Road), to pick up a fine set of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* on sale at a bookstall near Portland Road (today's Great Portland Street) station, and cart them home to an Islington room east of the Angel (34–35).<sup>47</sup> So heavy and bulky are these volumes that Ryecroft has to carry them in two goes, making the journey there and back twice. The copy of Gibbon is his reward to himself paid for by missed meals and by his own static hackwork in his Islington garret. The physical toil involved in the walk is stressed: it leaves Ryecroft 'perspiring, flaccid, aching – exultant' (35). The other walk too is a sort of failure which is also a success. This extends from another rented room, this one on the Hampstead Road north of Tottenham Court Road, to the Knightsbridge home of a wealthy pupil being tutored and back again, because the pupil is unwilling to rise for his class, yet he pays for the class nevertheless.<sup>48</sup> The hack teacher's dream: paid and not having to work because the pupil cancelled late. Walking then back to Hampstead Road and working, fired with energy, the whole day long on the writer-scholar's real work for which the teaching is mere necessary drudgery paying for bed and board.

Sometimes work is seated and leisure pedestrian; sometimes it is the other way around. Both of these London walks, as recalled by Ryecroft, enact and mimic not the relationship between businessman and clerk as in Dickens's pairings of Ralph and Newman, Tulkinghorn and Snagsby but, in a distorted fashion, the walks of the labouring man. Carrying the books along the New Road then trudging back and retrieving the second load because he cannot carry the whole lot at once, Ryecroft mimics the lowest sort of delivery man or even a dray horse ('[s]ometimes I added the labour of a porter to my fasting endured for the sale of books'). Yet he does so in the pursuit of what he calls 'literature': writing the experience and understanding of which liberates its reader from the pursuit of gain, embodied in the works of the father of English free thought, Gibbon. To achieve this noble goal, Ryecroft is prepared to

make sacrifices: ‘To possess those clean-paged quartos I would have sold my coat.’ (34). As in many ways, Ryecroft thus simultaneously rejects and participates in modern commercialism and acquisitiveness. His ardour for the object of his desire, the self-denial he is prepared to experience for it, resembles nothing more than the relentless struggle for money of a young Andrew Carnegie or John D. Rockefeller.<sup>49</sup> Yet Ryecroft’s patriotism and conservatism compel him to desire not money but social standing within a British class system fetishizing the figure of the gentleman. On the trip from Hampstead Road to Knightsbridge, Ryecroft establishes himself as a gentleman rather than a boor for the simple reason that walking to work and finding no work there he is still paid. This differentiates him from London labouring figures such as the docker who arrives too late at the dock gates and walks home empty-handed.

Other London walks are remembered which involve beauty and art as a momentary release from the seated drudgery of the garret. Unlike Newman and Kate in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Ryecroft is a freelance, but like them he is still dominated by the ticking of the clock, if only because he must arrive on time to tutor pupils and deliver set numbers of words to editors for tight deadlines. Ryecroft recalls ‘walking London streets by night, penniless and miserable’, and hearing music from open windows in Eaton Square, ‘one night when I was going back to Chelsea, tired, hungry, racked by frustrate passions. I had tramped miles and miles, in the hope of wearying myself so that I could sleep and forget’ (135).<sup>50</sup> Here as with the wealthy Knightsbridge pupil who slept in and cancelled the class, for which he was still paid, Ryecroft is thankful: ‘for an hour or so I revelled as none of the bidden guests could possibly be doing’ for having the free concert in the street, which he, unlike the invited guests (he assumes), can truly appreciate (135). Another instance is his August Bank Holiday encounter with an empty and seemingly pristine London. For once unhurried, Ryecroft feels different about the buildings of the city, finding ‘a charm in the vulgar vista, in the dull architecture which I had

never known' (88). London without people, neither the raucously boorish poor nor the smugly boorish wealthy, becomes aesthetically beautiful. 'Deep and clear-marked shadows' have more visual power 'when they fall upon highways devoid of folk'. This happens in the course of yet another walk which is not leisured nor again straightforwardly connected to work.

In Ryecroft's present retirement cushioned by money, to walk is a choice. Walking can, however, become the day's activity, balanced by the rest which follows physical exertion. As such, walking for the retired, country-dwelling Ryecroft, can mirror the working day of the person who (unlike the older Ryecroft but like his younger self) must work. So Ryecroft, when 'a little weary', rests from this physical exertion by sitting in his chair waiting for 'the soft but penetrating odour which floats into my study with the appearance of the teapot' (215). And so, in the present tense of the book, apart from reminiscing about the past and responding splenetically to what he reads, he presents his central daily activity as walking in the different seasons of rural England. Here is the close of 'Autumn':

Yesterday I passed by an elm avenue, leading to a beautiful old house. The road between the trees was covered in all its length and breadth with fallen leaves—a carpet of pale gold. Further on, I came to a plantation, mostly of larches; it shone in the richest aureate hue, with here and there a splash of blood-red, which was a young beech in its moment of autumnal glory.

I looked at an alder, laden with brown catkins, its blunt foliage stained with innumerable shades of lovely colour. Near it was a horse-chestnut, with but a few leaves hanging on its branches, and those a deep orange. The limes, I see, are already bare.

To-night the wind is loud, and rain dashes against my casement; to-morrow I shall awake to a sky of winter. (202)

Ryecroft can thus make the passage of time in a fashion that seems free of hurry. And yet the hurry of his past always shadows his unhurried present.

A different sort of walk in the present is that of the past as it is projected in memory, a memory Ryecroft indulges precisely because of the money which enables him now to walk, sit, or reflect when he wants. In the remembered past, Ryecroft had two roles as aspirant writer and intellectual in 1880s London: in one with the walk as relief from labour, in the other with the walk as part of the drudgery. Firstly he carries out hack writing that is badly paid but necessary for survival. Because of his poverty and lack of a position this is carried out not in a study or office but in the same single room, cellar or ‘the squalidest garret’, sometimes ‘pestilential’ (26), where the writer sleeps. Then, walking out in the evening to the theatre (227) or ‘in funds’, marching to the book stall to buy his coveted Gibbon (34–35), the physically sedentary toil at the desk has its opposite when the work is done in escapes into the streets. These are themselves limited to London because there is insufficient money to leave London (and the lodgings are too bad to leave precious books in for any length of time). Secondly, as Woolf notices, the young Ryecroft often walked to work tutoring pupils in their homes. The walk would be from the cheapest lodgings in proximity to the homes of the rich, between those according to a timetable of lessons, and back again. The tutoring and the writing are also alike in that they are both freelance work paid for by multiple better-off customers rather than employment requiring attendance at a place of work for set hours, but both keep Ryecroft on a leash, they restrain his mobility, because he cannot be very far at any time from pupils or editors.

## **5. Modernity Begets Conservatism**

While Ryecroft himself is a splenetic opponent of modernity in guises as varied as London, the contemporary inn, literary commerce, the education of children from working-class

families and universal suffrage, *Ryecroft* the book is entirely a product of modernity and far from denying or ignoring the changes of Gissing's lifetime it calls attention to them. It has been compared to the concern in Thomas Hardy's novels with what Angel Clare views in Tess D'Urbeyfield as 'the ache of modernism'; it could equally well be compared, with its gnomic numbered sub-sections and reflections that are personal to the risk-taking limit of egotism, to Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*.<sup>51</sup> Both books strive towards the formal departures today associated with the high modernism of the 1920s. In Gissing's *Ryecroft*, as in both Hardy and Nietzsche, the experience of modernity can be combined with both a massively expanded time range and an sense of bitterness or a callous indifference in relation to the present moment.<sup>52</sup>

For Gissing, via *Ryecroft*, literature as a business or profession seems to be squalid. He claims to write at a time when an interest in 'the processes of "literary" manufacture and the ups and downs of the "literary" market have taken over from actual discussions of literature, clearly alluding to industry and the stock market (194–95). On numerous occasions *Ryecroft* refers slightly to writing that pays by the word, or to the profits made by publishers and hangers-on of the publishing industry, or to writers suited to coping with the brutality of that industry, such as 'A big blusterous genial brute of a Trollope', or Dickens, a 'shrewd and vigorous man of business', contrasting them with himself, 'in all practical matters [...] idle and inept' (195, 30). Perhaps the most striking example of *Ryecroft*'s caustic view of his own former occupation comes when he recalls, on a dark winter morning, 'sitting up in the dark, I heard men going along the street, roaring news of a hanging that had just taken place.

"Execution of Mrs"—I forget the name of the murderess. "Scene on the scaffold!" It was a little after nine o'clock; the enterprising paper had promptly got out its gibbet edition. A morning of mid-winter, roofs and ways covered with soot-grimed snow

under the ghastly fog-pall; and whilst I lay there in my bed, that I might sicken and die in that wilderness of houses, nothing above me but “a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours”. (212)

Through Ryecroft, Gissing bemoans the fact that writing is a commercial business, associating this fact with the frightening accelerations of urban modernity and contrasting it negatively, in a manner clearly reminiscent not just of the conservative English Romanticism of Wordsworth and Ruskin but of much older modes,<sup>53</sup> with rural retirement. Despite his assertions to the contrary, Ryecroft forever sees literature in terms of its market materiality, in terms of its business, and the long-distances high-speeds walk becomes the physical figure for this, its symbol, its talisman. Ryecroft claims to be no businessman, no Ralph Nickleby. Yet he emerges as a deformed and decayed figure, lurking in his Devonshire bower. He complains about the state of the English inn while benefitting from the mysterious inheritance (in effect his benevolent patron, his Maecenas, to continue the Horatian analogy) which has freed him from the slavery of the pen and the canvasser offering him typewriting services, an inheritance perhaps derived from industrial or commercial sources. He praises the poor benighted servant he has in Devonshire as well as the railway post which swiftly brings him books from London. Ryecroft may be an older man but like numerous youthful lead characters in the young Gissing’s fiction – notably Arthur Golding in *Workers in the Dawn*, Julian Casti in *The Unclassed*, Gilbert Grail in *Thyrza*, Adela Waltham in *Demos*, Sidney Trent in *The Nether World* and Reardon in *New Grub Street* – he is both wise and a fool. The puzzle in each case relates to modernity and working for money: no one can avoid this unless money makes the avoidance possible, yet perhaps as Ryecroft himself realizes, it is just as noble to charge around a dirty and rapacious city grabbing money, as it is to contemplate a beautiful fire in rural seclusion.

## 6. Conclusion

Ryecroft's move through the seasons, within the frame narrative provided by 'G. G.', is a move towards the close of his own life. Just before the end he mulls over the clichéd expression '[t]ime is money' and turns it around, transforming it into 'money is time' (262). Here he finds 'a precious truth', regarding the 'glorious fire crackling and leaping' suddenly as an example of the 'material comfort' with which in his latter days he is blessed: 'What are we doing all our lives but purchasing, or trying to purchase, time?' What is the hard-working City man doing, whether working honestly or exploiting others like Ralph Nickleby, but trying to retire early?<sup>54</sup> This chapter has offered a contribution to the 'historical geographies of mobility' announced by Tim Cresswell, by illustrating how sedentary positions of stillness and pedestrian motion could both in this era of print for mass consumption, railways, and competitive examinations as the gateway to membership of a new middle class be associated with either leisure or work. It has done so by opening up experiential dimensions of these moves and obstructions by examining feelings about them committed to paper and, crucially dramatized through the device of a semi-fictional character reflecting on the relationship between past and present.<sup>55</sup> The present collection's contribution to the literature of mobility lies in the ability of 'hurry' as a concept to capture aspects of modern subjectivity peculiarly well. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, this chapter has argued, is imbued with feeling-laden instances of hurry, each brought about by one-off and unique conjunctions of money and time.

Ryecroft is a 'socioeconomic outsider' at least in the early part of his career, yet sociological readings of Gissing have by-and-large overlooked this book.<sup>56</sup> Offensive as many of the opinions expressed in it are, *Ryecroft* needs to regain its place among the earliest non-fictional studies of urban modernity, alongside works by Simmel and Ferdinand Tönnies. It is

a profoundly literary work in its complex, knowing games with authorship and editing, games played with an audience whose particular sophistications as readers have largely disappeared from sight, and these complexities are among the mobilities of the urban environment which produced it. Precisely through its rendering of felt experience, which is to say its literariness, *Ryecroft* adds considerably to an understanding of ‘the rhythms of everyday life’ in nineteenth-century London,<sup>57</sup> and as such makes the case that historical geographers and literary scholars need to interact more profoundly.

Hurry appears in the architectures of London: those which are strangely made beautiful on August Bank Holiday for Ryecroft wandering alone through an empty city; those of Islington High Street which at times he cannot separate from his own hurried youth. Gissing’s special interest for students of urban modernity is found in the peculiar relish his writing expresses for scenes which might seem merely squalid or boring: in the life he gives to a world of hurry without overly aestheticizing it. As such, while it might be tempting to condemn Gissing as an egotistical depressive who was becoming anachronistic in an era running into modernism, to do so would be a mistake. He represents a major cultural strand: the anti-town spiritual urge was remarkably strong throughout Britain and London’s era of material pre-eminence, as evidence from Dickens’s Wemmick (in *Great Expectations*) to the Hampstead Garden Suburb of Dame Henrietta Barnett and Raymond Unwin indicates. Gissing is a powerful writer of town who is also always completely alienated from town, and as such represents quite precisely one British relationship to the urban. His account of the complex refigurations of the time-money relationship, additionally, are vital among accounts of the moment in modernity being produced in many contexts during the last decades of the nineteenth century, notably in Germany and the USA as much as in England.

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<sup>1</sup> Katharina Boehm and Josephine McDonagh, ‘Urban Mobility: New Maps of Victorian London’, *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15, no. 2 (2010), 184–200, 187. See Charlotte Mathieson, “‘A Moving and a Moving On’”:

Mobility, Space, and the Nation in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, *English* 61, no. 2 (2012), 395–405; Josephine McDonagh, 'Space, Mobility, and the Novel: "The Spirit of Place is a Great Reality"', in *A Concise Companion to Realism*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 50 – 67.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006); Tim Cresswell, 'Mobilities II: Still', *Progress in Human Geography* 36, no. 5 (2012), 645–53; Tom Hall and Robin James Smith, 'Stop and Go: A Field Study of Pedestrian Practice, Immobility and Urban Outreach Work', *Mobilities* 8, no.2 (2013), 4–5; Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2 (2006), 207–26; Mimi Sheller, 'Moving with John Urry', *Theory, Culture & Society* (2016), <https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/moving-with-john-urry-by-mimi-sheller/>.

<sup>3</sup> James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800 – 1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); James Buzard, *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8–14.

<sup>4</sup> Mathieson, "'A Moving and a Moving On'", 396. For another effort to spatialize *Bleak House*, based on a north-south geographical line running through England, see Jason Finch, *Deep Locational Criticism: Imaginative Place in Literary Research and Teaching* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2016), 57–62.

<sup>5</sup> George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (London: Constable, 1921). Page references hereafter in parentheses.

<sup>6</sup> James Winter, *London's Teeming Streets 1830 – 1914* (London: Routledge, 1993), 100–01.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'George Gissing', in *The Common Reader Volume II*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Vintage, 2003), 221–22.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1912), 61; Peter Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1979), 57.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), 56. This area contained numerous ramshackle pubs and small halls where 'Soho radicalism' was focused (see Sarah Wise, 'The Eclectic Hall, Headquarters of Soho Radicalism', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (2017), 289 – 300, doi: 10.1093/hwj/dbx009). Political meetings of this sort are important in Gissing's 1880 debut novel, as are lowlife drinking scenes set in the same neighbourhood (George Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, ed. Debbie Harrison [Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2010], 478–92). The 'labyrinth' south of Crown Street, which became the northern section of Charing Cross Road, can be seen clearly on Edward Weller's 1868 map (<http://london1868.com/weller41.htm>).

<sup>10</sup> Even the recent interest in formerly more obscure figures such as Margaret Harkness and Amy Levy, as keys to aspects of everyday gendered experience formerly overlooked, largely remains within analysis of the novel.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 41; Adrian Poole, *Gissing in Context* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 204.

<sup>12</sup> Exceptions: M. D. Allen, "'Feeble Idyllicism": George Gissing's Critique of *Oliver Twist* and Ryecroft', *Gissing Journal* 43, no. 3 (2007); Max Saunders, *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kevin Swafford, 'Mourning, Pleasure and the Aesthetic Ideal in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*', *Gissing Journal* 38, no. 3 (2002), 1 -- 13.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by Swafford, 'Mourning, Pleasure and the Aesthetic Ideal', 12–13.

<sup>14</sup> Copies of the 1921 printing of *Ryecroft* in the library of Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and of the 1930 printing of the book in the library of the University of Tartu, Estonia, share this origin.

<sup>15</sup> Saunders, *Self-Impression*, 129–31.

<sup>16</sup> See the reflections in the introductory essay of this volume on multiple posts and daily editions of newspapers around 1900.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Davies, *Lost London: 1870–1945* (Croxley Green: English Heritage, 2009), 22, 117; Patricia E. C. Croot ed., *A History of the County of Middlesex Volume XIII: The City of Westminster Part I* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2009 [Victoria County Histories]), 133.

<sup>18</sup> Lynda Nead (*Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000], 168), notes that for nineteenth-century observers of a progressive bent Holywell Street 'represented a London that was rapidly disappearing, but not fast enough'. Thinking of architectures of hurry the street and those around made up a literal blockage of circulation in the city. Visitors to London jokingly said to have disappeared between Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Strand because of this knot of old, decaying thoroughfares. Conversely, as Nead (*Victorian Babylon*, 184) observes, Holywell Street before its demolition was 'a place of stasis and reverie' for ordinary Londoners, notably women, because of the multitude of shops in it which sold paintings and illustrated books, and displaying these in their windows: a temporary respite from the city of hurry.

<sup>19</sup> E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 1989), 166.

<sup>20</sup> As discussed in the introductory essay to this volume.

- <sup>21</sup> On Aldwych, Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 6: Westminster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 330–33; F. M. L. Thompson, *Hampstead: Building a Borough, 1650 – 1974* (London: Routledge, 1974).
- <sup>22</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Janet Wolff, ‘The Invisible “Flâneuse”: Women and the Literature of Modernity’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 2–3 (1985), 37–46 (1985, 2006); Janet Wolff, ‘Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the Flâneur)’, in *The Invisible Flâneuse: Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, eds. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18–32.
- <sup>23</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Wolff, ‘Gender and the Haunting of Cities’, 20.
- <sup>24</sup> Swafford, ‘Mourning, Pleasure and the Aesthetic Ideal’, 12.
- <sup>25</sup> Roger Milbrandt, ‘How Poor Was George Gissing? A Study of Gissing’s Income between 1877 and 1888’, *Gissing Journal* 43, no. 4 (2007), 1–17.
- <sup>26</sup> Lesley Hoskins, Samantha Shave, Alastair Owens, Martin Daunton and David R. Green, ‘The Death Duties in Britain, 1850 – 1930: Evidence from the Annual Reports of the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue’ (History of Wealth Project Working Paper 1, 2014), <https://historyofwealth.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/working-paper-1.pdf>; Martin Daunton, *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1851 – 1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- <sup>27</sup> David R. Green and Alastair Owens, ‘Geographies of Wealth: Real Estate and Personal Property Ownership in England and Wales, 1870–1902’, *Economic History Review* 66, no. 3 (2013), 848–72. Gissing himself never got enough money with his pen – let alone from any mysterious legacy – to retire from the business of writing daily for money, although he gradually became more prosperous from the late 1880s onwards. His annual income always fluctuated; in the 1890s, when he was a well-established writer, it was similar to that of a better-paid clerical worker, rather than that of a middle-class professional such as a clergyman or solicitor.
- <sup>28</sup> Milbrandt, ‘How Poor Was George Gissing?’, 10.
- <sup>29</sup> A network complete only in the year that Gissing died and Ryecroft was published (Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* [London: Vintage, 2001], 12–13; Winter, *London’s Teeming Streets*, 100–17).
- <sup>30</sup> Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, 5–8, 48–56; George Gissing, *Thyrza*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013), 60–62; see Keating, *Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, 58 – 63. See Richard Dennis, ‘Thyrza’s Geography’, in Gissing, *Thyrza*, 560–67.
- <sup>31</sup> H. J. Dyos, ‘The Slums of Victorian London’. In *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos*, ed. David Cannadine and David Reeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 129–53, 139.
- <sup>32</sup> Keating, *Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, 53–92.
- <sup>33</sup> M. D. Allen, ‘Bleak House and *The Emancipated*’, *Gissing Journal* 43, no. 4 (2007), 17–27, 18.
- <sup>34</sup> M. D. Allen (“‘Feeble Emancipation’”) claims to have found specific Dickensian roots for the rural portion of Ryecroft in *Oliver Twist*, but does not demonstrate this via specific verbal or thematic parallels. Taken together, the specifics of 1890s nature-writing (e.g. C.J. Cornish, *Wild England of To-Day and the Wild Life in it* [London: Thomas Nelson, 1895]; see Jason Finch, *E.M. Forster and English Place: A Literary Topography* [Turku, Finland: Åbo Akademi Press, 2011], 122) plus the general idea of the country as opposed to the town represented by the English West Country, as in at least two separate Dickensian cases (see below, note 54) form more convincing analogues for Ryecroft’s accounts of his walks and life in the English countryside.
- <sup>35</sup> Poole, *Gissing in Context*, 206.
- <sup>36</sup> George Simmel, ‘The Metropolis in Modernity’, in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 203–10.
- <sup>37</sup> Milbrandt, ‘How Poor Was George Gissing’, 11.
- <sup>38</sup> I am grateful to Richard Dennis for this observation about the transformation of Ryecroft’s tea-drinking (and more generally for his expertise on London and on Gissing).
- <sup>39</sup> Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 9.
- <sup>40</sup> Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 468, 558–66
- <sup>41</sup> ““And if you have no real objection to accompany Mr. Bucket to the place in question,” pursues the lawyer, “I shall feel obliged to you if you will do so” (Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Norman Page [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971], 328).
- <sup>42</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 22–24, 41–80; Wolff, Invisible “Flâneuse”. On (largely middle-class) women walkers in the streets note Nead; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the*

*Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) concentrates on observational walks by female writers. In late Victorian and Edwardian fictions, for example Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop* (1888) and Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* (1903), respectable working women are sometimes placed within the boundaries of the shop, over which they can have some control. See Elizabeth F. Evans, 'We are Photographers, Not Mountebanks! Spectacle, Commercial Space, and the New Public Woman', in *Amy Levy: Critical Essays*, ed. Naomi Hetherington and Nadia Valman (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 25–46. Women's pedestrian commutes as a multitudinous aspect of everyday life, rather than a cause for outrage or moralizing, or even a statement of independence, would reward more attention.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, ed. Paul Schlicke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121.

<sup>44</sup> The ferocious speed at which Ralph himself walks is more than once emphasized by Dickens (e.g. Chapter 10, Chapter 44).

<sup>45</sup> Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 127.

<sup>46</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, 182–89.

<sup>47</sup> Gibbon was crucial to the development in England of a modern view of the classical past, free-thinking and sceptical about all religions, Christianity as much as Paganism. In narrating its decadence and decline, Gibbon chose to examine the era when the Roman Empire was hurrying towards its demise, a choice which was resonant in the era of the 'fin-de-siècle' and 'decadence' in which Gissing wrote. And yet for Ryecroft, and presumably for Gissing himself, Gibbon also represents an escape from the hurry of modernity: in the massive volumes of the folio *Decline and Fall*, the opposite of small, cheap portable reprints designed for reading on trains, in the single-minded concentration that reading them requires, and the sense of transport to another world that reading them gives.

<sup>48</sup> The distance from the middle of Hampstead Road (running north-south) to the middle of Knightsbridge (running east-west) is approximately three miles. Assuming this, and Ryecroft's vaunted pace of 'five miles an hour', the walk there and back would have taken him 72 minutes.

<sup>49</sup> The young Gissing, after an early disgrace in Manchester and poverty in London, went as far as Boston and Chicago seeking his fortune, but it did not work out.

<sup>50</sup> The young *Ryecroft* (like the young Gissing on the account given by Milbrandt in 'How Poor Was George Gissing?') was always able to work for a living and support himself to the extent of having a bed for the night. In this sense his tramp differs from that of the homeless who 'carry the banner' in Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (London: Tangerine Press, 2014), p. 92, who must 'walk the streets all night' having failed to secure a bed in the cheapest lodging houses of the city. *The People of the Abyss*, like *Ryecroft*, was first published in 1903. I am grateful to Phillip Gordon Mackintosh for pointing out the comparison.

<sup>51</sup> Swafford, 'Mourning, Pleasure and the Aesthetic Ideal', 1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> On massive temporal expansions in modernity and its art, see Charles M. Tung, 'Baddest Modernism: The Scales and Lines of Inhuman Time', *Modernism/Modernity*, 23 no. 3 (2016), 515–38.

<sup>53</sup> *Ryecroft* is to a considerable extent a formal imitation of the *Epistles* of Horace put into a modern setting.

<sup>54</sup> Or perhaps, like another peculiarly unpleasant Dickensian businessman, Mr Vholes, 'supporting an aged father in the Vale of Taunton—his native place' (Dickens, *Bleak House*, Chapter 37), buying time for another who has himself invested time in the London money-maker. In all three cases, the Vholeses', the Nicklebys' and Ryecroft's, the other of hard-nosed London is the West Country, often used discursively as an epitome of rural England.

<sup>55</sup> Cresswell, 'Mobilities II: Still'.

<sup>56</sup> Bart Keunen and Luc De Droogh, 'The Socioeconomic Outsider: Labour and the Poor'. In *The Cambridge Companion to the City in Literature*, ed. Kevin R. McNamara (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 99–113, 108.

<sup>57</sup> Alastair Owens, Nigel Jeffries, Karen Wehner and Rupert Featherby. 2010. 'Fragments of the Modern City: Material Culture and the Rhythms of Everyday Life in Victorian London', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 15, no. 2 (2010), 212–25.