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“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
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“Misery of Miseries”: Gissing and the Servant Question

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In late-Victorian times the shortage of servants was considered a grave social issue. The ideal of home as a place of comfort and peaceful family life, which to a large extent depended on a sufficient supply of cheap domestic labour, was threatened. Through the work, diary and letters of George Gissing we get a detailed insight into the difficulties in hiring, keeping and managing servants which not only reflects the specific problems of the Gissing household but aspects of the general situation known as the servant question. It is no exaggeration to say that “the servant question was *lived* by Gissing with painful intensity.”¹ From 1891, when he married Edith Underwood, the servant problem is brought into his novels and short stories; the letters to his family and close friends complain about his own domestic difficulties and his diary reads like a catalogue of woes. Even if Edith’s personality and incompetence as mistress of the house, wife and mother have been largely blamed for the tragi-comical rate of servants’ comings and goings, I would like to point to other factors that concurred to create the domestic nightmare where the presence or absence of servants played a crucial part. It becomes evident that Gissing’s background, his social insecurity, temperament, marriage across the class barrier and his often insufficient income aggravated a situation from which he in the end had to escape.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century industrialisation and the growth of the middle class combined to create a greater demand for domestic labour. In this context the middle class was defined as households with at least one servant, and a recommended minimum income needed for that purpose of £150. In 1891 over half the domestic staff of 1.5 million were employed in such households of small tradesmen, coal merchants etc. The professional classes of doctors, clergymen, bank managers and others with an income of around £600 would normally employ three servants: a

cook, a housemaid, a parlourmaid or nursemaid, which was a recommended minimum staff for a well-run household.²

Although there was always a certain stigma connected with service, especially as far as the lower domestics in middle-class families were concerned, and service often “was conceived to be but a step or two removed from serfdom,”³ it was also regarded as a refuge and quite a comfortable way of life. Secure from the economic buffets which almost all other workers had to suffer, the domestic servants were provided with the basic necessities. They were better housed and, since they shared the diet of the household, they were better fed than for example, weavers, soldiers and agricultural workers.⁴ There was also a possibility of social advancement since the status of the employer was reflected on to his servants. By constantly moving to families further up the social scale, the servant could improve his or her own status, working conditions and wages. A high turnover was therefore characteristic of household labour. For the individual domestic workers this represented a certain amount of freedom and bargaining power and also worked as protection from abuse: “Powerless to control most of the work and living conditions, a domestic only had one defense: to change employers,” as Katzman points out.⁵ Conscious of this possibility, servants were less willing to display the deferential attitude which their masters expected. Behind the “independent spirit” or “insolence” which Gissing and so many of his contemporaries complained about, lay no doubt a lessened dread of dismissal and a concomitant impatience with the strict control and sometimes overburdening demands of their employers.

In spite of the obvious advantages of domestic labour they did not outweigh the disadvantages. The giving up of personal freedom, the long hours, the frictions of a personalized relationship with the mistress were drawbacks that in the long run made young women choose the shop, the factory or the new openings in clerical work during this time. The growth of democratic ideals and trade unionism⁶ in society complicated the fact that in employing a servant the class issues were brought into the homes and consequently set up “the home as a site for all the conflicts between labor and management that afflicted the nineteenth century generally.”⁷ Furthermore, as Horn points out, never “was this clearer than among employers whose own station in life was uncomfortably close to that of the maid they kept, and for whom the preservation of petty distinctions of rank was all-important.”⁸ Against this background of servants’ shortage, their general tendency toward independence and mobility along with Victorian

middle-class ideals and class issues, Gissing's own frustrated attempt at conventional family life is set.

When Gissing married Edith Underwood in February 1891 he had few illusions about what a future life with an uneducated working-class wife would contain. But he found her pliable and had hopes to be able to smooth her rough edges and at least improve her speech. In August they moved to No. 1 St Leonard's Terrace in Exeter, a house of eight rooms, an ambitious undertaking for a young author who just two months earlier complained that he could "only just afford the necessary food from day to day."⁹ One can only speculate on Gissing's motives for setting up house on such a comparatively grand scale. It may have been a more or less pronounced wish to attain middle-class respectability, a compensation for his own social insecurity and Edith's working-class background, a way of distancing his family from a class that was "uncomfortably close" to that of the servants they kept. Langland sees the Victorian home "as a theater for the staging of a family's social position, a staging that depends on a group of prescribed domestic practices."¹⁰ The Gissings employed a young servant, Nelly Edwards, who seemed promising and they spent a few quiet months in their new home before their first son was born, an event which was to mark the beginning of their serious trouble. Up till then Gissing was quite content with his domestic life as shown by letters to his brother Algernon and sister Ellen in November of that year: "Edith does very well—improves much in every way. I am more than satisfied with her. The house is orderly, everything punctual. She has many very good qualities."¹¹ But in December, when Edith approached her confinement, the servant left, obviously fearing the extra work. As a maid-of-all-work Nelly had to run the entire house, including cooking and cleaning the eight rooms, and it is hardly surprising that she made use of her possibility to seek better employment when the arrival of a baby was imminent. After the birth of the child it was deemed necessary to keep two servants. The hiring of a nurse only doubled the servant problem for Gissing who had been compelled to turn to registry offices. He cannot have been fully unaware of the doubtful reputation of these establishments but he could not afford the costs of advertising. In recruiting new servants, Pamela Horn says, the servants' registry office was the last alternative when all others had failed, since they were considered "the resort of prostitutes or the lowest grade of servant only."¹² With two new servants from the registry office, a new-born baby and a distressed wife, the prospects of domestic tranquillity for Gissing were indeed bleak.

Consequently, the rapid change for the worse that took place in December 1891 can be attributed to the new additions to the Gissing household: baby and servants. A contributing factor was also the change in Edith's condition, a condition that today most likely would be diagnosed as post-partum depression. The symptoms of raging mood swings, lack of bonding with her child, feeling of worthlessness, fear of being alone and psychosomatic disorders (neuralgia etc), which Edith from now on suffers from, speak in favour of such a view. When the baby in January was put out to nurse in the country for a few months, it may not have been considered such a dramatic step as it would today ; it nevertheless gave the couple some breathing-space. Family life was resumed in April, now with the help of two servants and a nurse, and from this time on the servant problem escalates in the Gissing household to its bitter end.

The idea of the Victorian home as a shelter from the outer world and a place of rest after a long day's work, implied of course that the master went out to work and the mistress stayed at home, supervising its maintenance. In Victorian literature home is not only spoken of as an ideal but as a "place apart," Monica Cohen says, and "the seclusion is invariably envisioned as the exclusion of 'work.'"¹³ In *Great Expectations* Wemmick's Castle functions as a tenderly exaggerated ideal, a miniature home separated from the rest of the world by a moat—a contrast to other dysfunctional homes in the novel. According to Cohen, Dickens in this novel emphasizes the distinction between home and work to mark the good homes, as for example Wemmick's Castle, from the bad ones, like the Pocket household. Although described with a great deal of sympathy this is "a chaotic house of mismanagement" with an apathetic wife, misbehaving servants and children running wild. Mr. Pocket boards his students and the fact that he lectures about domestic management becomes an ironic twist and makes plain the gap between theory and practice. Cohen suggests that it is precisely this "lack of distinction between work and home that is somehow implicated in the disarray of the Pocket household."¹⁴

It would seem that a similar lack of distinction played a crucial role in the Gissing household. That Edith had no understanding of the particular needs of a writer is not surprising. To the servants the constant presence of the master must have been a disruptive element, not likely to command respect. There were conflicting orders and quarrels between master and mistress. Gissing often felt called upon or was asked to meddle in household affairs, however petty: "Not a day without wrangling and uproar down in the kitchen," he complains.¹⁵ The hiring of a nurse did not make the

situation easier ; a nurse was higher up on the servants' scale than the ordinary general servant, she was better paid and more discriminating about her working environment. This created tensions between servants as well as between master and nurse: "A feeble and pretentious idiot, lamenting because she finds this is only a small house" was Gissing's comment when a new nurse left after two days.¹⁶ Obviously this nurse only needed one glance to condemn the household as being too "small." The home of an unknown artist and a working-class wife in small financial circumstances would not attract a servant who was eager to better her own social prestige—servants were as class conscious as their betters. Gissing learnt this the hard way ; when he later engaged a young woman by the name of Janet Sparkes, whom he judged to be vastly "superior socially to any we have had," he cautiously added that she might be "too good for the place."¹⁷ This turned out to be true, since Sparkes after only a couple of days gave notice to leave within a month, by which time she was transformed into a "useless idiot woman."¹⁸

Her successor was Mrs. Mantle, a mature woman of 45 years. Gissing enjoyed a clean house and well-cooked meals for a few days before she, too, declared herself "generally dissatisfied" and left. Older servants were sought after on the servant market and therefore better paid. Their knowledge and experience were a certain guarantee against domestic catastrophes, but Gissing rarely succeeded in finding servants from that category. The tender age of many general servants was a problem in itself. Tens of thousands of children over 10 years of age (the minimum school leaving age until 1895) were in service and it goes without saying that this kind of child labour was cheap. Many lower middle-class families had to make do with such domestic help and it is not surprising that these child servants failed to meet the employers' demands of running an entire household.

Circumstances improved somewhat when the big house in Exeter was given up and the family moved to Brixton. A temporary servant was called in, but half a year later the girl, Lizzie, was still with them. If there was an aspect of social failure involved in this move, Gissing did not admit it, instead he was eager to point out to his brother that the new area was "a most respectable bourgeois district."¹⁹ Having relinquished his educative efforts with Edith and perhaps tired of keeping up appearances with two or three servants, Gissing, his social self-confidence at a low ebb, was convinced that social isolation was necessary. His class consciousness is revealed in a letter to Clara Collet at this time: "I have made up my mind never again to mix in the society of educated people. It is a necessity of my circumstances.

I find it a wretched discomfort to pretend social equality where there can be none.”²⁰

Restlessness and servant problems forced the family to shorter stays in Clevedon and Dorking before they moved again in September 1894, now into a small house with a garden at Epsom, a home where the final process of marital disintegration would take place. In February the following year, the servant who stands out as the one who escaped more serious criticism, Annie Medhurst, arrived. Always quick to condemn, Gissing finds her “coarse,” but she soon delighted him by an unsolicited spring cleaning of the whole house. She left after a few months to reappear surprisingly two days before Edith gave birth to their second son in January 1896. When Annie left again six months later it was an event that drove the family to Yarmouth, and Gissing complained to Clara Collet: “Our stay is uncertain, for we have lost our servant, & must find another before we can go back home. Misery of miseries !”²¹ The power of the servants was thus considerable. Gissing’s frustration at this utter dependence for the basic functions in life on a class of people he had come to despise is clear from an entry in the diary: “A joke, rather, that I, in my position, should stand trembling for the decision of the gutter-child of fifteen years old !”²² Ten days later he left home never to return.

In spite of the “infinite misery” with servants and complaints that work was impossible, this period of Gissing’s life was, astonishingly enough, his most artistically fruitful. *The Odd Women* was finished in December 1892, *In the Year of Jubilee* in April 1894 and *The Whirlpool*, after a period of short-story writing, in December 1896. During these years, when Gissing suffered from domestic problems almost daily, it is hardly surprising that the issue turns up, sometimes gratuitously, in his work. In *Jubilee*, for example, Lionel Tarrant as a preliminary to his later more seductive endeavours, asks Nancy: “Do you give much thought to the great servant question ?” Without waiting for an answer Tarrant expands on the causes for the present situation and blames “the triumph of glorious Democracy” for the ill-boding development where “a spirit of rebellion” rules in the kitchen: “The servants have learnt that splendid doctrine that every one is as good as everybody else [...] this kind of thing is going on in numberless houses—an utterly incompetent mistress and a democratic maid in spirited revolt.” Surely, the author here was voicing his frustration at a recent kitchen row which in this way left an imprint in his novel. As if he felt that this speech was slightly out of context, Gissing though, lets the bored

Nancy finish by taking Tarrant down with the comment that “he should make an article of it [...] and send it to *The Nineteenth Century*.”²³

On the whole, servants show a greater variety in Gissing’s fiction than in his life. There are a few rebellious servants, but they are described in a way that suggests causes for their revolt ; the author has an understanding attitude that cannot be found in the comments about his own servants. In *New Grub Street*, for example, Amy’s mother keeps “only two servants, who were so ill paid and so relentlessly over-worked that it was seldom they remained with her for more than three months.” He uses the word “slaves” and passes judgment on a mistress who would not hesitate to work “her servants till they perished of exhaustion before her eyes.”²⁴ In a short story, “A Charming Family,” there is a familiar scene with an approaching domestic crisis (childbirth) and a servant leaving the house at twenty-four hours’ notice, but the author, instead of delivering a stream of abuse at unreliable domestics, supplies her with a good reason—she had not been paid for months. A later example is Mrs. Cross in *Will Warburton*, a mean mistress with sadistic inclinations, who in six months runs through half a dozen “general” servants “[u]nderpaid and underfed” and found “the sole genuine pleasure of her life in the war she waged with them.”²⁵ When one of them rebels in a drunken fit and attacks her mistress with a poker, we do not blame the careless servant—bad mistresses get their deserts. In fact, incompetent mistresses represented a more serious problem than incompetent servants ; to rule and manage the domestic staff and create a harmonious home atmosphere was their responsibility. Ada in *Jubilee* could never be anything but the centre of chaos in the Peachey household.

It is possible that Gissing with a few years’ hindsight could more easily see both sides of the matter and that it was in merciful forgetfulness in his solitude at Dorking that he could describe the dirty, little servant of Alexander Otway in *The Crown of Life* so good-humouredly:

With manifest pride the little servant came in to lay the table ; she only broke one glass in the operation, and her ‘Sure now, who’d have thought it !’ as she looked at the fragments, delighted Alexander beyond measure [...] after it appeared an immense gooseberry tart, the pastry hardly to be attacked with an ordinary table knife [...] It was an uproarious meal. The little servant, whilst in attendance, took her full share of the conversation, and joined shrilly in the laughter.²⁶

The secret may be that “no word of ill-temper could be heard” but still, a similar conduct of one of the servants in the Gissing household could hardly have passed without a grim comment by the diarist.

An amusing example of Gissing’s more unforgiving side is an event that took place in December 1894 when a “servant took herself off, having

secretly had her box removed beforehand.”²⁷ The same thing happens to Mrs. Cross in *Will Warburton*: “the girl who had been with them for the last six months somehow contrived to get the box secretly out of the house, and disappeared (having just been paid her wages) without warning. Long and loudly did Mrs Cross rail against this infamous behaviour.”²⁸ Years after the actual event Gissing here describes it in words almost identical to the ones he used in his diary and in a letter to Clara Collet. ²⁹ Seldom is the influence of his own experience with servants as transparent as this. Instead, Gissing seems to find relief in describing wishful dreams of clean little servants like the one of the Micklethwaites’ in *The Odd Women* who opens the door to Everard Barfoot, signalling a simple but dignified domestic atmosphere by her “gentle, noiseless demeanour, which was no doubt the result of careful discipline.”³⁰ Noiselessness and cleanliness were the hallmarks of a good servant, qualities which Gissing rarely found in his own domestics ; his constant grumbling about unwashed crockery and the general filth he had to put up with shows an almost obsessive preoccupation with hygienic matters.

The more mature examples of Mary Woodruff in *Jubilee*, a housekeeper promoted to friend and confidante, and Dr. Derwent’s man-servant Thibaut in *The Crown of Life*, “the most delightful of men, though only a servant,”³¹ are paragons of domestic faithfulness and humble devotedness. To serve their masters is the purpose of their lives, a natural and worthy mission it seems. As a domestic ideal they are half-way to the perfect image of a bachelor’s housekeeper in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, the invisible servant who operates by magic:

My house is perfect. By great good fortune I have found a housekeeper no less to my mind, a low-voiced, light-footed woman of discreet age, strong and deft enough to render me all the service I require, and not afraid of solitude. She rises very early. By my breakfast-time there remains little to be done under the roof save dressing of meals. Very rarely do I hear even a clink of crockery ; never the closing of a door or window. Oh, blessed silence !³²

The servant question finds its way also into the short stories. The dirty, incompetent servants get their share of abuse in, for example, “The Tyrant’s Apology,” or “Fate and the Apothecary.” In “Our Learned Fellow-Townsmen,” on the other hand, we get a glimpse of a “pleasant, roomy house, always quiet and fragrant under the rule of an excellent domestic.”³³ However, in “The Foolish Virgin ” the servant question is made an important theme. Written in 1896, when Gissing was immersed in trouble at home, the story suggests a solution to the problem in recruiting domestic labour among the unmarried, lower-middle-class women. These idle wo-

men would find a purpose for their often meaningless existence, and the servant standard would increase. In this story Rosamund Jewell is advised by a young man, whom she is secretly in love with, to go into service if she wants to be “a profitable member of society.” She agrees to help a young family since “cheap sluts have driven them frantic.”³⁴ With the noble purpose of showing “a way out of the great servant difficulty” she means to impress the young man, who nevertheless marries someone else. Gissing’s proposal may have contained a grain of earnestness, or at least wishful thinking, but there is, as always, ambiguity in his choice of title and the heroine’s name.

With his new life in exile together with Gabrielle Fleury one would have thought that Gissing at long last had attained domestic peace—no ill-tempered wife, disturbing children or incompetent servants. But random remarks in the diary and correspondence of his last years show that even if released from his intense suffering during his life with Edith, his inherent discontent found new outlets. Life in a flat did not agree with him and an invalid mother-in-law was substituted for children as a source of irritation. There are still quarrels with landladies, the rented houses are seldom satisfactory, finances are pinched and his health is declining. The circumstances are indeed different but the wording is strangely familiar: “Gabrielle is in poor health, & likely to be so, owing to the ceaseless work & agitation caused by her mother’s illness. Never a day, nay not an hour, of tranquillity.”³⁵ His existence, work and home life, was still totally dependent on servants, even if the almost daily occupation with housekeeping problems had ceased. When their servant in Paris, Louise, fell ill, work stopped. Unable to cope with life without domestic help, he notes after a few days: “Work hopeless during absence of servant.”³⁶ There were also shortcomings in the managing of the French household and when Louise is called away because of her mother’s illness there is the familiar litany: “The usual misery after her departure,”³⁷ the word “usual” indicating that it was not an isolated event. Although servants represented a great problem, being without them was an even greater problem.

Marianne Curutchague, Gissing’s servant in Ciboure, had a redeeming feature in being Basque. The language barrier probably had a restraining effect on the master-servant frictions. The exotic tongue commanded a sort of respect in a man deeply interested in languages, a respect which in part was extended to the servant, as a letter to Henry Hick in 1902 shows: “Our servant is a Basque, & therefore more interesting than the race of servants in general. Splendid people, physically, these Basques. And one has a

respect for their language, which no philologist has yet connected with any other spoken in the world.”³⁸

Indeed, Gissing sees servants as a race apart, devoid of human dignity and emotions, not an uncommon phenomenon of the times for that matter. His personality and circumstances certainly made him a very exacting employer ; fastidious about punctuality, cleanliness, language, noise and cooking, he accuses his servants of burying him in filth and supplying him with food not fit for human consumption. His grumbling is not confined to his own home—when he visits Hardy and Meredith in September 1895 he finds fault also with their domestic arrangements ; the cooking is bad and the servants careless, not to mention poor Mrs. Hardy who is ugly as well.³⁹ Judging from Gissing’s diary and correspondence the dealings with servants brought out the worst sides of his personality ; he is rash in judgment, impetuous, quick to anger and filled with self-pity. His choice of words in his comments about domestics is embarrassingly forcible ; with few exceptions they are described as lazy and filthy, the invective of “idiot” is not infrequent. He did, however, sometimes raise his own servant problem to a more general level, as in this letter to Algernon: “As for the servant difficulty, I have exhausted all possible utterances. The matter becomes a very grave one, & I am sure that in a few more years great numbers of people will find it necessary to do without servants altogether—a state of things which has largely come to pass in the United States.”⁴⁰ Gissing’s concern about domestic life in uncomfortable, bare houses and with only the simplest meals was exaggerated, in fact he came much closer to predicting the future when he, with his corrosive family life behind him, wrote about Dickens’s Ruth Pinch in Italy:

There are who suspect that our *servant-question* foretells a radical change in ways of thinking about the life of home ; that the lady of a hundred years hence will be much more competent and active in cares domestic than the average shopkeeper’s wife today ; that it may not be found impossible to turn from a page of Sophocles to the boiling of a potato, or even the scrubbing of a floor.

Still unable to refrain from the familiar sneer at “every spendthrift idiot of a mistress, and every lying lazybones of a kitchen-wench” which he hopes will be “swept into Time’s dust-bin,”⁴¹ Gissing is aware that the system where the comfort and life-style of the upper and middle classes were maintained by domestics was rapidly disintegrating. The last century has indeed changed women into combined nurses, housekeepers and professionals. That they, as overworked as any maid-of-all-work of a hundred years ago, would demand that their husbands share the burden of child care and housework might have been beyond the power of his imagination.

¹*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio U. P., 1994), vol. V, introduction, p. xxviii, hereafter CL.

²Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), pp. 19-20.

³J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 179.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 115, 124.

⁵David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week. Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford U. P., 1978), p. 270.

⁶In 1891 the London and Provincial Domestic Servants' Union was formed. It was never very successful (around 600 members) and was dissolved in 1898.

⁷Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels. Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. P., 1995), p. 4.

⁸Horn, p. 13.

⁹*London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: the Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks: Harvester, 1978), 27 May 1891, p. 247, hereafter Diary.

¹⁰Langland, p. 9.

¹¹Letter to Ellen, 7 November 1891, CL IV, p. 336.

¹²Horn, p. 40.

¹³Monica Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1998), p. 72.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁵Diary, 4 October 1892, p. 286.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 20 July 1892, p. 282.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 2 November 1895, p. 393.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 2 December 1895, p. 395.

¹⁹Letter to Algernon, 12 July 1893, CL V, p. 121.

²⁰Letter of 11 November 1893, CL V, p. 159.

²¹Letter of 1 August 1895, CL VI, p. 8.

²²Diary, 1 February 1897, p. 434.

²³*In the Year of Jubilee* (London: Hogarth, 1987), pp. 52-53.

²⁴*New Grub Street* (Oxford: Oxford U. P.), p. 240.

²⁵*Will Warburton* (London: Hogarth, 1985), pp. 67-68.

²⁶*The Crown of Life* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1978), p. 49.

²⁷Diary, 18 December 1894, p. 356.

²⁸P. 282.

²⁹Letter of 26 December 1894, CL V, p. 269.

³⁰*The Odd Women* (London: Virago, 1982), p. 173.

³¹P. 26.

³²*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (London: Constable, 1921), p. 4.

³³"Our Learned Fellow-Townsmen," *A Victim of Circumstances* (London: Constable, 1927), p. 276.

³⁴"The Foolish Virgin," *ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

³⁵Letter to Clara Collet, 21 January 1901, CL VIII, p. 129.

³⁶Diary, 15 October 1899, p. 520.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 25 October 1900, p. 533.

³⁸Letter of 24 August 1902, CL VIII, p. 426.

³⁹Diary, 12 and 14 September 1895, p. 387.

⁴⁰Letter of 8 September 1895, CL VI, p. 24.

⁴¹*Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (London: Gresham, 1912), pp. 192-93.

Gissing's Vision of Croton: De Quincey, Lenormant, Livy, and the Past Recaptured

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One of the most surprising passages in all of Gissing's prose occurs in his description of his quinine- and fever-induced vision of Croton in ancient Roman times. As with so much of *By the Ionian Sea* (1900-1901), most readers have viewed the passage as essentially a job of recording and reporting. But Gissing goes further than this. He expands and alters his vision while describing and interpreting it, and he does so in an extraordinary way.

In the evening following the night when the vision had appeared to him, Gissing jotted down in his diary a few scattered memories of what he had seen—just seven sentences in all, some only fragments:

The result of all this quinine was an extraordinary night—reminding me of De Quincey's opium visions. I saw wonderful pictures ; beginning with pictured vases, and sepulchral tablets, and passing on to scenes of ancient City life, crowded streets, processions, armies etc. Marvellous detail, such as I could not possibly imagine of myself. Scenes succeeded each other without my ever knowing what would come next. A delight—in spite of my feverish suffering. Lovely faces, on friezes and tombs and vases. Landscape flooded with sunshine. (29 November 1897, p. 464)

The comparison to De Quincey seems Gissing's attempt to illuminate his own strange experience to himself. Interestingly enough, De Quincey's account of his opium-induced trances includes apparitions from ancient Rome:

[...] At a clapping of hands would be heard the heart-shaking sound of *Consul Romanus*: and immediately came "sweeping by," in gorgeous paludaments, Paulus or Marius, girt around by a company of centurions, with the crimson tunic hoisted on a spear, and followed by the *alalagmos* [war-cries] of the Roman legions. (De Quincey, p. 105)

In comparing Gissing and De Quincey, however, one needs to make a few basic distinctions. The *Confessions* pages appear within a section

called “The Pains of Opium” (96-116), in contrast to an earlier one dealing with its “Pleasures” (80-83). Although De Quincey refers to the “splendour” of the “gorgeous” classical “spectacles” that he could “summon” up out of nothing in “a voluntary” or “semi-voluntary” way, he nevertheless regards them as “sad and solemn.” Furthermore, he distinguishes between his elegiac waking visions and their later terrifying invasion of his dreams—a usurpation that he could not control (pp. 102-03). In *By the Ionian Sea*, though not in his diary, Gissing does describe just a single frightening dream that occurred in his sleep before his exhilarating waking visions—the opposite order of sleeping and waking from De Quincey’s. Gissing dreamt specifically of a menacing trip by boat across a turbulent sea. In this nightmare he struggled to reach the Lacinian Promontory but never did get there. Yet the dreaming Gissing yearned to examine its still-intact column, as well as the stones left from Hera’s ruined temple (p. 114). On an actual walk along the beach at Cotrone two days earlier, he had glimpsed that column some four miles in the distance (diary, 26 November 1897, pp. 461-62). His later waking vision repairs the failure within his storm-tossed dream, and he sees Cotrone and the promontory up close—both miraculously restored to the way they looked more than two thousand years before. He feels “delight” at these “wonderful pictures,” so that in contrast to De Quincey’s change from sadness to terror, Gissing moves from terror to absolute delight. Yet quite unlike the author of the *Confessions*, Gissing cannot will his visions into existence or call them back again once they have vanished. Indeed, his very loss of them causes a kind of sadness (diary, p. 464). Yet apart from this final letdown, the Croton vision passage glows with the most remarkable pleasure. I shall examine the expansion of this scene in *By the Ionian Sea*, two important analogues to it, and finally Gissing’s surprising emotional reaction.

In *By the Ionian Sea*, Gissing increases his diary’s mere seven sentences to twenty-five entirely new ones with many fresh details. In an important addition, he now insists explicitly that he remained completely awake as these scenes from the past unfolded themselves to him (p. 114). He emphasizes their contrast with his earlier miserable dream, which the diary does not even mention. Most significantly of all, the *Ionian Sea* passage inserts at some length a wholly new scene. The expanded sequence devotes almost a full page to a vision of an atrocity that the diary simply skips, unless one considers two meager annotations—“armies etc.”—as the vaguest kind of hint. The military atrocity that he now does describe occurred in 203 B.C. (Culican), when the Carthaginian general, Hannibal, reportedly

ordered the slaughter of many thousand Italian mercenaries who refused to sail with him across to North Africa:

[...] it was at Croton that he embarked. He then had with him a contingent of Italian mercenaries, and, unwilling that these soldiers should go over to the enemy, he bade them accompany him to Africa. The Italians refused. Thereupon Hannibal had them led down to the shore of the sea, where he slaughtered one and all. This event I beheld. I saw the strand by Croton ; the promontory with its temple ; not as I know the scene to-day, but as it must have looked to those eyes more than two thousand years ago. The soldiers of Hannibal doing massacre, the perishing mercenaries, supported my closest gaze, and left no curiosity unsatisfied. (p. 116)

According to Samuel Vogt Gapp, Gissing based this “vision of Hannibal and the mercenaries” “directly on” François Lenormant’s *La Grande-Grèce* volume II (Gapp, p. 125, n. 11). Gissing did, in fact, carry this study of the history and antiquities of the region along on his trip and consulted it quite often (*By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 43, 75, 194, 215, 234), and it clearly helped to trigger his vision itself. But by insisting on a direct indebtedness of the passage in *By the Ionian Sea* to the one in Lenormant, Gapp ignores their striking dissimilarity. Gissing’s brief handling of this scene of mass murder has a wholly different tone and emphasis from Lenormant’s detailed and horrified account.

Lenormant stresses the callous brutality of this slaughter of many thousands. He builds up slowly to its ultimate horror. He explains that even before the Italian mercenaries had refused to sail to Africa, Hannibal’s rage over his orders to retreat had left him in the bloodiest of moods: “Mais en partant il voulut faire à l’Italie de sanglants adieux” (But on leaving, he wished to bid a bloody goodbye to Italy) (p. 147). And Lenormant makes the mercenaries’ refusal seem, in fact, admirable by arguing that they had fought out of justified resentment of Roman occupation—not only for self-gain: “soutenus par leur haine contre les Romains et par l’idée qu’ils défendaient contre eux leur indépendance” (sustained against the Romans by their hatred and by the idea that they defended their independence against them) (p. 147). In fact, as Lenormant tells it, most of these so-called mercenary Italians actually resisted—“refusèrent”—Hannibal’s offer of seductive big rewards if they agreed to sail with him to Carthage: “et essaya de les séduire par les plus belles promesses pour les décider à le suivre jusqu’à Carthage” (and tried to seduce them by the most handsome promises in order to persuade them to follow him to Carthage) (p. 147). They loved their own homeland too much to comply: “ils ne voulurent pas devenir des aventuriers sans patrie” (they refused to become soldiers of fortune with no homeland of their own) (p. 147). Lenormant increases our sympathy still

further by describing the fraternal refusal of their non-Italian fellow mercenaries to accept Hannibal's gift of their former comrades as their own personal slaves: "il dit aux mercenaires des autres nations, qui allaient le suivre en Afrique, de choisir chacun comme esclave celui des Italiotes qui leur conviendrait" (he told the mercenaries from the other nations, who were going to follow him to Africa, they were each to choose as a slave whichever Italiot they liked) (p. 147). Lenormant underscores the atrocious inhumanity of the massacre itself by dwelling on the way that Hannibal responds to this comradely refusal: he orders a group of ruthless African archers, as well as those from the Balearic Islands, to carry out at once a close-range mass killing. Without hesitation, they obey:

"Alors le général carthaginois fit avancer des corps d'archers à demi sauvages, Africains et Baléares, qu'il savait étrangers à cette nature de sentiments généreux ; et sous ses yeux et par ses ordres ils tuèrent à coups de flèches jusqu'au dernier les Italiens [...]" [Then the Carthaginian general had his half-savage corps of archers advance, Africans and Balearians, whom he knew to be strangers to this kind of generous feelings ; and under his eyes and at his command, letting fly their arrows, they killed the Italians to a man.] (p. 148)

Lenormant focuses the reader's attention on Hannibal's cold ruthlessness by quoting in full his cynical response to a witness upset by the massacre's cruelty:

Comme un témoin de cette scène hideuse lui faisait quelques observations sur un acte d'aussi révoltante cruauté, Hannibal lui répondit froidement: "Au moins comme cela les Romains ne pourront pas enrôler dans leurs troupes d'aussi braves soldats" [As a witness of this hideous scene remonstrated with him about an act of such revolting cruelty, Hannibal coldly replied: "At least now the Romans will not be able to enrol in their troops such brave soldiers?"].

In his quite different version quoted above, Gissing skims past the details connected with the massacre and minimizes its atrocity. Hannibal's cynical comment after the slaughter becomes instead his quite rational thought before he has even asked the mercenaries to sail back with him to Africa and before they have turned him down. Here it turns into a kind of justification for his later lack of mercy. And Gissing does not mention the method of mass killing. He simply flits past it without the slightest hint of distaste. One of his favorite Roman historians, Livy, describes this same slaughter with even more compression—in only half a sentence—yet Livy does convey his intense condemnation with one key word:

[...] Multis Italici generis, quia in Africam secuturos abnuentes concesserant in Iunonis Lacinae delubrum inviolatum ad eam diem, in templo ipso foede interfectis: Many men of Italic race refusing to follow him to Africa had retired to the shrine of

Juno Lacinia, never desecrated until that day, and had been cruelly slain actually within the temple enclosure. (bk. 30: 440)¹

One can also translate that judgmental adverb *foede*—“cruelly”—even more forcefully as “fouly.” But part of Livy’s moral condemnation arises from his having conceived of these murders as a bloody desecration of the temple’s interior. As a matter of fact, however, the Loeb Library’s translator rejects this story of the temple’s desecration as historically impossible, simply because some twenty thousand victims, as estimated by Appian, could not have fit inside Juno’s holy place (bk. 30: 441, 3n). Lenormant himself, who had actually examined its ruins, omits it entirely from his account of the massacre (just as Gissing does). Nevertheless, in their different ways both the French archaeologist and Livy the historian agree about the cruelty of Hannibal’s mass killing. But Gissing glides past it without expressing blame.

In a recent essay on “Gissing and Ancient Rome,” Jacob Korg has argued persuasively that although Gissing “was without formal religion, he had what can fairly be called a spiritual attitude toward” classical Rome (*A Garland for Gissing*, p. 227). Yet in the passage about this massacre, Gissing’s worship of the classical past takes a most extraordinary turn. After describing his various visions of ancient Croton, he insists that the slaughter on the beach stood out as one of the most “elaborate” of his visions, and he stresses the pleasure that all of it gave him: “Alas ! could I but see it again [...]” (pp. 115-16). Then he expands on his enjoyment of these unbelievable scenes that culminated in mass killing:

The delight of these phantasms was well worth the ten days’ illness which paid for them. After this night they never returned [...] That gate of dreams was closed, but I shall always feel that, for an hour, it was granted me to see the vanished life so dear to my imagination. If the picture corresponded to nothing real, tell me who can, by what power I reconstructed, to the last perfection of intimacy, a world known to me only in ruined fragments. (pp. 116-17)

Rather like a God-intoxicated mystic, Gissing has faith in the truth of the images that have flashed so strangely upon his eyes. And also like a mystic, he stresses “a glory of sunshine, an indescribable brilliance” that “lay over” everything and put “light and warmth into” his “mind” “when-ever” he made an effort “to recall it” (p. 116). Yet his nonreligious classical revelation has one essential difference from most revelations about the divine. Gissing’s awe at his vision of a long-vanished Croton overwhelms his sense of the agony and pain of twenty thousand dying mercenaries. In his remarkable attempt to recapture both what he saw and felt, even massive

images of appalling human suffering fade away for Gissing into mere insignificance. Nothing but the grandeur of vanished Rome itself touches his human feelings when faced with the magic of a reborn antiquity.

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¹Gissing greatly admired Livy, whose single extant work, a *History of Rome*, remains truly massive even with roughly three fourths of it missing. See Gissing's comment to his brother Algernon on 22 September 1885: "I hope you are getting to enjoy Livy. His Latin is glorious,—history set to the organ" (*Collected Letters*, vol. 2, p. 349). Significantly, too, for this interactive web of texts and inner visions, De Quincey also admired Livy very much: "I had been in youth, and ever since, for occasional amusement, a great reader of Livy, whom, I confess, that I prefer, both for style and matter, to any other of the Roman historians [...]" (pp. 104-05).

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Editor's Note: Another interpretation is possible here. In both his diary and his recollections in *By the Ionian Sea*, Gissing is reporting what Dr. Sculco called his *visioni*; he is not passing judgment on the barbaric behaviour of Hannibal; he is not describing a scene which took place under his eyes, but his own fever-induced visions as he described them to the Italian doctor. I see in his description no sign of indifference to cruelty. Gissing was a consistent thinker. The man who in *The Whirlpool* evoked history as "a record of woes" (Part III, ch. I), as a "nightmare of horrors" (in an eloquent passage of *Ryecroft*, Winter XVII), can hardly be accused of callousness. When in *By the Ionian Sea* he writes of "the delight of these phantasms," he is reporting an arresting psychic phenomenon from an aesthetic point of view. Besides, it may be appropriate to recall the diary entry for 14 October 1888 in which Gissing records his impressions after a visit to the Louvre: "splendid copy by Rubens of horsemen fighting, by Da Vinci. (Why is not this scene horrible to me, like, e.g. the war scenes of De Neuville? Is it not because the costumes are antique, and war

can be accepted as an accompaniment of earlier civilization, but is revolting in connection with the present ?)" Lastly, it is clear to me that when Gissing refers to "these phantasms," he means all his visions, not only the horrible sight of the massacre of the Italiots. Most certainly Gissing did not write like a God-intoxicated mystic. At no time was his stance regarding so-called spiritual matters in the slightest way ambiguous.

A Paisley Grocer and Two Paisley Poets

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In January 1894 George Gissing received a letter from a Mr. Hamilton, the secretary of the Paisley Philomathic Society, requesting some biographical information for distribution among the members for their next meeting when they planned to discuss his novel *Demos*.¹ Gissing was clearly pleased with this sign of the progress of wider public esteem and on 13 January 1894 he replied in a letter specifying the titles of the twelve novels he had published to date and characterizing his works as attempts "to depict the world as [he] saw it."²

Nothing was ever heard again from his Scots admirers and at first it proved as difficult to retrieve any information about the Philomathic Society as about its secretary. However, with the help of the Scottish census records for the years 1881, 1891 and 1901, additional assistance from the librarians at Paisley's Central Library, and not least Terry Stevenson's willingness to make available the impressive fruits of his genealogical inquiries into the Hamilton and Stevenson families,³ I have been able to piece together the identity of Robert A. Hamilton. He was born on 15 July 1860 at 22 Stock Street, Paisley, eldest child of Alexander Hamilton (Glasgow, c. 1834 – Paisley, 26 March 1901) and Christina King (Paisley, c. 1840 – Paisley, 14 March 1921). Alexander Hamilton had first married Jane Fotheringham King (Paisley, 16 August 1834 – Paisley, 10 November 1856) at Paisley on 27 February 1853. When his wife died in giving birth to their third child, her younger sister Christina moved in with her brother-in-law to look after the two surviving children and to keep house for him. In those days it was still prohibited to marry your dead wife's sister, but this did not stop Alexander from having another ten children by his "servant/housekeeper," as she is labelled in the census.

Though his father and many other relatives were chiefly employed as weavers or printers in the local spinning and linen mills, in his early twen-

ties Robert Hamilton set himself up as a grocer in his native town and over the years he styled himself more ambitiously either as “grocer and wine merchant” or as “ham curer and wholesale provision merchant” trading at 5 Carriagehill, Paisley. On 24 June 1884, in a civil ceremony, he married Jane Marshall Walker (Paisley, 15 May 1861 – Paisley, 8 July 1934), by whom he had four daughters and two sons. His home address in January 1894 (the time of his correspondence with Gissing) was 5 Great Hamilton Street, Paisley. Upon his death on 9 November 1932 the total value of his estate amounted to no less than £6,820.2s.10d, which must have made him one of Paisley’s most prosperous grocers.

A prosperous tradesman is perhaps not the most likely candidate for the secretaryship of a Philomathic Society, but some further research into his origins revealed an impressive literary heritage through the maternal line, which marks him as eminently suitable for the post. His mother Christina King was the daughter and granddaughter of two Paisley poets. Her grandfather James King (Paisley, 1776 – Paisley, 1849) was a well-known weaver-poet, whose works were published in his lifetime and in important later collections, such as *The Scottish Minstrel*,⁴ *The Harp of Renfrewshire*⁵ and *Paisley Poets*.⁶

Robert Brown, the editor of the last named title, records in his memoir that “James King was born in Causeyside Street, Paisley. He was sent to school at seven years of age, but his education consisted only of a little reading and writing. When little more than eight years of age, he was taken by his father to assist him in weaving figured muslin. Although he had a great desire for reading, it was not till he reached twelve years of age that he joined a circulating library, and within two years afterwards had read much of the history and ballads of [his] country, and of the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome. [...] He became acquainted with Tannahill⁷ and several other verse-makers. [...] In his eighteenth year he enlisted in the West Lowland Fencibles, and after five years’ service the battalion was disbanded and he then settled in Crieff as a weaver. In 1826 he returned to Paisley and lived in the same house in which he was born. During the following year, he removed to Charleston, Paisley, where his wife died in 1847, and he died there on 9th September, 1849, in his seventy-third year. They were both interred in Paisley Cemetery.

Many of his poetical pieces appeared throughout a period of many years in newspapers and periodicals. [...] When he was in the army, many of his pieces were sent to a friend in Paisley, and were never recovered. [...] The Rev. Dr. Rogers, in *The Scottish Minstrel*, states that ‘for vigorous intellect,

lively fancy, and a keen appreciation of the humorous, King was much esteemed among persons of a rank superior to his own. His mind was of fine devotional cast, and his compositions are distinguished by earnestness of expression and sentiment.”⁸

Here is a representative sample of James King’s pleasant love songs:

THE LAKE IS AT REST

The lake is at rest, love,
The sun’s on its breast, love,
How bright is its water, how pleasant to see ;
Its verdant banks showing
The richest flowers blowing,
A picture of bliss and an emblem of thee !

Then, O fairest maiden !
When earth is array’d in
The beauties of heaven o’er mountain and lea,
Let me still delight in
The glories that brighten,
For they are, dear Anna, sweet emblem of thee.

But Anna, why redden ?
I would not, fair maiden,
My tongue could pronounce what might tend to betray ;
The traitor, the demon,
That could deceive woman,
His soul’s all unfit for the glories of day.

Believe me then, fairest,
To me thou art dearest ;
And though I in raptures view lake, stream, and tree,
With flower-blooming mountains,
And crystalline fountains,
I view them, fair maid, but as emblems of thee.⁹

With such an example before him, it is not surprising to find his son Robert King (Kincardine-on-Forth, 25 December 1812 – Boquhan, 5 December 1891) stepping into his father’s poetic boots. For the details of his life we are indebted once again to Robert Brown’s memoir: “His mother, who had received a good education, was his principal teacher till he reached seven years of age. From that period till he was ten years of age, he was under a college student in his native village. At the latter age, he removed

with his mother to Glasgow, and was entered in a school connected with Govan Parish. When about twelve years of age, his father placed him under his intimate friend John Murphy, a well-known shawl pattern-drawer. But this arrangement ended in 1826, in consequence of Robert's removal to Paisley along with his parents, where his father wished to place him as an apprentice to a pattern-drawer, who was also an experienced artist and miniature painter ; but this man being irregular in his habits, the proposal was abandoned, and it was arranged that he should be a hand-loom weaver, although drawing and colouring were much more to his liking. [...] In 1841, Mr. King, during the great stagnation of trade which then prevailed, was appointed a teacher to many of the children of the unemployed weavers. [...] He opened a school in Great Hamilton Street, where he continued for four years. While holding this position, he set himself to the acquiring of higher branches of education than he possessed, in order to fit himself for taking charge of more advanced classes. He afterwards went to the Free Church School in Stevenson Street, Paisley, where he was master for nine years. When conducting this school, [...] he appointed a substitute to enable him to take a short session of the Free Church Normal Seminary, and, after passing his Government examination, the Stevenson Street School came under his inspection. In 1859, Mr. King accepted the appointment of master of the Free Church School, Killearn, and thus left Paisley after having resided in it without interruption for eighteen years. Some time after the passing of the Education Act for Scotland in 1872, Mr. King came under the new Board of Education for Killearn Parish, where he had been teaching for sixteen years. He retired in 1877 and lived at Little Boquhan, Killearn until his death in 1891.

Robert King commenced, when very young, to make verses – as early as ten years of age. One of these...was on the subject ‘Wallace looking back on the fatal field of Falkirk.’ His father, when reading over the piece, seemed pleased till he came to the part where the youthful poet made his hero weep for the destruction of his gallant followers. ‘Wallace weep !’ exclaimed his father, throwing the verses to his son. ‘Wallace never wept.’ No fit of rhyming enthusiasm came upon Mr. King for many years thereafter. His time was much taken up with his scholastic duties, and he had few spare hours to devote to the Muses, but he always cherished the hope that, should he be favoured with more leisure, he would then devote more attention to poetry. [...] His poetical pieces have not, as yet, been collected and published in book form.”¹⁰

As an instance of Robert King's art we give one of his more domestic pieces celebrating a local wedding anniversary:

GOLDEN WEDDING OF MR. AND MRS. WALTER FERGUS
BLACKDALES, LARGS, 19TH JANUARY, 1877

THE WIFE'S SONG TO HER HUSBAND

Through fifty years, oh, deary me !
 'Tis misty tae look back ;
But mem'ry fond, wi' gladsome light,
 Illumines the well-known track.
And scenes o' love, and grief, and joy,
 Arise in chequered train,
And seem as real as if the past
 Now present were again.

But weel I wot, for every grief
 A thousand joys are seen,
And ilk ane, wi' a thousand tongues,
 Proclaim how true you've been.
For every shade you've bathed in light,
 Ilk grief wi' joy you've crown'd,
Till every tear has grown a pearl,
 Ilk sigh a joyous sound.

Auld folk oft say that youth is daft,
 Bards sing that love is blind,
But fifty years prove I've been blest
 Wi' sight and sense refined.
I saw your manly form and face,
 Your loving, truthfu' life,
And I gave my love, my heart, my name,
 A' tae be your guidwife.

Your hand was hard wi' earnest work,
 Your face wi' sunshine browned ;
But siller won wi' faithfu' sweat
 Has aye an honest sound.
And fair-won siller, fairly used,
 Gars want and care stand back,
And fills the barrel and the cup,
 The dresser and the rack.

Your head is patriarchal now,
 Your brow grand furrows trace,
 Your silvery beard, o' richest fret,
 Illumines your manly face.
 'Mang men o' worth you're honoured aye,
 And honoured aye will be ;
 And, though you're not Sir W.,
 Yer my guidman tae me.

Twa loving hearts, twa willing minds,
 Life's campaign we began,
 And now's our golden wedding night—
 See ! We have grown a clan !
 God bless our bairns, and bairns' bairns !
 God bless you, my guidman !—
 I'd rin the race richt o'er again,
 That we sae weel ha'e ran.¹¹

On 31 January 1834 Robert King had married Margaret Bell, by whom he had three children (Jane Fotheringham King, Christina King and James King). His second daughter Christina gave her father's name to her first child.

Such then is the ancestry of Robert A. Hamilton, the Paisley grocer and secretary of the Philomathic Society, grandson and great-grandson of poets. In the obituary¹² that appeared in a local paper mention was made of his having been “a gentleman of fine character [...] extremely popular with the members of Charleston [a Paisley suburb] Bowling Club and in his younger days a very good bowler.” Conspicuously absent from the notice was any reference to his (inherited) literary interests in the early nineties of the preceding century, when he did “take an active part in public affairs,” to which his membership of the Paisley Philomathic Society testifies. That omission has now been put right.

¹*London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell U. P., 1978), p. 327.

²*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, vol. 5 (Athens, OH: Ohio U. P., 1994), p. 173.

³Terry Stevenson is a great-grandson of Robert Hamilton. The results of his genealogical research can be found on the web:

<http://homepages.which.net/~joseph.stevenson/Names.htm>

⁴Rev. Charles Rogers, *The Scottish Minstrel: The Songs of Scotland Subsequent to Burns* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1870).

⁵William Motherwell, ed., *The Harp of Renfrewshire, Second Series: Songs and Other Poetical Pieces (many of which are original)* (Paisley: Alex. Gardner, 1873).

⁶Robert Brown, F.S.A., Scot., *Paisley Poets: with Brief Memoirs of them and Selections from their Poetry* (Paisley: J. & J. Cook, 1889).

⁷Robert Tannahill (1774-1810). Another Paisley weaver-poet contemporaneous with James King, whose sister Jean he courted. At his cottage in Queen Street, Paisley, he composed most of his best known songs. An admirer of Burns, he helped found the Burns Anniversary Society in 1805 in Paisley—the world’s first Burns Club. In 1807, encouraged by friends, he published “The Soldier’s Return” with poems and songs that made him famous. When a publisher declined a revised edition in 1810, and after a mental illness, the poet drowned himself in a culvert of the Candren Burn. Tannahill’s poems and songs are still popular to-day—“Jessie the Flower o’ Dunblane,” “Will ye go Lassie, go,” “Thou Bonnie Wood o’ Craigielee.”

⁸Brown, pp. 114-16.

⁹Rogers, p. 264.

¹⁰Brown, pp. 481-83.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 485-86.

¹²“Well-Known South-End Resident’s Death. MR. ROBERT HAMILTON, POTTERHILL.”

A well-known citizen of Paisley, long identified with the South-end of the town, has passed away in the person of Mr. Robert Hamilton, grocer and provision merchant, who resided at Corsehill, Potterhill Avenue. He had carried on business in Charleston for a great many years, and was also for some time a partner of the firm of Messrs Burnett & Hamilton, wholesale provision merchants. Mr. Hamilton had been in failing health for the past few months and only at the Licensing Court in October disposed of his licence. He was a gentleman of fine character and was greatly esteemed by those who were privileged to know him. Extremely popular with the members of Charleston Bowling Club, he was past president, and in his younger days a very good bowler. Deceased did not take any active part in public affairs, but nevertheless had a wide circle of friends. He was a member of South Church, and is survived by his widow, two sons and a daughter.

Gissing and Hornung Their Relationship in Life and Death

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

The publication of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman* in the just re-launched Penguin Classics gives us an opportunity to recapitulate what is known of the relationship between Gissing and Ernest William Hornung. The two writers did not belong to the same branch of English literature and, considering that Gissing spent little enough time in England from the autumn of 1897 onwards, they might well never have met if chance had not brought them together to Rome in March 1898. Hornung appears a number of times in Gissing’s diary and in the last three volumes of his collected

correspondence ; he wrote an obituary of Gissing and quoted a significant passage from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in one of his last books. Such are the main facts from which the history of their few contacts can be reconstructed.

Gissing's diary entry for 12 March neatly supplies the starting-point though it does not say how Hornung had come to hear that Gissing, a fellow author, happened to be in Rome and where he was staying: "After dinner a card was sent in to me, with the name Hornung. It was the novelist (of whom I have read nothing). A man of 30, suffering much from asthma ; married to a sister of Conan Doyle. Invited us all to call to-morrow evening." So the next day he called at Hornung's lodgings—38, Via Gregoriana, the rooms concerned being those in which the writer and translator Mary Howitt died in 1888. Perhaps a tablet said so near the entrance, but the name cannot have been new to him since he is known to have read her translations of Fredrika Bremer, *Hertha*, and of Andersen's *Tales* and *Autobiography*. Gissing noted that he visited the Hornungs after dinner, staying until 11 p.m. Always attentive to women's physique and behaviour, he recorded that "Mrs. Hornung [was] a large, healthy, good-humoured woman, with wonderfully bright eyes," and that they had one child, Oscar, three years old at the time. When Gissing wrote "all" in his diary, he probably meant H. G. Wells and his wife, who had arrived in Rome on 8 March, and/or Conan Doyle. Whatever answer may be given to this question, there was much mutual visiting among this informal gathering of literary men. After dinner on 18 March Hornung and his wife called on Gissing at the Hôtel Alibert and the visit was returned two days later, followed by a new visit of the Hornungs on the 22nd, this last being richly documented by a letter from Hornung to Frederic Whyte, a friend who worked for Cassell's. Whyte wrote in his book *A Bachelor's London: Memories of the Day before Yesterday* (Grant Richards, 1931) that he preserved a few of Hornung's letters to him, the whereabouts of which is unknown, and quoted in part the one Hornung wrote on 22 March 1898: "We have seen quite a lot of Gissing and Wells during the last fortnight. Wells has joined Gissing here for two or three weeks. We like them both quite immensely. Wells is a very good little chap when you know him, humorous, modest, unaffected. As for Gissing, he is really a sweet fellow—Connie says so and it is the only word. ... He has charm and sympathy, humour too and a louder laugh than Oscar's. That man is not wilfully a pessimist. But he is lonely—there has been some great sorrow and ill-health too. I took him the *Academy* this forenoon ... and found him writing a short story in his insect's hand—1,000

words on each (quarto) page. I spoilt his morning's work but left him merry. I could have stopped there jawing all day." The number of the *Academy* was that for 19 February in which, under "Notes and News," a paragraph read in part: "A Roman correspondent [perhaps Hornung him-self, Richard Lancelyn Green suggests in his introduction to *Raffles*] states that the Eternal City has now quite a little circle of English and American literary people. Mr. Gissing, Mr. Hall Caine, and Mr. Hornung represent fiction ; Lord Rosebery and Mr. Haweis criticism ; Mr. Astor, patronage. The principal poet is Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, [who] the other day read a paper on 'Pessimism and Optimism.'" The short story that Gissing was then writing was "The Ring Finger," which appeared in the May number of *Cosmopolis*.

Gissing's diary then shows him attending a musical party at Hornung's on 26 March, a new occasion for him to remark on Mrs. Hornung's "robust and beautiful health" and an opportunity for making the acquaintance of "her sister, Mrs. Foley [...] also a fine physical type ; a little less robust, and more handsome." In the afternoon of 28 March again Hornung called on him, "and talked ad infinitum, as usual." The last time Gissing and Hornung met in Rome would seem to have been on 8 April, shortly before Gissing left for England via Germany, and it may well be on that particular day that the famous photograph showing the two men with Wells and Conan Doyle was taken, as on no other occasion are the four writers mentioned together in Gissing's diary.

With the exception of the entry for 18 December 1898, when he recorded writing to Hornung, Gissing did not mention his friend again in his diary. However, this silence is misleading since the *Collected Letters* show him requesting Wells on 26 August to let him have Hornung's address ("I want to ask him something about Australia," where he knew that Hornung had spent some two years in the mid-1880s). A letter of 3 July from Hornung to Wells quoted by Royal A. Gettmann had shown the recipient that Gissing was not being forgotten by their Roman companion. By late September he had heard from Hornung, who was still in Italy and contemplated staying on near Naples through the winter. No correspondence for that period has survived, but by early April 1899 the Hornungs were back in London, living at 36 Edwardes Square, as is shown by a letter of 4 April from Gissing to Gabrielle Fleury: he was to go to London on the 6th and would spend the night at the house of Hornung, "a very good fellow who has for a long time begged me to come and stay with him." *The Amateur Cracksman* was just out and it would be surprising if Gissing during his

visit had not seen a copy. Then, as rarely happened in those days when the postal service was generally reliable, a presentation copy of Hornung's next novel, *Peccavi*, the story of an erring parson, which came out in October 1900, failed to reach its destination, and the mishap entailed serious misunderstanding between the two writers. Over a year later, Hornung would seem to have complained to a common friend, Morley Roberts, that Gissing had not troubled to write to him about his book, which is described by John Sutherland in his *Companion to Victorian Fiction* as the most serious of Hornung's novels. Gissing was sincerely distressed. He replied to Roberts on 15 December: "I remember so well his telling me about the book long before he wrote it, and very gladly would I have read it [...] I grieve if Hornung thinks that I was idly indifferent to his work—indeed no! In this way I am losing all my pleasant friendships; people think me forgetful." And in his next letter to Roberts, dated 12 January 1902, he continued in the same strain: "I am vexed beyond measure that Hornung should have thought me capable of such brutality. To what address did he send the vol., and when? Yes, give him my address, with all greetings." Neither Hornung's letter nor the reply he almost certainly received have apparently been preserved.

The next contact on record materialised when Gissing sent Hornung a presentation copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in which the inscription reads: "To E. W. Hornung with very kind regards from George Gissing. Feb. 1903." The volume is listed in Mark Samuels Lasner, *A Period Library*, p. 53. The last echo of the affair occurs in a letter from Gissing to Roberts of 22 February 1903: "I have written to Hornung, and had a very friendly reply. I feared he loathed me, but I find it is not so." After this, silence took over, temporary then eternal, but on hearing of Gissing's death, Hornung wrote an obituary of him for the *Author*, the monthly organ of the Society of Authors, which was published on 1 February 1904, pp. 131-32. Because of his own light view of the art of fiction he candidly confessed that he liked the man, whom he came to know fairly well in Rome, better than his books, those at least that he had read, *New Grub Street*, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and all the Dickens criticism which had been published in volume form. He would have liked his friend's novels to contain more humour, a desire that no lover of serious literature can fully share and which reminds us of Orwell's disposal of the arguments of the apologists for humorous fiction. His comment on *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* sums up his own approach to what he thought suitable material for storytelling: "That beautiful veiled autobio-

graphy, [...] brilliantly written as it is, and touchingly eloquent of the man, is in many places marred for his friends by an alien misanthropy and an almost morose perversity of view.” But Hornung was somehow a little embarrassed by his own low-brow approach to Gissing, whose passion for the classics earned his respect. “He was a greater scholar than could possibly be gathered from his books. [...] He has left behind him more than one that may well survive as uncompromising transcripts of their time. And a vivid memory of the man, of his fine face, his noble head, his winning kindness, will endure as long as the last of those who knew him.”

Hornung and Gissing were to remain associated beyond death in an eerie manner. For one thing, their respective sons Oscar and Walter were killed in action in northern France on 6 July 1915 and 1 July 1916, and the bodies of neither young man could be found. For another, fate willed it that in March 1921, that is twenty-three years after their happy time together in Rome, and seventeen after Gissing’s death, Hornung should be buried in the Saint-Jean-de-Luz cemetery only a few yards from his friend’s grave. In between Hornung commemorated Gissing in his own way in his modestly entitled volume *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front* (1919). In the chapter entitled “War and the Man” he quoted from the passage in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* on the weekly drill in the Lindow Grove School playground, reporting that while he himself disagreed with Gissing about his view of the subject, he had met a Field Ambulance young man who emphatically agreed with the pacifist writer.

Now of most if not all of this Richard Lancelyn Green shows that he is aware in his attractively produced edition of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman* in the Penguin Classics, and this is all the more remarkable as Gissing can only be said to be part of his subject in so far as Hornung saw much of him at the time he was busy writing *Raffles*. Gissing is present in the Chronology, the Introduction (pp. xxvii-xxviii) and the Biographical Sources. The eight short stories or episodes are superbly annotated. As time passes, the need for notes (historical, literary, linguistic and technical) where contemporary English readers found no difficulty, is becoming more and more obvious. Some Kipling short stories, for instance, can no longer make full sense without such annotations. The pages devoted to Further Reading testify to the impressive extent of the editor’s research. He has obviously spent much time in the Newspaper Library at Colindale. Only there can the many contemporary reviews of the volume and the obituaries of the author be easily found. Few if any readers will think it necessary to go deeper than the editor did. As for the nature and quality of the text, a sober assessment

like that of Oliver Edwards, alias William Haley, in *The Times* for 22 March 1956 strikes the right note: “Raffles was Victorian, but in spirit he was Edwardian.” As we read the adventures of Raffles we feel, if our notion of time needs any sharpening, that we cannot be very far from Saki, although the latter’s incisiveness is not anywhere to be found because the two writers obviously had different temperaments and had gone through experiences hardly worth comparing. Hornung was a tamer sort of man. And the blurb is fair enough when it addresses the potential reader as follows: “Encouraged by a suggestion from his brother-in-law Arthur Conan Doyle to write a series about a public-school villain, and influenced by his own days at Uppingham, Ernest Hornung created a unique form of crime story, where, in stealing as in sport, it is playing the game that counts, and there is always honour among thieves.” We are indeed pretty far from Gissing, even Gissing the young storyteller who, in some early American tales and a slightly later “English” novella like “All for Love” openly indulged in melodrama. We have not read *Peccavi*, the “serious” novel that Gissing failed to receive from Hornung, and only when we have done so, shall we be able to see whether there were more affinities between the two men’s work than is suggested by *Raffles*. It is a pity that Gissing was given no chance of responding to *Peccavi*.

Book Review

George Gissing, *Am Ionischen Meer: Ein Streifzug durch Süditalien*, Schellenberg/Liechtenstein: wiborada verlag, 2003. German translation of *By the Ionian Sea* by Karina Of, with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas and an afterword by Wulfhard Stahl. Stiff paper covers, featuring the “Lacinian Promontory”, Leo de Littrow’s illustration from the original edition. 207 pp. € 21,25. Swiss Francs 34. ISBN 3-909151-04-3.

In George Moore’s short story “The Way Back”, published in 1903 in the volume *The Untilled Field*, one of the characters expresses a sentiment with which Gissing would doubtless have agreed: “There are more beautiful things in Italy than in the rest of the world put together, and there is nothing so beautiful as Italy.” Gissing’s love of classical history and languages was the driving force behind the two extended visits to the land of his dreams in 1888 and 1897.

Among the additional attractions of that ancient world must have been its power to survive and endure and its capacity to enchant and console. These qualities are at the heart of *By the Ionian Sea*, Gissing's record of his second extended visit to Italy in the late autumn of 1897, when he travelled for a month in the Calabrian world of Magna Graecia, which had haunted him from childhood. Paradoxically, because the old world had passed for good, because it had died, it had become impervious to the ravages of time and fate, and by triumphantly asserting its victory over the destructive forces of circumstance it could become a perfect antidote against the feelings of fragmentation and isolation, with which Gissing had been struggling for so long. Like so many other Romantics, Gissing early developed the habit of projecting an ideal world either on what remained of the classical world or on the simple lives of ordinary mortals. The continuing search for that remote perfection, unaffected by the malaise of modernity, became more urgent after the death of his beloved father and, in order to regain some sort of balance (however precarious) in his private and professional life, he increasingly came to rely on the life-enhancing echoes and shadows associated with places and events from the distant past.

Pierre Coustillas (whose wide-ranging academic career never took him to Lyon *pace* the blurb) provides an illuminating survey of earlier and later travellers in Italy and their books (among others, François Lenormant, Goethe, Paul Bourget, Norman Douglas). In his informative introduction to this first German translation of Gissing's travel-book, Coustillas reminds the reader of the great critical acclaim accorded to the first edition by quoting the verdict of the *New York Times* critic: "one of the most enchanting works of prose written in our language for many years") and he ends by expressing the hope that the translation into German, together with the translations into Italian and French, will contribute further to the ever growing European recognition of Gissing's little masterpiece.

Gissing discovered German culture and language when he was still a boy at Wakefield and, given his exceptional linguistic versatility, it comes as no surprise to find him acting as assistant master for German at Lindow Grove School at age 15. Among the many prizes he wins in the examinations at Owens College in the summer of 1873 is a third certificate in German, and soon after his arrival in America in the autumn of 1876 he reports to his brother that he has been translating a great part of Heine's "simple and delightful" poems into verse. Through the long years of friendship with Eduard Bertz his knowledge of German life and letters was expanded and deepened to the point that he would occasionally "represent

himself as a German” when abroad, because he found he would have a better reception—and be charged less—than when he declared his nationality. In 1889 he confidently claims to “have the three continental languages well at command,” but a year later he is considering spending the winter in Berlin in order to make himself “perfect in the spoken language.”

With the publication of her exemplary translation—a work of art in its own right—Karina Of is repaying with interest Gissing’s heartfelt affection for German literature and language. How one envies the German reader who comes to Gissing for the first time through this splendid translation. The felicities of style and substance that await him/her! Not the least of its many virtues is the translator’s sensitivity to the stylistic nuances of the original, combined with an extraordinary ability to find the equivalent turn of phrase in her native language. Take the following example from ch. VIII, “Faces by the Way”, in which Gissing describes one of Cotrone’s washerwomen at work on the beach: “now and then one of them ventured into the surf, wading with legs of limitless nudity and plunging linen as the waves broke about her.” This becomes: “Hin und wieder wagte sich eine von ihnen mitten in die Brandung hinein, watete mit gänzlich entblößten Beinen ins kühle Naß und tauchte die Wäschestücke hinein, während sich um sie her die Wellen brachen.” Karina Of’s “gänzlich entblößten Beinen” admirably catches Gissing’s suggestive alliteration of “legs of limitless nudity”, only losing perhaps a touch of sensuousness. Of such subtle and inventive solutions there are many and one hesitates in questioning the one or two phrases one does not find entirely satisfactory. Let me mention one of these. The lyrical climax of Gissing’s final sentence is the past participle “forgotten”. It emphasizes the fact that the world of “to-day and all its sounds” have already been forgotten in preference to the eternity of “the silence of the ancient world.” The German rendering “zu vergessen” establishes a parallel with the other infinitive “zu wandern” [es wäre mir beschieden...zu wandern...und...zu vergessen], which the original eschews with good reason. These minor Dutch mutterings must not in any way be taken to detract from the impressive quality of the translation, which without any doubt will find its way to many grateful German readers.

The book comes with a brief gazetteer of the major cities and towns of Magna Graecia, a bibliography of books of travel in Italy and a map of southern Italy in 1894.

Wulfhard Stahl, whose earlier efforts on Gissing’s behalf in the German-speaking world do not need any further introduction, demonstrates his familiarity with the most recent fruits of Gissing scholarship in an after-

word which argues persuasively the tragic and sudden collapse of Gissing's Calabrian contentment and provides a historical and critical context to an author whose life and work must have remained largely unknown in Germany, despite the publication in 1997 of *Die Überzähligen Frauen*, Karina Of's translation of *The Odd Women*, and *Was so alles geschieht*, Richard Fenzl's translation of *Human Odds and Ends*, in 2000. May this *Dritte im Bunde* (appropriately published under the wiborada [= a Swiss recluse, patron saint of booksellers and librarians] imprint) further secure Gissing's reputation in Germany.— Bouwe Postmus

Notes and News

The Centenary of Gissing's death is to be marked by a number of publications. The Gissing Trust in Wakefield will soon reissue in hardcover *A Life's Morning* (the critical edition published by the Harvester Press in 1984, with an introduction and notes by Pierre Coustillas and Clifford Brook). Deborah McDonald's book on Clara Collet (Woburn Press) will also appear in the summer. It will contain much more factual information on her family background than has been known so far as well as a detailed analysis of her professional career. Gissing will naturally be a foreground figure in the book. Miss Collet remained in touch with the Gissing family for years. That she disliked *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* has been known since at least 1962, when a long letter from Gabrielle Fleury to her apropos of the book was published in *Etudes Anglaises*. We hope to show shortly in the present journal that her relations with Morley Roberts were not hostile from the beginning. For a few years after Gissing's death she corresponded with him quite amicably.

The Grayswood Press of Grayswood, Surrey, known through *The Dickens Magazine*, plans to publish a collected edition of Gissing's writings on Dickens in three volumes in 2003-2004. This is a welcome enterprise as no project of the kind has ever been heard of. *Charles Dickens, a Critical Study* has not been reprinted since the 1970s and then only in America. The edition announced by George Prior was never published, despite the promising full-page advertisement printed in the Autumn 1980 number of the *Dickensian*. Now this once frequently reissued book has never been edited and when Blackies last reprinted it, in 1926, they forgot

that Gissing had revised his text for the 1902 edition which their subsidiary, the Gresham Publishing Company, kept in print until the 1920s. So serious textual problems loom ahead for the editor of the Grayswood Press edition. Another volume will consist of Forster's *Life of Dickens*, which Gissing abridged and revised at Arcachon for Chapman and Hall. In various forms the book was kept in print in England by Cassell, though *The English Catalogue* has nothing to say about it, and by Chapman and Hall until the 1920s. The interest of a new edition lies in the fact that the book, as the spine of the Chapman and Hall editions put it clearly yet a little abruptly, Gissing's task did not consist solely in leaving out huge quotations from Dickens's correspondence; he introduced considerations of his own and made whatever stylistic adjustments he thought necessary, considering that it would not do, he rightly thought, to have one page in the style of Forster, and the next in Gissing's (letter of 13 October 1901 to James B. Pinker). As no assessment of Gissing's share in the book has ever been seriously attempted, a good opportunity to assess his achievement in this little-read work is now offered its first editor. The third Grayswood Press volume, not necessarily the third to appear, will be a collection of all Gissing's shorter writings on Dickens, that is the introductions to the Rochester edition, including that to *David Copperfield* which Richard Dunn rescued from oblivion in the 1980s, and the introduction to the same novel which appeared in the ill-fated Autograph edition; Gissing's two essays on Dickens, "Dickens's Homes and Haunts" and "A Personal View of Dickens"; and his two reviews commissioned by the *Times Literary Supplement* in its infancy. Each of the three volumes will be introduced by its editor and concluded by a Dickens scholar. Further information will be given in our next number.

As announced in the October 2002 number of the *Journal*, an illustrated critical edition of *By the Ionian Sea* is to appear this year under the imprint of Signal Books, an Oxford firm which has largely specialised in travel literature. The editor of this *Journal* is responsible for the critical apparatus. It has been suggested that an Italian translation would be welcome.

Scholars and book collectors who can devote a reasonable amount of time to research on the many websites likely to satisfy their curiosity often make astonishing discoveries. Cyril Wyatt recently reported two of his own successes. One of them concerns the forgotten existence, over a hundred years ago, of a most curious copy of the 1888 Smith, Elder edition of

Demos with the very special binding of an Austrian railway circulating library, the Globus-Bibliothek which, to all appearances, was short-lived. The front cover features an image of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders with this well-known if ambiguous motto: *Mein Feld ist die Welt*. The library gave extremely detailed instructions to potential borrowers. The advertisements, all written in English, convey the atmosphere of Central Europe before the Great War. One of them was for the *Vienna Weekly News*, a paper in which Tauchnitz is likely to have advertised his international editions in English. This circulating library cannot have offered many English titles to travellers/borrowers. On Abe.books the only other copy of a book in the Globus-Bibliothek that has been traced is one of Besant's *The Captain's Room*. A possibly more interesting discovery is an edition for schools of *The Tempest* edited by Stanley Wood, a son of Gissing's head-master at Lindow Grove School. The book was offered on the internet as containing a preface by Gissing. Once the volume was acquired, it was realised that the so-called preface was merely an epigraph, as could be predicted, a (long) quotation from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* about Shakespeare's play.

Domenico Marino, who goes on researching in the Crotone Records on his *bisnonno* (great-grandfather), and on the Crotoniats met by Gissing in 1897, has drawn our attention to the March number of *Ulisse*, the monthly review of Alitalia, which is largely devoted to Crotone, *la città di Pitagora*. The series of articles by journalists and historians have eye-catching titles, in Italian and in English: *Volto nuovo, radici antiche*/New Look, Old Roots ; *Aleggia il nome di Pitagora*/The name of Pythagoras hovers in the air, etc. Pp. 78-176 are copiously illustrated. Because *Ulisse* is not for sale but only available in theory to passengers who travelled on Alitalia last March, finding a copy is difficult.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka, whose site on Gissing has been praised by independent observers and who has nearly finished editing the Japanese book which will commemorate the centenary of Gissing's death, has completed, with the assistance of Hélène Coustillas, the badly needed list of contents of the *Gissing Newsletter/Journal* since 1965, which had been on the stocks for some time. It will be regularly updated.

The list of books containing mentions of Gissing, mainly in an unexpected context, which appeared in our April number, on pp. 37-39, was in-

evitably incomplete, but only two correspondents have wished to make it a little longer. The translator of *The Odd Women* and *By the Ionian Sea* into German pointed out that we overlooked *Mère Méditerranée* (1965), by Dominique Fernandez, and Jacob Korg that we should have mentioned in the list of novels, Christopher Morley's *The Haunted Bookshop* (1919), in which the hero, Roger Mifflin, keeps a second-hand bookshop on Gissing Street, Brooklyn, and encourages Titania, a young woman who wants to become a bookseller, to read Gissing. Another volume, recently offered on e-Bay, is *For Readers Only* (Chapman and Hall, 1936), by J. Penn. The author went into the Reading Room of the British Museum to commune with the great figures of the past that have sat at its desks and handled its books. Penn "begins by evoking the shades of the former students, of Marx and Lenin, of Kropotkin and Mazzini, of Butler and Browning and Gissing and Tennyson and Carlyle and countless others besides, picturing them as they were in this vast storehouse of knowledge."

A ceremony in honour of Alan Clodd, publisher and bibliophile, took place on Monday 9 June in the British Library auditorium. The speakers were Alan's brother, Denis, who was accompanied by his daughters Alison and Kate, and Stephen Stuart-Smith, Alan's successor and present owner of the Enitharmon Press, whose obituary of Alan was reprinted in the April number of the *Journal*. Kathleen Raine and Jeremy Reed gave readings of their own poetry, and Rohinten Mazda, Tom Durham, and Anne Harvey read poems by John Masefield, Rabindranath Tagore, Thomas Hardy, William Blake, Edward Thomas, Frances Bellerby and Elizabeth Craigmyle, with, in between, recordings of some of Alan's favourite poems set to music. The British Library was represented by an unidentified member of its staff who reported that Alan bequeathed to it the manuscript of Christopher Isherwood's first novel. Among the assistance were a number of distinguished booksellers who were as many friends of Alan as a bibliophile. In the paper he read, Denis Clodd related a characteristic anecdote: "Only seldom did we manage to lure [Alan] away from Finchley to Norfolk, which I used to do by promising him visits to bookshops in Norwich and elsewhere in the county. On one occasion I took him to Blakeney to renew his acquaintance with Barbara Muir—widow of Percy Muir—probably well-known to older members of this audience. After he had managed politely to detach himself from her well-known loquaciousness, he set about looking for bargains on her husband's well-stocked shelves."

A limited edition of Jeremy Reed's twenty-stanza *Elegy for Alan Clodd*, published that day, can be purchased at £15. The edition consists of 125 copies for sale, and 25 hors commerce copies. The text has been designed and printed by Sebastian Carter at the Rampant Lions Press, Cambridge. ISBN 1 900564 94 7. Stephen Stuart-Smith, the publisher, can be joined at the Enitharmon Press, 26B Caversham Road, London NW5 2DU. For the sake of completeness let us note that Steven Halliwell wrote an obituary "Alan Clodd 1918-2002," in *Keynotes*, the Newsletter of the Eighteen-Nineties Society, Vol. 3, no. 10, pp. 1-3.

The publication of Francesco Badolato's nicely got up selection from the *Ryecroft Papers*, *The Zest of Life*, with an introduction which supplies the essential facts about Gissing's life, gives us an opportunity once more to express the hope that some enterprising English or American publisher will soon revive this title. Its semi-autobiographical and artistic interest remains and will remain considerable. The policy of Oxford University Press concerning the book is difficult to account for. They have published six impressions of *New Grub Street* (since 1993), another six of *The Nether World* (since 1992) and two of *The Odd Women* (since 2000). Can they complain that Gissing's books are still bad sellers ?

Dr. Simon James has sent us an article published in the *Guardian* for 24 May, p. 22, "Sun-lit v grim-lit." It consists in a lively e-mail exchange between two novelists, Amanda Craig and Louise Doughty, on an apparently exciting subject—why happy books never win prizes. At one stage of the discussion, Amanda writes to Louise: "I love the Victorian novelist George Gissing for his unblinking descriptions of the abyss into which individuals may sink ; but I love Rohinton Mistry more for depicting similar horrors in India, and yet suffusing his characters with love, humanity and even hope. I love Rose Tremain, Jonathan Coe, Elinor Lipman and, yes, Joanne Harris, among others, for being so much more than the splinter of ice in the heart. Great tragedy is cathartic, but laughter, as Nabokov said, is the best pesticide."

At a Conference organized by Guyonne Leduc at the University of Lille III on "Voix et voies de femmes" on 13-14 June, Pierre Coustillas read a paper entitled "Clara Collet 1860-1948: Une femme entre deux mondes." Professor Leduc will collect all the papers that were read during those two

busy days in a volume to be published later this year by the Paris publisher L'Harmattan. Details will be given in due course.

Both Mitsuharu Matsuoka and Christine DeVine have drawn our attention to the creation of a Gissing Discussion List on the Internet. The instigator is Mike Newman mike@greatnorthern.demon.co.uk, who works in the Local Education Authority and studies with the Open University. He says he returned late to study and happily discovered Gissing's work and has "a particular interest in Gissing and in ideas of 'Englishness' and representations of the City of London." "The list," we are told, "is for the discussion of Gissing's life and works, and hopes to bring together enthusiasts and academics alike to both further the cause of Gissing studies, and to encourage new readers to enjoy his works. Announcements of events, and short Gissing related advertisements are permitted and encouraged, but excessive commercial postings will be moderated out. We would also encourage members to post a brief introduction on joining the list." It seems that within a couple of days seventeen people had subscribed to the List at:

<http://greatnorthern.demon.co.uk/mailman/listinfo/gissing/>

A full archive will eventually be available at:

<http://greatnorthern.demon.co.uk/pipermail/gissing/>

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *The Zest of Life*, edited with an introduction and exercises by Francesco Badolato, Barzago (Lc), Italy: Casa Editrice Marna, 2003. Publisher's address: Via Santuario, 5 – 23890 Barzago (Lc). ISBN 88-7203-202-4. €6.00. Cover illustration: "The River Thames near Walton Bridge" (detail), by J. M. W. Turner. The book is dedicated to the participants in the Gissing Centenary Conference, University of London, 24-25 July 2003. It is an anthology of twelve excerpts from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, preceded by an introduction and a selected bibliography.

George Gissing, *Am Ionischen Meer: Ein Streifzug durch Süditalien*, Schellenberg, Liechtenstein: wiborada verlag, 2003. ISBN 3-909151-

04-3. E-mail: wiborada@adon.li Translation by Karina Of, foreword by Pierre Coustillas, afterword by Wulfhard Stahl. Swiss francs 34, €21.25. Cover illustration: The Lacinian promontory by Leo de Littrow. The text is followed by a bibliography and a German map of Southern Italy.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by John Goode. Oxford: Oxford University Press, [late 2002 or early 2003], £7.99. This is the fourth impression in the Oxford World's Classics. The introduction is followed by a Note on the Text, a Select Bibliography, and a Chronology of George Gissing. The text of the novel is followed by an appendix which consists in a note on *New Grub Street* and London, an extract from a "Map of London Poverty (1889)" and explanatory notes. In the eight pages of publishers' advertisements at the end of the volume, *The Odd Women* is misspelt.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Patricia Ingham. Oxford: Oxford University Press, [late 2002 or early 2003], £7.99. This is the second impression in the Oxford World's Classics. The Introduction is followed by a Note on the Text, a Selected Bibliography, a Chronology of George Gissing, a map showing the London of *The Odd Women*, and the text of the novel is followed by explanatory notes. In the fourteen pages of publishers' advertisements at the end, *The Odd Women* is again misspelt. None of the misprints we had noticed in the first impression has apparently been corrected.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*. Edited with an Introduction by Bernard Bergonzi. London: Penguin Books, [late 2002 or early 2003], £9.99. This is a new impression, given like the previous one as the 17th. Both are misnumbered, being in fact the 18th and 19th. Perhaps the change of printers accounts for this fresh oversight. The textual notes are followed by two blank leaves.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Elaine Showalter, London: Penguin Books [late 2002 or early 2003], £8.99. This is the seventh impression, but the new printers, Anthony Rowe Ltd of Chippenham, reprinted the book with the copyright page of the first Penguin edition, erroneously dated 1993 for 1994, merely replacing the Clays imprint by their own.

George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002. Translation by Masao Hirai. ISBN 4-00-322471-X. Yen 600. This translation, which was first published in January 1961, is now in its fortieth impression. It is dated 25 December 2002. The cover illustration of this delicately produced paperback is the same as those of all the other impressions we have seen since the publication of the first edition. For the gift of this volume, which testifies to the vitality of Japanese interest in the *Ryecroft Papers*, we are indebted to Mr. Mitsuharu Matsuoka, a Gissing enthusiast of the younger generation.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Francesco Badolato, "La narrativa vittoriana in un acuto esame di Francesco Marroni," *Il Corriere di Roma*, 19 March 2003, p. 11. Review of *Disarmonie vittoriane*, which contains a long article on *The Whirlpool*.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka, "George Gissing and Artistic Alienation," *Central Japan English Studies*, No. 22, March 2003, pp. 31-45.

E. W. Hornung, *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman*, ed. Richard Lancelyn Green, London: Penguin Books, 2003. Gissing appears on pp. i, vii, xv, xxvii, xxviii, liii. See the review in the present number. This Penguin edition, the first of the book to be published under that imprint, is a Penguin Classic New Style, in which *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* will be available before long.

Anon., "Il libro di Francesco Badolato sui banchi degli studenti del Gandhi," *Giornale di Carate*, 27 May, 2003, p. 13. On the public presentation of *The Zest of Life* to the Istituto superiore Gandhi, with a photo of the editor and the audience. In this article Gissing is called, probably for the first time, "il vulcanico scrittore di epoca vittoriana."

Anon., "Besana: un libro del professor Badolato agli studenti di quinta del 'Gandhi,'" *La Provincia di Lecco*, 24 May 2003, Brianza page. A review of the book listed above.