

The Gissing Journal

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“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
Commonplace Book

From *Veranilda* to *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* The Correspondence between Clara Collet and Morley Roberts

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

Gissing and Clara Collet knew each other for over ten years, from late spring 1893 to his death in December 1903. Their relationship, which remained obscure for decades, is now well documented. The subject was broached in a paper read at an MLA Convention in December 1978,¹ a few months after the publication of Gissing's diary, in which the major landmarks of their friendship are clearly signposted. It was considerably enriched when, from 1994 to 1997, all Gissing's letters to his friend were published in Volumes 5 to 9 of his collected correspondence, and it was again discussed more synthetically in two volumes issued in 2003, Jane Miller's *Relations*, in which the author devoted over fifty pages to her great-aunt Clara, and in Deborah McDonald's full-length biography, *Clara Collet 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman*. A third volume is likely to appear before long, *A Modern Woman's Knowledge: The Empirical Researches of Clara Collet, 1888-1902*, by Clive Hill. However, many valuable sources of information concerning Miss Collet, as everyone except members of her family would seem always to have called her, have not yet been turned to any account. For instance, neither in Jane Miller's book nor in Deborah McDonald's do we find any ground-breaking biographical information about the relationship between Clara Collet and Morley Roberts, the two figures in the present exchange of correspondence.

The history of Clara Collet's eighteen letters published in this article is probably recorded in the papers of the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, where they could already be consulted in the early 1960s. It is self-evident that they constitute only a very small portion of those that were actually posted to Roberts. Morley Roberts's literary property was scattered after his death in 1942. The most part found its way to the University of Pennsylvania, but valuable elements went to the Brotherton Library in Leeds and to the Berg Collection. His side of the correspondence is still in the possession of the Collet family. It consists of some seventy letters and postcards, and it is again self-evident that the lot is not complete. Both correspondents are bound to have mislaid or destroyed dozens of items, the importance of which cannot be defined. However, despite this calamitous situation, two facts emerge: first, the correspondence covers a relatively short period of about eight years (these two friends of Gissing only began to correspond

after his death, and they ignored each other after the publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* in 1912); second, the memory of their common friend George Gissing was uppermost in their minds during those years of liberalism clouded by gloomy threats of war.

The present exchange of letters printed here, besides helping us to reconstruct the mentalities of a number of well-known figures of Gissing's circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances, gives us an insight into the ethos of the period. The Gissings of Wakefield and Gabrielle behaved as though they were living in besieged fortresses, mentally paralysed by the comments, public and private, that were being passed or that could at any moment be passed on George's unconventional existence and equally unconventional work. Still, no revelation had yet been made about the Manchester episode and its damaging consequences. One easily guesses what both Morley Roberts and Clara Collet must have thought of the despicable campaign of vilification launched by the *Manchester City News*, even though by then, that is early 1913, they had quarrelled about their conflicting views of loyalty towards their deceased friend. Fortunately there were enlightened spirits among Gissing's admirers whose opinions now strike us as harbingers of the more liberal attitudes of the present day. Among them were Charles Harold Herford, Gissing's contemporary at Owens College (1853-1931), and Percy Withers (1867-1945), two names chivalrously connected with the commemoration of Gissing at Manchester University, formerly Owens College, on the eve of the Great War.²

¹Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing's Correspondence with Clara Collet, M.A., Social Investigator and Reformer," Supplement to the *Gissing Newsletter*, January 1979, pp. 27-34.

²See Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing and the Shakspeare Scholarship" (*Gissing Newsletter*, July 1988, pp. 5-25), in which an important letter from C. H. Herford to Clara Collet, dated 7 May 1913, was printed. Herford was one of the staunchest supporters of the double project launched by Percy Withers, which consisted in putting up a memorial tablet and creating an annual Gissing Prize.

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The correspondence printed here begins exactly nine months after Gissing's death, on the day *Veranilda* came out, 28 September 1904. Both correspondents were painfully aware of all the difficulties which had preceded that event. That the novel had remained unfinished was a cruel reminder that Gissing was deprived by death of the immense pleasure with which he had looked forward to its publication. Early in the year H. G. Wells had been asked to write an introduction, which had been rejected by the Gissing family and Clara Collet in her capacity as executrix, and subsequently published in the August number of the *Monthly Review*. Of the objections to Wells's introduction and of the public comments on the controversy Gabrielle Fleury, alias Madame Gissing, was kept informed, more readily by her friend "Miss Collet" than by George's relatives. Her social position as an illicit wife was, by the moral standards of the day, markedly insecure, and all the parties, whether active or passive, involved in the fate of Gissing's posthumous affairs, were highly conscious that she was a person to be humoured or reckoned with.

The first letter powerfully reflects Clara Collet's dignified position in an oppressive atmosphere. Her letter to Gabrielle no longer seems to be extant, but that of Gabrielle to her, written on 21 and 22 September and posted on the 23rd, is still in the possession of the Collet family. While Clara was in Ireland, staying at the Imperial Hotel, Cork, Gabrielle was visiting a friend of hers, Mme Grangier of Lourmarin, Vaucluse, a portrait of whom, currently in this writer's collection, was preserved by Gabrielle. Wells's letter was printed in C. K. Shorter's weekly article in the *Sphere*, 10 September 1904, p. 244. It was a lengthy epistle which revealed Wells's incapacity to see how tactlessly he often behaved to people around him, and which was later to be used as evidence of his insincerity. In the light of his subsequent writings the early part of his conclusion nowadays rings blatantly false: "It has been a bitter disappointment to me that my little piece of work for my friend should be so unreasonably flung aside, and I can only hope that the partisan spirit this discussion has aroused will not go to the length of condemning what was Gissing's maturest, last, and most deliberately-conceived book."

If Clara had subscribed to a press-cutting agency she would have received at least two or three dozen paragraphs or articles that dealt with the rejected introduction. Among the most recent at the time she wrote were "Stray Leaves," in the *Labour Leader* (23 September, p. 291); "Literary Notes," in the *New York Tribune Illustrated Supplement* (18 September, p. 9); and "Rambling Remarks by A Man of Kent," i.e. William Robertson Nicoll, in the *British Weekly* (15 September, p. 541). The passage in Wells's letter she was glad Roberts would not reply to read: "The draft [of the introduction] was sent to Mr. Morley Roberts, Gissing's most intimate friend during all the London period. The two were constantly discussing literary questions during that time. Mr. Roberts made some invaluable additions and corrections, but the critical estimate he endorsed with enthusiasm."

Algernon Gissing's moral weakness and flabby style were often denounced by Clara. After Bertz's name she could have added that of Edward Clodd.

[Imperial Hotel, Cork, on the stationery, was crossed out]

Vernon Chambers
4 Theobalds Road, WC

28 Sept 04

Dear Mr Morley Roberts,

Last night I found a letter awaiting me here from Madame Gissing and just after I had posted my answer I read Mr Wells' letter in the *Sphere* of the 10th Sept. I do not know who has been writing to the papers as I have carefully avoided looking at the reviews likely to discuss the question of the Preface.

Whether you differ from or agree with Mr Wells' views I am glad that you decided not to reply to his letter. His statements are not correct; but no one who has to rely on Algernon Gissing for information will ever be told

the truth. He is the most unmanly man I have ever had dealings with and his letters to Mr Wells have evidently been written in his usual style.

But although I am most anxious that George's friends should keep out of all newspaper controversy I am equally anxious that you should do as you suggested and write of him as you knew him—not for publication at present. And above all I wish that you would give some idea of the later years of his life with Mme Gissing; so that people may understand that it was in every true sense of the word a marriage. You saw them together last year and no doubt George wrote to you about her also.

I have not told Gabrielle anything of the tone adopted by Mr Wells in speaking of her; but that request that she should keep out of England for fear of injuring the prospects of the children getting a pension is a sufficient indication of his attitude towards her. In his letter he says he consulted everyone whose criticism was likely to be helpful; Gabrielle was not one of these and from first to last he has acted as though she were a nursery governess liable to be dismissed at a month's notice.

In this matter of the Preface he (Mr Wells) has been badly treated. I have felt that all along although I had to consider others and to choose between allowing a grave injury to be done to George's memory and to the living, and incurring Mr Wells' indignation. Of course Algernon ought to have frankly acknowledged to Mr Wells that he had made a great mistake.

Of all George's so called 'friends' you are the only one who really cared for him himself, – the only one who seems to understand what Gabrielle was to him (Except Herr Bertz).

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

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Authors' Club
3 Whitehall Court, S.W.

29.9.04

Dear Miss Collet,

Many thanks for your letter. I was just thinking of writing to you, for really I don't know where I am or where we all are in this imbroglio. Can I come and call at Vernon Chambers to-day about 5 or 6? I've just read Veranilda.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

Or could you come *here* from the office when you leave? It is only a hundred yards from you.

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This second letter of 29 September clearly shows that Roberts was already at work on the biography of Gissing which became the *roman à clef* entitled *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. It also shows his failure to appreciate his friend's historical novel, to which he, as a classicist of sorts, was in theory better prepared to do justice than many readers unfamiliar with both time of action and setting.

Authors' Club
3 Whitehall Court, S.W.

29.9.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I've just sent a note to the B[oard] of T[rade] but hear you are in Ireland. When you return will you let me come & call or will you, on leaving the office, come & have tea with me here [?] I much want a talk with you. I've written a lot about Gissing, most of it only for private circulation among a very few, & among these not A[lgernon] G[issing] I think.

I've just read *Veranilda* and it distresses me above measure that I *cannot* think it a success. For Gabrielle's sake I wished tremendously to like it, & think it great, but it isn't Gissing at all. I'm writing to her and am saying as little as I can about it, but I'm grieved to my heart that I don't like it.

I'm doing G. just as I knew him, from the beginning, without any concealment of everything, for only thus can one judge what an awful tragedy his life was. I want to do the last part at length for the reasons you speak of. I don't know what H. G. W. says about Gabrielle. What astounds me above measure is his judgment of *Veranilda*. It is absolutely incredible to me that he could sincerely hold these opinions comparing it with *Born in Exile*, *N. Grub S^t* & others. I want you to tell me exactly why you & others thought his paper w^d inflict a grave injury on any one. All I disliked in it was his depreciation of G's early work, which after *Veranilda*, is still more astonishing.

Please let me hear when you return. I want you to see what I'm doing about G. among the first.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

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Clara Collet's next letter having been written on a Friday, Roberts was given to understand that they could not possibly meet until 5 October. More candidly than in any other letter she expressed her detestation of the Authors' Club, which she suspected of being the headquarters of writers' gossip, where editors like C. K. Shorter and William Robertson Nicoll collected the literary news they hastened to

distil for the benefit of their readers. Roberts stood warned; no more than Miss Collet could he be unaware that Gissing had studiously declined all invitations from the Club.

The remark about George's brother was probably justified in the writer's eyes by Algernon's incapacity to act responsibly and consistently in his role as co-executor with her, but he does not seem to have written to the papers at large. The only letter from him that has been traced is that to Shorter which was printed in the *Sphere* for 3 September, p. 226. Since the original (Brotherton Library) is dated 23 August 1904, it is obvious that Shorter took his time to print it—minus a couple of sentences hostile to him! He began in his usual dilatory manner, but picked up as he proceeded: "All I know is that nothing conceivable could have given George Gissing greater pain than the thought of *Veranilda* being issued with that preface, and upon this alone the executors acted." The letter is placed in context in the present writer's article, "The Stormy Publication of Gissing's *Veranilda*," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, November 1968, pp. 588-610.

Imperial Hotel
Cork

30 Sept 04

Dear Mr. Morley Roberts,

I go to Limerick to-morrow and shall not be able to finish my work there before Tuesday afternoon. I cross on Tuesday night if I can manage it and get back to Vernon Chambers on Wednesday morning. Could you call there about 12 o'clock that morning? I must go to the office in the afternoon and could not rely on getting away much before 6 o'clock. The Authors' Club is the last place I ever want to visit.

Sunday would be the best day for me if you cannot come on Wednesday morning; or Saturday afternoon about 4 o'clock. But I think you generally go away for week-ends.

Don't worry about the imbroglio. The only thing to be done is to do nothing. The commotion is far greater amongst the members of your club than outside and the fire will burn itself out if no one adds fuel to the flames. Of course if Algernon Gissing is writing to the papers he is sure to give himself away completely.

I have written to tell Mr Wells the facts about my action in the matter. Not that it will produce the slightest good effect on him but I felt I owed him the explanation.

You see they (the Gissings) have ignored me altogether from the beginning and I was never told about the Preface. I heard about it by accident at Easter and Mr Wells told me about it a little while after as a little affair with which I had nothing to do. So long as I imagined the Gissings were

satisfied with it I felt I must not interfere although I thought it must [be] foolish of them to excite public curiosity in such a way. To say that to appreciate a Gothic romance you must be told about the life of the author is ridiculous.

It was not until about the 19th May that I heard they did not like the Preface. I wrote to Mr Wells for the proof and decided that contract or no contract it must not be published. All this time the Gissings had never said a word about it to me. Of course I had made no contract and the only contract existing was that made with George who naturally did not provide for a Preface. I broke no contract; but even if a fresh one had been made I would willingly have paid damages to Constables to prevent its being carried out.

All the communications with Mr Wells were through Algernon Gissing. And nothing I could have said would have influenced Mr Wells. He has a theory that only literary people have any power of judging the feelings of other literary people. [This sentence was deleted by Clara Collet.] Well, of course I am exaggerating in saying that; but no opinion of mine would have any weight with him.

For example – I wrote to him that I was quite certain that by the time I knew George his Balzac plan of writing was quite inexistent. He calmly wrote that you agreed with him on this question completely; never produced any evidence from you or quoted anything George had said himself on the subject or asked me *why* I was certain that this theory of a Balzac nightmare affecting all his work was untrue when I knew him in 1893. It happens that I was reading Balzac just then and that George discussed Balzac's universal scheme with me smiling at Balzac's audacity and of course also at his own. Moreover I knew something of the facts which started him on each of his novels from 1893 to 1899.

Sincerely yours

Clara E. Collet

The memorandum of agreement for the publication of *Veranilda* is dated 12 November 1903. By "his novels from 1893 to 1899" we should understand those he wrote from *In the Year of Jubilee* to *The Crown of Life*. Gissing wrote and published *The Odd Women* before he met Miss Collet.

This letter has a very positive aspect in that it corrects Wells's oft-repeated but fundamentally unjustified assertion that one of Gissing's ambitions was to emulate Balzac. In the rejected introduction to *Veranilda* Wells wrote: "More or less deliberately he set himself to the scheme of an English *Comédie Humaine*, and in the very titles of such novels as *The Unclassed*, *The Nether World*, *The Emancipated* and *The Whirlpool*, lurks the faint aroma of his exemplar. He must have set his

course to this determination before he was twenty-one, and it was surely the most unhappy and presumptuous of undertakings.” Wells’s attempt to belittle Gissing is apparent in these lines, as is Roberts’s undisguised propensity to look at his former friend condescendingly in his next letter.

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Authors’ Club
Whitehall Court

1.10.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I will do my best to call at your chambers on Wednesday. I may say that the Authors’ Club is not particularly excited about this matter as there are few in it who knew much of George and if you would ever like to come across from your office in the afternoon, when I am usually there, I can give you tea in another part of the Court which has no connection with the Club.

I do not think that I ever said more to Wells about G. and Balzac than that B.’s great industry appealed to G. very much. The fact too that B. knew what it was to starve was something as you know. Wells is a very good chap but he has arrived at a frame of mind when he finds it rather hard to admit that he can be wrong. One must take that into account. Personally I have not the feeling against the rejected preface that you seem to have. When W. sent me the rough draught to Switzerland I was very ill and only annotated mistakes of fact of which there were a few. I did not see that I was called on to put him right in his criticism, especially as criticism in England is nothing but undisciplined opinion. And I may as well confess to you that though I loved G. and in some things did not a little for him, yet there is much of his work which I do not like and do not think good. I think it possible that I shall write an article which is really part of what I am doing about him which will distinguish his best, which is great, from the rest.

Have you read *Veranilda*?

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

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One wonders whether the version of Wells’s introduction read by Clara Collet and Morley Roberts was the same as that which achieved publication in the *Monthly Review* after it was turned down by the executors. In the reprint that appeared as an appendix to Royal A. Gettmann’s volume of correspondence between Gissing and Wells, the closest one gets to a candid revelation of what Clara Collet calls “that terrible affair at Manchester” will be found where Wells wrote of his friend

that "he truncated his career at Owens." To many readers at the time such a phrase was a way of attracting attention to some event that could not be openly named.

Imperial Hotel
Cork [address crossed out]

1 Oct 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

I have just received your letter. I am not sure that you know that George never told Gabrielle of that terrible affair at Manchester or of his first marriage. Read Mr Wells' Preface and imagine the shock it must produce on a person who believed want of success and an unhappy late marriage were the only painful things in his life. The whole tone, to a woman who loved George and had never heard him referred to except with respect must be terrible.

There again, since Mr. Wells ignores the effect on private persons of this life of George, he would have done far less harm if he had stated the facts simply and concealed nothing. As it is he excites everyone's curiosity and sets them hunting for what people call the 'truth.' What right has the world to be told facts which it will injure the man's sons to have circulated?

Still all that was inevitable from Mr Wells. I have never questioned his right to follow his own judgment and publish this Impression. Of his good taste the least said the better.

But for his executors to publish it in permanent form along with *Veranilda* is quite a different thing. Putting aside the question of the harm done by permanently exciting curiosity what would George's feelings have been if he had imagined that every person who read *Veranilda* would also be invited to read the depreciatory criticism of his previous work? Mr Wells is quite right in saying that George would not have resented anything in this criticism; but he would have resented *Veranilda* being the medium by which that criticism was communicated to his readers. Nor would he have wished the book to succeed on anything but its own merits.

Unquestionably the book would have sold better with Mr Wells' Preface; for the person who can read an historical novel there are twenty who will pay for an exciting scandal.

Mr Wells' regret that his work has been *wasted* gave me great pleasure. He recognizes as I do how unimportant this temporary bonfire is compared with the permanence that would have been gained had the Preface been published along with *Veranilda*.

My inability to enjoy any historical novels but Scott's (whose great men belong to all time, not to any particular century) has enabled me to prepare Gabrielle for lack of appreciation on my part. But I shall probably like the book much better than you do. What you call 'Gissing' is no doubt rather Gissing + the effect of Roberts than the man as he would have been with that influence withdrawn. No person is really the same person to any two of his friends.

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

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13 Holland Park Avenue, W.

7.10.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I've lost Alg. Gissing's address that you gave me. Can you oblige me with it again, on a p.c.

My wife hopes you will be able to come to tea with us any Sunday you like. Please let me know beforehand when you come as I might otherwise be out.

Apologising for troubling you,
Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

Algernon Gissing's address was Castlerigg Cottage, Keswick. Roberts's wife was Alice, née Selous, formerly Mrs. Hamlyn; they married in 1896.

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13 H[olland] P[ark] A[venue]

16.10.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I went out of town on Friday & only got back to-night, so I couldn't come or answer your letter, for which I am sorry. I had a letter from A. G. which I suppose is characteristic. I'll show it you. Apparently he was so upset that he can't do anything. I've not got the letters, but if I don't shall write again in a week.

Last bout with George's letters hurt my eyes badly. They ached for 3 days. I mustn't do so many next time. I shall be in town for another ten days & if you have a few hours free please let me know. I think it very kind of you to let me see these letters at all.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

I wish your G. G. article were more *you* and less quotation!

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Clara's allusion to her "scanty lighting arrangements" in response to Roberts's remark about his eyes aching for three days after reading some of Gissing's letters to her at her home is interesting because it reminds one of a similar situation in mid-February 1895 when Roberts wrote to Gissing that he had been unable to read his—very important—letter about a projected article. In both cases, one suspects Roberts of devising some mysterious ploy. Gissing's handwriting was at all times perfectly legible.

Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Rd, WC

17 Oct 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

I am afraid my scanty lighting arrangements are more responsible for your eyes aching than G's handwriting. I am always meaning to do something but as I am always out at the time when the gasfitter would have to be in things are allowed to slide.

I can keep any evening free that would suit you except next Sunday evening; Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon are free if I know beforehand.

A. G. has often made me furiously angry but his epistolary style is always a joy to me. I have been awake all night with anger and have laughed in the middle of it all over some of his delicious phrases.

I have never attempted literary criticism. G's work is the only literary work that I have ever written about and it was to make certain people read him that I did that much. I have occasional flashes of humility which would always prevent my attempting any critical estimate of George's work.

Zangwill made several references to G's work in "Without Prejudice." I copied out the passage which had especially struck me and enclose it.

Gabrielle goes to St Jean de Luz on the 25th Nov and intends to stay there three months. She has heard of Mr Butler Clarke's death by having her letters returned with that explanation from the Post Office but says that no one in St Jean de Luz has mentioned it in their letters to her. Of course she is very much upset by it and has written to St Jean de Luz to know about it all. I hope they will only tell her of his death and not of the circumstances.

Sincerely yours
Clara E. Collet

Zangwill

“Gissing is grey enough, and he has not even beauty of style to gild the greyness withal. Wherein then lies Gissing’s beauty ? In his own pity, in his own irony, unconsciously communicated to his subject-matter, and so fused with it that, like most novels that find the life of the poor so terrible his books are merely long-drawn lyrics expressing the sense left upon his own soul by the long unlovely thoroughfares.”

(Given as an example that the artist may irradiate a mean theme by his handling. Thackeray, Flaubert, Gissing, and Ibsen quoted as illustrations.)

Clara’s article on Gissing was “George Gissing’s Novels: A First Impression,” *Charity Organization Review*, October 1891, pp. 375-80. That by Israel Zangwill, “Without Prejudice: George Gissing,” appeared in *To-Day*, 3 February 1904, pp. 433-34, and in the American monthly *Reader Magazine*, May 1904, pp. 624-26. As for Gabrielle, we know of letters from her to Eduard Bertz dated 10 November from Lourmarin, Vaucluse, then again to Bertz and to Roberts dated 29 November from Ciboure. On 23 March 1905 (letter to Bertz), she was still in the Basque country. For Henry Butler Clarke, who had supervised the building of Gissing’s grave on Gabrielle’s behalf, see Volume 9 of Gissing’s *Collected Letters*, pp. 26-27. While in England, his mind having given way, he bought a gun, hired a cab, and presently, in the cab, blew his brains out.

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13 H[olland] P[ark] Av.

18.6 [an obvious slip for 10]

Dear Miss Collet,

I am much obliged for your letter & will come & see you again on Saturday at 3. Please let me know if it should turn out to be inconvenient. But if I don’t hear I will come then.

I think G’s writing *very* trying & whatever the light may be I must not read very many letters at once. I do not think I have quite recovered yet!

I’m glad to see that bit of Zangwill’s, and am sorry I did him an injustice.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

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13 Holland Park Avenue, W.

2.11.04

Dear Miss Collet,

My wife is very sorry that she missed you by less than a minute to-day. She hasn’t been out for weeks but to-day went to the dressmakers, of

course, because you were coming! This is what *I* call the native malignity of matter. Things will go wrong if they can. I hope the next time you come I shall be here too. I stayed in last Sunday, thinking that you & some others might come but no one did.

I wrote A. G. again & have had no answer. After a week I shall write to him severely if one can be severe to such a weakling.

I've done no more about George. I have to do potboiling stories instead, tho' I've been too tired to write for the last 10 days. I go on Thursday to Tunbridge Wells to look for a house. I may be able [away] till Monday.

Things look very bad again in foreign politics, don't they? I fear it will be war after all. I can picture to myself what George would have said.

Yours with best regards from us both,
Morley Roberts

Of course by "done no more about George" Roberts means that he has not been working at his biography of Gissing, ultimately published as *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. The potboiling stories, which were doubtless published in newspapers or periodicals, have not been identified. They were probably collected in the volumes of short fiction he published before the Great War.

The international tension alluded to by Roberts is explained by R. H. Gretton in *A Modern History of the English People 1880-1922* (London: Martin Secker, 1930), pp. 658-59. The Hull fishing fleet had been fired upon by Russian ships. "A storm of fury swept over the nation [...] The King, telegraphing his sympathy with the widows and the injured men, used the phrase, exceedingly strong for one in his position, 'unwarrantable action.' Public opinion demanded that a British fleet should instantly be despatched after the Russian ships." But promptly the Russians made amends.

Gissing's imagined response shows that Roberts was aware of his pacifism. And Clara's reply indicates that she inclined to Gissing's views. Like him she was distrustful of the role likely to be played by the press under such circumstances.

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4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road, W.C.

2 Nov 04 [sic]

Dear Mr Roberts,

The long arm of coincidence was clearly at work yesterday; it was the first free week-day afternoon I have had this year and Mrs Roberts was deliberately called out to prevent our seeing each other. It was disappointing but such marked attention from the powers above is gratifying.

To-day I am going for a couple of days to Sheerness to stay with a friend whose husband is private secretary to the Admiral in command there. They are exceedingly busy but do not seem at all apprehensive of serious friction. Personally I think the newspapers are making the worst of things for want of anything to put in now that Parliament is not sitting.

On my way home yesterday I got the *National Review* as I guessed that Miss Jane Findlater's 'The Spokesman of Despair' referred to George. There is a good deal in it that I like; she deals gently but firmly with *Veranilda*; she feels the power of his writing and makes it felt. But she does not sufficiently discriminate between what George said he aimed at and what he succeeded in doing. She takes his view that he was always showing the effect of poverty on character and she finds fault with his one-sided treatment of it. But to me the striking merit of George's books, from the first to the last, is that he shows the real determining factors in life to be personal character and personal ideals and their relation to the characters and ideals of those around them. She does not even mention *Born in Exile*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool*, in these three poverty is not even alleged to be the cause of evil. In *The Whirlpool* the nearest approach to a 'happy ending' is that of Mary Abbott who marries on a very small income and is not going to have a servant – of course a *great* pledge of happiness in the future in George's eyes.

People take *Ryecroft* far too much *au pied de la lettre*, and they do not attempt to fill up the blanks. Not one single critic so far as I am aware has commented on Ryecroft's silence about his daughter. Perhaps they think George invented her existence one moment and forgot it the next. But of course he did nothing of the kind.

His criticism of *Rachel Marr* is most characteristic of the singular absence in him of the force which drives people to act. When I read the last chapter I felt that much as I found fault with in the book was due to your having written the whole of it for the sake of the last chapter. In your anxiety to have the readers' whole-hearted sympathy with Rachel you seemed to me to have made Antony's wife so loathsome as to make Antony himself a monstrosity. The touch of insanity in Rachel is merely used to give her the force to execute her purpose. You did not seem to me to allow it to touch her brain or her judgment of life. Given Antony and his wife we were to pronounce Rachel right. But to me it seems that you wanted to produce an effect which real life never justifies. Antony could not in real life have thought it right to return to his wife under the circumstances you give; and real life seems to me to offer you only one way of producing the

effect you wanted, that of allowing passion to distort Rachel's judgment of the girl so that she is blind to the redeeming features of the girl's character necessary to explain Antony's conduct.

Of course I am not a good judge of such a book; such subjects repel me ; still *if* I read a book no matter how distasteful the choice of subject may be, I never resist the power of the author to carry me along with him, but you bumped me into too many rocky places for me to enjoy the journey.

Don't write to Algernon until I have seen you again. He has got to do two things for me; he mustn't be killed with overwork.

Weekday evenings about 8.50 suit me better than Sunday afternoons; people so often ask me to be at home to see them on Sundays. My kind regards to Mrs Roberts.

Always sincerely yours

Clara E. Collet

Jane H. Findlater's article, "The Spokesman of Despair," appeared in the November 1904 number of the *National Review*, pp. 511-22. It was reprinted in her collection of essays, *Stones from a Glass House* (London: James Nisbet, 1904). A hundred years after Clara Collet made that remark about Ryecroft's daughter ("his daughter, an only child, was married," Preface), the silence of critics on the subject does not seem to have been broken. Nor is it clear what Clara Collet had in mind. *Rachel Marr* was then Roberts's latest novel (1903); Gissing's generous judgment on the book is to be found in his letter to Roberts of 17 October 1903 (*Collected Letters*, Volume IX, pp. 143-44).

*

Royal Hotel, Mount Ephraim
Tunbridge Wells

3.11.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I'm down here for a night or two, looking for houses in the neighbourhood. We shall be *very* glad to see you any evening at 8.30. Then you are sure of finding us both in. I *may* be out next Monday night but after that I shall certainly be at home.

I got another letter from A. G. enclosing *1* letter of mine, & he says he can find no more. And is distressed about it as they say they have none at Wakefield. But I enclose his letter.

Please don't reply here as I may be gone from here to-morrow.

I'll discuss your view of Rachel with you when we meet. In the meantime I think you don't appreciate quite the strength of the marriage tie when only one, even, hangs on. And that strength was a thousand times added to

by Antony's fanatic view of it. I am not concerned by your finding a lack of reality. That comes from the strange (& purposed) atmosphere & the fact that the people are purposely drawn over life size. As to writing the book for the last chapter, I may tell you that till the last chapter came I wasn't sure whether they couldn't be saved after all. There is indeed some evidence in the book that I thought they might be at one point. However it couldn't be done.

I've not seen the article you speak of yet, but will get it on my return.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

*

The allusion to the box sent to Algernon from Paris by Clara Collet is clarified in the unpublished letters of Gabrielle Fleury to her. One of them, dated 1 April 1904, at which time Gabrielle was in Ciboure, shows her planning to leave for Geneva on the following Wednesday. Then she would return to Paris "and stay there a few days before going to England,—& I intended to ask you if you cld come and join me at Paris, so that something may be done in the flat, about dearest G.'s papers and books.—Yr card tells me you will do so. Unfortunately we shall not be able to stay in this poor flat." Eventually Clara joined Gabrielle on 21 April, having been asked, three days before from Geneva, in a letter dated "Monday" with an 18 April postmark, not to "forget to bring with [her] the list of books & furniture done by G[eorge] on Thursday afternoon."

It was Gissing's practice to send to his relatives in Wakefield old correspondence and literary manuscripts he no longer needed. His many moves from lodgings to rented flat to rented house made it imperative that he should have a place he could regard as a warehouse. To all appearances very few letters from Roberts to Gissing are still extant. Apart from those he sent to Gissing from America from 1884 to 1886, only one seems to have escaped destruction: it is dated 12 October 1899 and may well be that which Algernon returned to him and which is men-tioned in Roberts's letter to Clara Collet of 3 November 1904 (see above). Gissing's letter to Roberts in which he said that he had left letters of Roberts's in Wakefield, as appears below, is indeed dated 17 May 1901.

4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road, W C

6 Nov 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

Last night on my return from Sheerness, I found a letter from A. G. about your letters. I have asked him to make a second search through the box I sent him from Paris. I am writing to Gabrielle to know if I am wrong

in saying that we saw a package of letters from you in it. If A. G. cannot find any such letters then I *must* have made a mistake.

Could you find the letter in which George said he had left letters of yours at Wakefield ? Are you sure he did not say he had warehoused them in England without saying where ? His books were not removed to Paris until about a year after he left England.

A.G. says he never opened this particular box till last week !

Please give my kind regards to Mrs Roberts and say that I hope to find you both at home on Thursday evening.

Believe me

Sincerely yours

Clara E. Collet

*

13 H[olland] P[ark] Av[enue]

7.11.04

Dear Miss Collet,

We shall expect you then on Thursday evening 8.30.

G's letter about my letters is dated Rue de Siam, May 17, 1901.

"I believe I have all your American letters but unfortunately they are at Wakefield and could not be found by anyone but myself. I am very sorry for this."

Of course he *may* have been mistaken. Still I think he was not, for several reasons.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

*

4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road, W C

8 Nov 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

A. G. has described the contents of the box to me and there is no question that your letters are missing. I have written to him about George's letter to you of May 17, 1901, and reminded him that George visited Wakefield for the last time in 1900. I feel sure that somewhere your letters, Algernon's and mine are hidden away together and have asked him if George left anything at Wakefield in Sept. 1897, when he visited them before going to Italy.

I began to read *Rachel Marr* again last night and got pulled up again at exactly the same point as before, – Anthony's engagement to Winnie. But I want to withdraw what I said about it in other respects. I see now that I

began the book with an entirely wrong impression. For some nine years I had read nothing of yours ; the *Western Avernus* had delighted me ; the stories of yours that I read in 1893 and 1894 disappointed me very much and I never looked at any of them again until in Gabrielle's flat at Paris in April I took up *A Question of Instinct*. The week after I read *Rachel Marr*. Of course eight years had elapsed between the two books and you no doubt have altered a good deal in that time. But only a few days had elapsed in my mind and passing from the one book to the other I regarded the latter as a literary *tour de force* and resented what I regarded as an insincere treatment of the subject.

I was quite wrong and read the book last night with entirely different feelings.

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

This letter contains a piece of information which solves in an authoritative manner a biographical problem which has been awaiting a solution since the publication of Gissing's Letters to his Family in 1927. In Appendix C to the book Ellen Gissing wrote: "The last glimpse of my brother comes to me vividly. It was the day on which we saw him off to London from the Wakefield Station, in August 1901, at the end of his last visit to England." Evidence has been sought in vain that on leaving the East Anglian Sanatorium Gissing did travel back to France via Wakefield although he had told Gabrielle that he would go straight to her at Saint-Honoré-les-Bains. In fact, he was true to his word.

Clara's assumption that Roberts's letters as well as Algernon's and hers to Gissing were hidden away together in the Gissing home at Wakefield may have been right, but they seem to have been lost. If she had read nothing by Roberts for some nine years, the last title she may have read would then be *Red Earth* or *The Purification of Dolores Silva*, collections of short stories published in 1894.

*

[The Authors' Club]

12.11.04

My dear Miss Collet,

Your letter gave me very great pleasure and I have put it away with the other letters, from distinguished persons, which I have had about Rachel Marr. You say the book has, in a sense, *changed* you. Well, its power of doing that or tending towards it, is what some people so fiercely resent. It disturbs the deep conservatism which in some [so] many ways distinguishes English radicals from their continental fellows. I was *very* glad to have your letter about it, as I was afraid that you would not like it at all.

I read your amusing and remarkable C.O.S. paper. When you said that ‘very good’ people (people recognized as such) have something the matter with them, you warmed my heart & made me envious that I hadn’t said it myself. I believe I once *did* say something of the kind, for I’ve always thought it. I mean to say it in future and if you come across it in a book you will know the [?]. I’m reading the book too. The statistical article wants special knowledge, & altho’ Laurence Gomme once paid me the compliment of saying that I had a great touch of the statistical mind in me, I can’t follow your mind all through because of my ignorance of the census.

I’m just going into Kent to look at another house, as it is so fine a day. You must come here again very soon. Don’t forget we are always in at night. I don’t think I’ve been out more than once in 12 months unless I was out of town.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

My wife thinks you are a very remarkable woman with immense knowledge. Her respect for a woman who can handle figures and at the same time like R. Marr is something beyond words.

The first paper by Clara Collet that Roberts praises is apparently “Three Ideal C.O.S. Secretaries.” It was read at the Denison Club on 14 February 1894 and published in the March 1894 number of the *Charity Organization Review*, pp. 119-28. Roberts had in mind a sentence on p. 127: “I have already on a former occasion expressed my belief that people who are at once recognised as ‘very good’ have something the matter with them, and are less, not more humanly endowed than others.” As for the “statistical article,” considering that Clara wrote a number of articles to which the epithet might apply, it cannot be identified. George Laurence Gomme (1853-1916), founder of the Folklore Society and Statistical Officer, then Clerk to the London County Council, contributed *London in the Reign of Queen Victoria* to the Victorian Era Series (1898). The book referred to by Roberts is the only one that Clara published, *Educated Working Women* (1902).

*

4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road, W C

23 Nov 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

I could not get the *Albany* until to-day. There is no reason at all why you should not send it to Gabrielle and tell her that you wrote it.

Have you read *Eve's Ransom* yet ? Some people run it down very much but I think it rather good.

You rather convey the impression that *The Whirlpool* and *The Crown of Life* were written after he left England. *The Crown of Life* was finished some months before he left England and *The Whirlpool* two years before.

You place the books much in the same order I should do giving full weight to the personal feeling aroused in myself in reading them. But there is as much of George Gissing's inner life in *The Whirlpool* as in any book he ever wrote. In the other books which you place in the first rank he was there as 'an exile from the paradise of ease and beauty.' He is in *The Whirlpool* as the weak man. The last sentence of the chapter ending on page 336 will illustrate what I mean. The book is full of anxieties about Walter. I feel sure that Morphew (and afterwards to a small extent Piers in *The Crown of Life*) gave one of his visions of Walter's future. *The Crown of Life* has always seemed to me almost ghastly in the way he took three brothers for analysis, knowing what was in his mind at the time.

In writing *The Whirlpool* he always imagined that he treated Harvey Rolfe as impartially as Alma. "The crown of his feeble, futile career should, in all fitness, have been marriage with a woman worse than himself." But Harvey is made out to be far superior to Alma ; this was not G's intention at all ; in writing about Harvey he was reproaching himself so bitterly that he was quite unaware that the literary result was to place Harvey on a much higher level than he intended.

Nor do I think that *The Whirlpool* suffers from his lack of *intimate* knowledge of the upper class. I did think so once but not now. If you look at it carefully you will see that it depicts a class which really exists—the people who from some reason or other are both fairly well off in income and almost destitute of social ties ; the kind of people who pick up acquaintances at hydros and boarding houses and whose friends are rarely more than two years old (as friends). In a surface kind of way George saw a great number of these people who live only on the surface of things, people who feel themselves flattered if supposed to belong to 'smart society.' The kind of society to which it is quite easy for Mrs Strangeways to have entrance. Cyrus Redgrave is still rather a painted image to me but all the rest seem true enough. Of course the same feeling of pity is not excited, but I am not sure it is not his truest book.

Gabrielle was to go to St Jean de Luz this week. I shall hear from her in a day or two if she is carrying out her plans as she intended.

I hope the fog has not driven you out of London but I expect you and Mrs Roberts have chosen the better part of valour and run away.

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

The *Albany Magazine* for Christmas 1904 contained “The Exile of George Gissing,” pp. 24-31, which Roberts published anonymously. He simplified Gissing’s work unduly, making him a writer who was only at his best when dealing with the theme of social exile. Miss Collet understood Gissing incomparably better than Roberts did. The last sentence of the chapter ending on p. 336 of *The Whirlpool* reads: “One lesson, if one only, he [Harvey Rolfe] had truly learnt from nature: it bade him forget all personal disquietude, in joy that he was not guilty of that crime of crimes, the begetting of children by a worthless mother.” By “the three brothers” in *The Crown of Life*, she meant Piers, the protagonist of the novel, Alexander and Daniel, sons of Jerome Otway. The sentence she next quotes from *The Whirlpool* occurs in Part 3, chapter 1, p. 336.

Gabrielle did stick to her plans; by 29 November she was writing to Roberts from the Pension Larréa, Ciboure.

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[The Authors’ Club]

25.11.04

My dear Miss Collet,

You have greatly relieved my mind about the article. As soon as I hear her S^t Jean de Luz address I will send Gabrielle a copy.

Perhaps I have always underrated ‘The Whirlpool.’ I know there is very fine stuff in it but I have found it dull in parts. What there is of G.G. in it is too much *translated*. It reads as if he had been writing so that his wife could not possibly suspect anything of herself in Alma. Of course they are utterly dissimilar but that very dissimilarity shows what I mean. It reads like a French book translated into German & from the German into English. I mean only in its remoteness from the model. The father with the child is good. Still—

But *The Crown of Life* has the passages which make me say he didn’t know the upper middle-class, though I think the middle-class-ness of *The Whirlpool* is only skilfully invented. However I can’t say all I could now in a little space. I’m so *very* glad I haven’t worried or amazed you by the article. I don’t care about the rest in the least. They can be savage if they like, including that thick-headed prig F.H.

You see we are in town yet. I hope to take a house near Wadhurst before Xmas, but it's still a matter of negotiation. I fancy we shall not go abroad unless my lung forces me to.

When are you coming in to see us again? Any evening but Monday next.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

Roberts's comment on *The Whirlpool* shows him at his worst as a critic of Gissing's work. His misunderstanding of the book is abysmal. Dragging in Edith, who of course had no idea and could have had no understanding, had she read the novel, of her husband's aims when he pictured Alma Rolfe, shows that Roberts altogether misjudged his friend's inspiration and personal situation. Clara's testimony in her previous and her next letters is illuminating.

"That thick-headed prig F.H." is of course Frederic Harrison, the Positivist, who had befriended Gissing in the early 1880s and had been requested to write a preface to *Veranilda* in the summer after the rejection of Wells's tactless and misinformed biographical introduction.

*

4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road W C

25 Nov 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

Tuesday evening, since that will suit you and Mrs. Roberts. I am too lazy to go out in the evening without a certainty of finding you at home.

So far as F.H. is concerned my feelings are much the same as those of the Bishop who thanked the layman for saying 'Damn.' At the same time I must confess that I consoled myself for the stupidity of the Preface by reflecting that that particular sentence could show that his judgment about 'Veranilda' did not count. I had not read 'Veranilda' although I brought it back with me to England but I had never believed in it. George had not a spark of patriotism in him. He could not possibly have understood a Roman. England was nothing to him except the country which produced Shakespeare and had beautiful scenery; what was beautiful he approved, what was ugly he hated. The feeling which unites a whole nation for good or for evil, for better [or] for worse, in slum or in villa, was wholly absent in him. Whatever it is which explains the defect explains George Gissing.

There are one or two words which Gabrielle would not like from anyone but you; but coming from you she will not misunderstand them. The word 'ease' when used by people in easy circumstances means something rather reprehensible. George hankered very little after what the average person

means by ease. £200 a year, certain, would have left him almost free from care. Do you remember Jane Austen's heroine who thought wealth a great factor in happiness while her sister only demanded a competence. The competence turned out to be £2000 a year while the wealth was £1000.

Are you sure that G's sense of colour was not developed until he visited Italy and Greece? At Wakefield, many years ago I saw a little water colour drawing which Walter (aged 5) said "Father painted before my time." The absence of colour in his room seems quite compatible with a keen appreciation of it. Good engravings are so much cheaper than good drawings.

In the sense in which you use the word George undoubtedly wrote potboilers and so has everyone who has worked as he ought to. But he always did the best that was in him to do at the time. Surely no one ever blames a person for doing potboilers unless he stoops to the level of an audience he despises. Even 'The Town Traveller' which he asked me not to read because he felt ashamed of it and which comes nearest to a deliberate attempt to please popular taste does not seem to me to be anything to be ashamed of.

I am sure you have read 'The Whirlpool' under a wrong impression. G. never altered a sentence from any thought of his wife. His own home circumstances had no place in his thoughts. In so far as he was influenced by his surroundings at the time the Henry Normans and the Davidsons would count for something. I am not fond of the book but believe that it deserves a high place.

Don't trouble to answer this.

Yours sincerely

Clara E. Collet

The delightful anecdote about the bishop and the layman still has to be traced to its source, but it seems that the sentence in the Preface in which Harrison claims that *Veranilda* is by far the most important book that Gissing ever produced is that which Clara Collet condemns. How could Harrison express himself so categorically, if in the same paragraph he confessed he had not read all Gissing's studies of contemporary life and indeed did not always feel in touch with those he had actually read? In turn Clara Collet failed to do justice to her friend, asserting that he could not understand Roman or indeed English patriotism. Maybe she could not forgive him for having taken her to task for her shallow enthusiasm after the relief of Mafeking in 1900.

The allusion to Jane Austen concerns Elinor and Marianne Dashwood respectively in ch. 17 of *Sense and Sensibility*, and that to the Henry Normans and the Davidsons, in fact to the former more than to the latter, is very much to the point.

*

13 Holland Park Avenue, W.

4.12.04

My dear Miss Collet,

I am returning to you by Parcel Post, all the books & papers you so kindly let me see. I am very much obliged for them. You have done and are doing a really useful work in the world & that seems to me the only thing really worth doing at all. I am too often afflicted with sad doubts as to whether my work justifies my existence. I mean this honestly & it isn't a pose. Does fiction do any good? If it only amuses, what are we who write it?

I am sending a copy of the *Albany Magazine* to Gabrielle by this post. I hear it is much liked in many quarters. By 'it' I mean the G. article.

I fear after all that I shall not get to St Jean de Luz yet awhile. But I'm not quite sure.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

The papers Roberts was returning were probably articles which Clara Collet had published in various periodicals, but details are unknown. The most complete bibliography available is that by Deborah McDonald in her recent book. There is no surmising what books Roberts was returning.

Of his temporary humility no more striking expression has been traced in his works and correspondence. It contrasts with the self-confidence he all too often parades in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*.

"The Exile of George Gissing" was indeed commented upon in a few periodicals. Examples will be found in the *British Weekly* ("Rambling Remarks," by A Man of Kent [that is William Robertson Nicoll], 1 December 1904, p. 197) and the *Sphere* ("A Literary Letter," C.K.S[horter], 3 December 1904, p. 208). Gabrielle acknowledged the copy of the *Albany Magazine* in her letter to Clara Collet of 7 December. She planned to read the article the next day, and commented upon it at length in her letter to Roberts of 9 December (original in the Berg Collection).

*

4 Vernon Chambers
Theobalds Road, WC

5 Dec 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

Thank you for the papers etc. Your note reminds me that I cut out the enclosed from one of my trade papers, for your benefit as both the matter and the setting amused me. By the setting I mean the Gazette in which it was published not the illustrations.

It is curious that you should express doubts about your work just at the moment when I have ceased to have any. Yesterday I read 'Immortal Youth.' You said it was written in your most cynical mood. However that may be I have no doubt whatever of its value. It is not a question of agreeing with your philosophy; that is not the test of such a book at all. My test of such a book is whether, at the same time that it makes me associate with people from whom I should naturally shrink, it makes me feel that God is in that world as much as in any other. To do that without the aid of false sentiment is to help the few to help the many.

In this book I don't find myself suspecting you of 'putting on side' as I did in your earlier work. Exaggeration instead of impressing me makes me indifferent. The lightness of treatment which perhaps would offend many seems to me right enough at this period of their lives. It is before or after, that the real tragedy comes and it is only women who ever bear the full burden of it, men always get a way out of the consequences. I wonder what a matron of a Sick Hospital or a Home for Epileptics would think of the book and its philosophy; or the mothers of Lil and Edith Thorne. The few cases of hopelessly depraved women [of course Edith Thorne is not in this category] that I have come across were daughters of wholly worthless men and of most devoted and courageous mothers whose only fault was to have married such men.

But I have no vocation for curing evils and have no crystallized faith as to what is right to do when everything has gone wrong. But a book like this, written in truthful earnest, helps me to see the motives to which to appeal and the forces which have to be combated. Even if you were not quite in earnest it makes little difference.

This reads as though enlightening me justified anybody's existence. For pessimism on that score I could give you points and win easily; partly because I have good health and can afford the luxury of a thoroughgoing disgust with things, whereas you would be made ill if you gave your whole mind to such analysis.

I calculate that about 9 months in the last twelve years have been spent by me in really useful work. For months at a time I speculate whether it is honest to go on drawing a salary at public expense for such poor results. Then suddenly something happens which makes me feel it was worthwhile for me to have been fooling about in order that I should be on the spot for that particular job.

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

Immortal Youth (1902) is a long novel of which Gissing gave his impressions to Roberts in his letter of 19 July 1902: “I notice a great advance in maturity of thought—in control of expression—in power of presentment.”

*

13 Holland Park Avenue, W

6.12.04

Dear Miss Collet,

I'm glad you like the cynical *Immortal Youth* & recognise its essential truth to types though they may be unknown to you. My slow conquest of your approval is a real feather in my cap, and I mean this in all sincerity. I have a few books more that I should like you to like. I'll tell you which they are when we next meet.

I hear Shorter says (latest *Sphere*) that my article is the best criticism on George that has yet appeared. I think D^r Robertson Nicoll says the same.

If one does 1 month's good work out of 12, it is much. I know that too well.

Yours very sincerely
Morley Roberts

For Shorter's and Robertson Nicoll's references to “The Exile of George Gissing,” see above in comment on letter from Roberts to Miss Collet of 4 December.

*

Pension Larréa
Ciboure, St J de L

21 Dec 04

Dear Mr Roberts,

I find that George had told Gabrielle of his first marriage and given her his diary beginning with the account of her death in Feb 1888 (not the date he wrote to me when he must have been too confused to give it correctly). She thought I did not know about it as I never mentioned it when she referred to these times and she learnt the details from you when we came to London.

As it had not given her the key to much which she wanted to understand I told her everything. I am sure she will be the happier for knowing and she is prouder of him than before. For his own sake she greatly regrets that he could not bring himself to tell her.

As for that little incident in England when he last came over she says that until I wrote to George it simply never occurred to him that such an interpretation of his conduct was possible to anyone.

She understands him thoroughly and after that incident there was perfect confidence and understanding between them. You must make her write the account of the last two years.

She did not like the idea of your publishing a Life within the next few years. It is possible that this new light may change her mind.

But I do not think you ought to publish it until both the boys are old enough to be consenting parties to the publication.

We hope that you are coming here but I am sending this in case you do not.

Yours sincerely
Clara E. Collet

The stressing of 88 shows that Clara had in mind Gissing's very important letter to her of 17 February 1897 in which he wrote: "My first wife was a hopeless drunkard, & died miserably in 1881 or 2, I forget the year." She corrected him in the margin. See *Collected Letters*, Volume 6, pp. 236-38.

"When we came to London" is a reference to Gabrielle's visit to England of the previous April, and to Clara's journey to Paris to fetch her. See above.

The "little incident in England" occurred at the Wellsees in June 1901. They tried to convince Gissing not to go back to France and therefore to life with Gabrielle when he left the East Anglian Sanatorium. Strictly speaking the little incident perhaps consists in the conflicting views between Gissing and Gabrielle when the question arose of his stay or otherwise at the sanatorium.

We may consider that Gabrielle did write an account of the last two years she spent with Gissing. See Appendix III to Volume 9 of the *Collected Letters*.

Acknowledgments will be expressed in the last instalment.

[To be continued]

Book Reviews

Simon J. James, *Unsettled Accounts : Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing*, London : Anthem Press, 2003. Pp. viii + 200.

The title *Unsettled Accounts* is deliberately ambiguous. Despite the word *Money* in the sub-title, Simon James writes about several kinds of unsettled accounts in Gissing's novels—unresolved relationships between characters and their families, their social class, their educational status, their cultural background, the publishing world, and society in general. But money is the

basic topic, a topic which, as it figures in the life and the works of George Gissing, has long deserved a book of this sort.

The opening chapter, "Telling Money," gives a critical overview of the importance of money in Victorian England—especially in the novels of the period, including works by not only Gissing, but also Dickens, Hardy, H. G. Wells, George Eliot, and even Charlotte Brontë and Henry James. It is Simon James's contention that "the presence of money in a narrative almost functions as a kind of index of fidelity to real life, filthy lucre [becoming] a guarantee of grimy realism." Gissing's own "accursed struggle for money" caused him to have no choice in fiction but realism. Simon James further points out that in Victorian fiction, "while the pursuit of money for its own sake is morally reprehensible, the self should also learn how to use money correctly." Gissing's protagonists, of course, do not usually have a choice of correct or incorrect usage of money at all, they mainly have the problem of how to get enough money in an honest way to keep body and soul together.

Henry James's "brilliant money-narratives" of *Washington Square*, *Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Wings of the Dove*, are stories based on "disparities between true moral nature and attractive appearances." Money provides tests of character and moral choices in these novels, as it does in *Great Expectations*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Shirley*, *Tono-Bungay*, *Middlemarch* and *Nostramo*. This list should alert the reader to the danger of sweeping generalizations about the importance of money in the novels of the Victorian period. Charlotte Brontë's most important novels have little to do with money. Except for *Nostramo*, Joseph Conrad's work is almost entirely outside the scope of Dr. James's study. The moral dilemmas which form the basis of Conrad's sea stories call for a different kind of analysis, as do most of the works of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. The present study might have made more mention of Trollope, Arnold Bennett, and George Moore, however.

Unsettled Accounts is interesting on the subject of endings: "Debts, both literal and metaphorical, are [...] an obstacle to traditional narrative closure. For the narrative to end, nothing must still be owing or remain unaccounted for." Dickens followed this scenario, which was what the Victorian reading public expected. Gissing did not.

The second chapter, "Dickens in Memory," points to many examples in the novels of both Dickens and Gissing in which money is a prime influence on plots and sub-plots. In Dickens, as in Gissing, the young heroes struggle without money for many chapters—but Dickens's characters often

come into an unexpected inheritance at the end, whereas Gissing practically never resorts to such a *deus ex machina*—and in fact allows most of his protagonists to end up still poor—Simon James calls this “reverse justice.” Gissing’s protagonists, like Edwin Reardon, and the Madden sisters, tend to prove their worth by fighting a protracted battle against poverty and an unjust class system; their survival or acceptance or even defeat is what counts. James points out that Dickens’s success as a writer was due to his sharing the values of his readers. Gissing, of course, did not at all share the values of the broad reading public of his day, and this was, James believes, a major cause of Gissing’s lack of popular success as a writer.

In the last three chapters of *Unsettled Accounts*, James divides Gissing’s works into three periods, not just according to years of production, but basically according to the degree to which the main characters are caught in poverty. “Poverty and Imagination: The Early Novels” (*Workers in the Dawn* through *The Nether World*) deals with the lowest classes of London. The protagonists of these stories attempt to scrape together basic existences; even the educated characters are pretty much beaten by their circumstances.

However, in Gissing’s novels of the 1890’s (as we learn in “The Price of Culture: Gissing’s Major Phase”), the protagonists are of a slightly higher class and have a slightly higher income—so now the plots can concern moral choices. *Born in Exile* is the novel of this period which Simon James covers most thoroughly. He analyzes Gissing’s sympathetic handling of the stultifying effect upon Godwin Peak of an education that prepared him for a class he cannot belong to. Peak’s reprehensible decision to falsify his religious beliefs in order to gain acceptance into a family and a social class above his own becomes the center of the story. For Gissing, bad as the traps of class and poverty are, his characters still must take responsibility for morally wrong choices.

The last chapter of this book is entitled “Gissing’s City of Women: The Later Novels.” Dr. James is most interested in *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Odd Women*, for in these novels we see that the traps of class and poverty are much worse for women than for men. James does not interpret Gissing as being the most perceptive writer about women of his time: “As one might expect from a writer who nominates Ruth Pinch as his favourite female character in Dickens, Gissing seems to share with many of his male characters the belief that, ideally, a woman’s place lies in the patriarchal Dickensian sphere of motherhood and domestic management.” Nevertheless, James sees that Gissing’s “representation of the unsatisfactory nature

of the world for educated middle-class women is at least sincere, if uncomfortable to read.”

It is true that among Gissing’s later novels there are some in which the protagonists accept their class status and make a success of their lives. Will Warburton is a good example. But Will Warburton is not typical. Dr. James recognizes that one of Gissing’s achievements as a novelist is “to write eloquently of failure.”

Unfortunately the prose of this book is disconcertingly sprinkled with terms unrecognized by ordinary dictionaries, such as “narratability,” “parodically,” “performative,” “commodification,” “indicial,” “conspicuity,” “reify,” “ironize,” “aestheticize,” “de-authorize,” and “contextualize.” There are too many sentences like the following: “Although virtue may be valuable in another register than the economic, a complete legibility of the self to the outside world is anti-economic: virtue may be dangerous if displayed too openly in a realistically represented, hostile struggle for economic existence.” Another: “The hero’s alienated consciousness seeks a regressive accommodation.” There are a number of grammatical and usage errors (“men such as him,” “is comprised of,” “preferring...than” instead of “preferring...to,” “a also frequent complaint”). There are even several verbs which do not agree with their subjects. George Gissing set too high a standard of writing for such faults to appear in a book about him.

The end-notes are conscientious and so is the bibliography. The index is excellent. The one appendix still needed is a chronological list of Gissing’s novels, with dates.

This book is a worthwhile contribution to Gissing scholarship in that it thoughtfully pulls together the many aspects of the huge influence of money in the fiction of George Gissing. Actually, Simon James has identified, in Gissing’s novels and those of his fellow writers and in the tastes of the English reading public of the 1880’s and 1890’s, the beginning of the obsession with money and material things that is still blighting the Western world. The Accounts are still unsettled.

Marilyn B. Saveson, Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio

George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, Oxford: Signal Books; Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2004. Introduction and notes by Pierre Coustillas. Pp. xxviii + 159.

Gissing’s popular travel book has been reprinted and translated many times, but this latest edition must be one of the most attractive, and is probably the most informative. The neat little paperbound volume, showing a fine photo

of the ruins of the Temple of the Paladins on its cover, is delightful to handle and read, a great improvement over the awkward quarto of the first edition, with its unfriendly white binding and uninspired Littrow illustrations.

A major attraction of this edition is the copious apparatus provided by the learned editor of the *Journal*. As he tells us, Professor Coustillas has been over Gissing's route four times, and has reported on his travels in the *Journal* and elsewhere. These trips were active research projects, and Coustillas gathered his information from personal interviews with local Calabrians, as well as from the historical works, guide books, and Italian articles about Gissing listed in the bibliography. The results of his inquiries appear in the very full notes that illuminate the text. The details they offer about Gissing's background reading, the people he mentions, and Calabrian history and topography, are valuable supplements to the book that Gissing himself, with studied casualness, called "Notes."

His declared interest in going to Calabria was to visit the region where Roman and Greek civilizations had merged. He concentrated on places of historical interest, made a difficult journey to see the ruins called the Table of the Paladins, and was charmed to discover, on his own, the remains of a road that had led to the ancient city of Tarentum, a find more interesting, he says, "than the objects ranged in a museum." But he also enjoyed observing the life of the street and cafés. He recorded memorable encounters with a variety of Calabrians, from the Italian who served as English vice-consul, to the ragged woman who waited upon him while he was lying ill in his hotel in Cotrone. Apparently insignificant details did not escape him. Describing the impoverished town of Squillace he remarks, "The animal population is not without its importance."

When he visited the cemetery at Cotrone, Gissing was strongly impressed by the custodian, apparently a man of culture, who had travelled to other countries, including England. Gissing does not mention his name, but Coustillas identified him in a 2001 *Journal* article as one Giulio Marino, and in his notes gives some facts and published resources that tell more about him. There is also a striking photograph of Marino, showing an intelligent face seriously threatened from both sides by enormous whiskers.

One of the longest notes reviews a story familiar to *Journal* readers, the unexpected relation between Gissing's reference to the name of the proprietor of the Albergo Centrale in Catanzaro and "paparazzi," the Italian term for news photographers that became popular after the death of Princess Diana. The notes frequently introduce observations by writers, such as

Gibbon, Lenormant, Augustus Hare, and H. V. Morton, as background information or points of comparison with Gissing's impressions. They show that foreigners have created a substantial history about their adventures in Calabria, a history in which Gissing's volume has its place.

His book has inspired a number of earlier enthusiasts to follow in his footsteps through Calabria, using *By the Ionian Sea* as a guide, and to write records of their journeys. Coustillas gives a list of these beginning with the chapter of Norman Douglas' *Old Calabria* devoted to the Gissing route, and ending with the latest example of what has come to be a sub-genre of travel literature, John Keahey's *Sweet and Glorious Land*, published in 2000. Keahey's book is not only a tribute to Gissing, but also, like *By the Ionian Sea* itself, an intimate narrative rich in personal experiences.

The pages of the Signal Books edition are very much enlivened by illustrations, some of them set decoratively into the text. It reproduces Gissing's sketches of artefacts and other sights that appeared in the first edition. But there are also photographs of the people and places Gissing saw. Coustillas took a number of these himself, and there are many other vintage photos of antique interest which he obtained from a variety of sources. Gissing's readers will want to see the portrait of Dr. Sculco, who cared for the author while he was ill in Cotrone, and the interior of the Catanzaro pharmacy that Gissing found so enchanting. Photos of the crowded slope of Cosenza and the ruins of the Squillace monastery show the reader what Gissing had in mind when he was describing these places.

The bibliographies at the end of this edition, like the volume as a whole, seem intended to satisfy both confirmed readers of Gissing and those whose interests might be more general. The volume is one of a series of travel books, and would be picked up by readers seeking information about Calabria who know little or nothing about Gissing. These readers are offered the opportunity to become more familiar with the author by a bibliography of his books, and a listing of biographies and published correspondence. Those who know Gissing will find in the bibliographical material specialized information about the previous editions and translations of *By the Ionian Sea*, and the numerous English and Italian notices about it. They will also find that the notes and illustrations accompanying the text lend considerable vividness and immediacy to Gissing's narrative and almost enable the reader to accompany him on his memorable journey.

Jacob Korg, University of Washington

Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens, Volume 1: Essays, Introductions and Reviews, edited and introduced by Pierre Coustillas, with an Afterword by Alan S. Watts, Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2004. Pp. 261.

The names of Charles Dickens and George Gissing have long been linked, from the satirical portrait of Orlando Whiffle in Gissing's first novel *Workers in the Dawn* in 1880 to the publication of his hilariously comic novel *The Town Traveller* in 1898, and it was never hard to trace the inspiration of his illustrious predecessor in the novels of the late-Victorian fellow artist. Gissing's demonstrable indebtedness to certain Dickensian qualities was repaid generously (if posthumously) by the publication of his study *Charles Dickens*, which took the critical world by surprise in the same year that he published *The Town Traveller*. In the authoritative *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (1999) Paul Schlicke, the general editor, praises Gissing as "one of the foremost early critics of Dickens," whose overflowing sympathy with poor and humble folk and whose remarkable ability to convey an atmosphere of rural peace, he was among the first to recognize fully and persuasively. The continued vitality and relevance of Gissing's critical insights into Dickens has inspired the *doyen* of Gissing studies, Pierre Coustillas, to undertake the admirable project of bringing out the *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*.

On the cover of the first volume (to be followed by Volumes Two and Three in May and August of this year respectively) photographs of Dickens and Gissing have been combined in a montage, which shows the two novelists at about the same age. Dickens, in one of the earliest photographs of him, by Henri Claudet, dating from c. 1850, is in his late thirties, and Alfred Ellis's portrait of Gissing was taken when the writer was thirty-five. One is tempted to see Dickens's superior confidence and extroversion reflected in his expression, while Gissing's characteristic blend of diffidence and introversion is similarly well caught. They were both at the peak of their creative careers, Dickens just having completed his masterpiece *David Copperfield*, in which he addressed his most painful childhood memories, and Gissing attempting much the same sort of thing in his still underrated novel *Born in Exile*.

Pierre Coustillas has collected in this volume two essays, "Dickens in Memory" and "The Homes and Haunts of Dickens," and two reviews, "Mr. Swinburne on Dickens" and "Mr. Kitton's Life of Dickens," that were included as appendices to his *Gissing's Writings on Dickens* (Enitharmon,

1969), and he has now added one of the rarer items in the book, the Introduction to *David Copperfield* written by Gissing in 1901 for the lavishly produced Autograph Edition which was published by the New York publisher George D. Sproul. Sadly, Gissing was never to see it in print as it did not come out until the early Spring of 1904. However, the bulk of the book is made up of the ten surviving Introductions Gissing wrote for Methuen's Rochester Edition of the Works of Charles Dickens. Only six of these had actually been published (*The Pickwick Papers*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge*) when at the end of 1901 it was decided to abandon the project on account of its disappointing sales. Nine of the introductions were made available to the general reader in America in 1924 when Greenberg (New York) published *Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens*, with an introduction by Temple Scott. In 1925 English readers were given the same collection, published by Cecil Palmer in London, under the title *The Immortal Dickens*, with a brief preface by the first editor of *The Dickensian*, B. W. Matz. For over eighty years it was thought the Introduction to *David Copperfield* was lost, until its discovery in Dickens House by Richard J. Dunn in 1981, in good time for its inclusion in the present volume. The one item that was commissioned and duly written, but has never been traced, is the Introduction to the *Christmas Books*.

In his fastidious fashion Coustillas has collated the earlier editions with (photocopies of) the extant holograph texts and provided full and detailed notes to each of the surviving Introductions. One is impressed by the speed with which Gissing generally completed these pieces, hardly ever taking more than three to four days over them, though he once confided to H. G. Wells he did not find them "easy things to do." He was paid 10 guineas per introduction, which must have been satisfactory, though not generous by any means. There is no doubt that the exemplary edition of these Introductions will add to the appreciation of Gissing's perceptive readings of Dickens's novels, which occasionally, as in his Introduction to *Nicholas Nickleby*, allow us a glimpse of the younger writer's critique of his admired example: "...[in England] novel-writing has never been regarded as a road to wealth. The English novelist, especially when success has come to him, is wont to see his art from the readers' point of view; with results too obvious. Dickens... did not wholly escape this perilous influence."

Apropos of "The Homes and Haunts of Dickens", the essay Gissing wrote for the Northern Newspaper Syndicate at Kendal, one notes with surprise the absence of any reference to it in the entry devoted to the "homes

of Dickens” in the *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*. According to Coustillas the article was first published in *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*, which makes one wonder about the reference to it found in the book entitled *Homes and Haunts of Famous Authors* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton, & Co., 1906), which specifies as its original source *The Nottingham Guardian*. Were these two different papers?

In a series of informative appendices the editor has included the Introductions by Temple Scott and B. W. Matz to *Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens* and *The Immortal Dickens* respectively. Chesterton’s handsomely complimentary tribute to Gissing’s acute appreciation of Dickens (“From Dickens to Gissing”) is also given in an appendix and in conclusion Pierre Coustillas has contributed an article from his own hand, “Gissing’s Two Introductions to *David Copperfield*: Veracity in the *Bildungsroman*.”

The best part of this rich offering I have left to the last: Coustillas’ apparently effortless and comprehensive “Introduction” is a model of its kind. The editor is at home at Wakefield as much as in Siena or in Arcahon, and his grasp of the facts (literary, biographical or bibliographical) marshalled in support of his elucidation of Gissing’s and Dickens’s achievements at times verges on the intimidating. But who would not love to be intimidated by such a modest display of knowledge?

In the Preface Coustillas claims that “Gissing’s writings on Dickens have been *unfairly* (my italics) overshadowed by those of G.K. Chesterton...,” a claim that appears to be confirmed by a comparison of the size of the entries for Gissing and Chesterton in the previously mentioned *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*: Chesterton is given twice the amount of space allowed to Gissing. Whether such prominence is based on prejudice and whether it is unfair, is a question dangerous to ask and impossible to answer. Yet the conclusion on reading this book is inescapable, its editor has provided all the material needed for a just and balanced reassessment of Gissing’s contributions to the study of Dickens.

The quality of this first volume makes one look forward with high hopes to the next two volumes in the series: volume 2, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* and volume 3, *An Abridgement of Forster’s Life of Dickens*.

Bouwe Postmus, University of Amsterdam

[The publishers of *Homes and Haunts of Famous Authors* should have given their source as *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*.— Ed.]

George Gissing, *Mujeres sin pareja*, Barcelona: Alba Editorial, 2001. Pp. 558.

The discovery of this Spanish translation of *The Odd Women*, thanks to Manuel Huguet, to whom we are greatly indebted, is a gratifying event in Gissing studies. The average English reader of the novelist's work hardly cares to know whether this or that title has been translated into a European or Asian language which anyway he cannot read, but among the many criteria that may help to define the extent of a writer's reputation the number of translations of his books is generally taken into account. Gissing's achievement had so far been almost totally ignored in Spanish-speaking countries. In retrospect Antonio Hoyas Solís's linguistic study of the novels (1985) looked like a flash in the pan. Will this beautifully produced translation of one of Gissing's major titles be followed by any others is a question that we should like to see answered positively. The book—physically a thick volume in card covers—offers an annotated translation by Alejandro Palomas, who is also known for his work on Katherine Mansfield, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather and Jack London. In the same series are to be found titles by Charlotte Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and R. L. Stevenson; so Gissing is in excellent company. The presence of Edward Gibbon and his masterpiece close to his name is one of those revenges of time which he savoured in moments of excusable self-pity. The front cover illustration by George Clausen, "Spring, Haverstock Hill," 1881, the original of which is in the Bury Art Gallery and Museum, Lancashire, with its two young women, one sitting on a bench, vacant-eyed, with joined hands, the other standing, pink-cheeked, holding a small bunch of daffodils, is such an appropriate choice that it is surprising no English or American publisher has yet thought of reproducing it on the front cover of his edition. Gissing has now been translated into fourteen languages and *The Odd Women* into five—the others being Swedish in 1980, French in 1982, Japanese (two different translations simultaneously) in 1988, and German in 1997.— Pierre Coustillas

Dario Durbé, *Giuseppe Benassai 1835-1878*, Reggio Calabria: C.EDI.C., 2003. Pp. xxii + 149.

Giuseppe Benassai was the artist two of whose paintings were seen by Gissing in the Museo Civico, Reggio Calabria, on 12 December 1897, the last day he spent in Calabria. In the diary entry for that day Gissing gave an account of his visit and of his conversation with the director, Giuseppe

Vazzana, noting among his many impressions: “Two modern pictures struck me: one of a pasture on the heights of Aspromonte—summer sky and herbage with shepherds and flocks; the other of a tarn and rushing torrent, also high among the mountains, dark and beautiful. The painter dead.” *By the Ionian Sea*, within two pages of the end, gives a few more melancholy details. “Naming the painter, my despondent companion shook his head, and sighed ‘Morto! Morto!’” At that, among Gissing’s biographers and critics, stopped public knowledge of artist and museum director for a hundred years. Perhaps Gissing did not catch the painter’s name or he consciously abstained from recording it. No light was to be thrown on the double mystery until 1998, when an enquiry was conducted successfully in the museum, by then restyled Museo Nazionale. At no time in the twentieth century did the English and American publishers of *By the Ionian Sea* care to produce an edition likely to satisfy the modern reader’s legitimate curiosity, and only now, after the publication of the Signal Books edition of Gissing’s book, does the volume under review, a superb work by any standards, tell us as much as is currently known about Benassai, though it fails to echo Gissing’s warm praise of two of his best paintings. Indeed in 1998, they were only visible to insiders and their friends!

Dario Durbé, a reputable Italian art critic, has produced a volume of outstanding quality of which collectors of books on the art of painting will be anxious to place a copy on their shelves. Physically this jacketed oblong album measuring 31.5 x 22.8 cm, and xxii + 152 pages long, may look like a coffee-table book, but it is in fact a sophisticated scholarly study of the painter’s life and work and a supremely attractive one pictorially. A number of individuals and institutions have been involved in its preparation: Mariano Cudia, President of the Istituto Forestale Europeo, Gaetano Arconti of the Fondazione BNC, and such official sponsors as the Regione Calabria, the Provincia di Reggio Calabria and the Comune di Reggio Calabria. The printers have been remarkably up to their difficult task: the type chosen is reader-friendly and the illustrations as good as can reasonably be expected.

As Gaetano Arconti makes clear, Dario Durbé’s task was a daunting one. Benassai’s life was a short one (1835-1878), his works are widely scattered, not only in some major galleries in Reggio, Florence, Naples and Cairo, but in private collections which may well not have been identified. At no time extremely popular in his lifetime, Benassai sank into quasi-total oblivion in the decades that followed his death, doubtless partly a victim of northern prejudice against the deep South, to which Gissing himself testified in both

his book and correspondence. Further an auction sale by the artist's descendants in 1937 complicated matters seriously. So that, with a commendable, though slightly discouraging honesty, Durbé considers his inventory as the first stage of some indispensable further enquiry. Even so the number of works listed and reproduced in this volume is impressive, as is the level of the artist's achievement. Like Gissing, who was content to declare himself "struck" by the two paintings he saw, we are impressed by the seventy-two plates and a hundred or so sketches reproduced from the notebooks. Whatever works may be temporarily or definitively lost, some clear idea can be formed of Benassai's favourite subjects: landscapes, animals and less frequently men and women, seascapes and plants.

Benassai was a Calabrian who mainly drew his inspiration from local scenes, but he was nonetheless something of a traveller. Readers of the present volume will find a number of very suggestive sketches made in Egypt in 1869. They brilliantly convey the atmosphere of the period. Dario Durbé reproduces several photographs of the artist as well as a portrait by A. Mancini, but the most remarkable of them is undoubtedly that on p. 94 where we see him, next to his wife Adele Bartoli, about the time of their marriage. Digitized photos made from a CD would not be better. Of course to readers of *By the Ionian Sea* the two paintings described by Gissing will be the most interesting. They are entitled "La Quiete" and "Aspromonte." Mariano Cudia, like Gissing, of whom he knew little or nothing until recently, writes in his presentation of the book, on p. xiii, that he was deeply impressed by the latter picture the first time he saw it, and that it remains very vivid in his mind. But there are many other excellent paintings of southern landscapes in the book, for instance plates 39 ("Haymaking") and 40 ("Landscape with cattle and boat"). President Cudia, who took the worthy initiative of having this book published, is to be congratulated; so is Dario Durbé, for his illuminating comments on Benassai's work. Retrospectively the need for such a volume seems to have been greater than was thought ever before.— Pierre Coustillas

Daniele Cristofaro, *Saluti da Squillace, Viaggio tra immagini e foto d'altri tempi*, AMDSCIA, 2002. Unpaginated.

The pleasure Gissing took in visiting Squillace was greatly spoilt by circumstances. He had pictured the old town to himself while reading a number of books which represented as many stages in the preparation of *By the Ionian Sea* and *Veranilda*. In his mind the place was strongly associated

with the monk and statesman Cassiodorus, a figure who fascinated him and who to this day remains a, if not *the*, local glory. Viale Cassiodorus is to Squillace what Westgate is to Wakefield or what Piccadilly is to London. But, as a few foreign travellers in Southern Italy have noted, Gissing did not choose quite the best season for his Calabrian trip. His stay in Cotrone had brought him within an ace of death and his visit to Squillace, although not connected with any physical danger, did not leave him very bright recollections. Had he seen the medieval city in spring or summer or even earlier in autumn, his impressions would have been more cheerful.

What was Squillace like in Gissing's time? Information is scarce, for nothing of any major political, social or cultural importance seems to have occurred locally for ages. However, Squillace has a glamour all its own, and the opinions of its inhabitants, past and present, are not likely to tally with those of hurrying travellers anxious to see the site, to have good views of the landscape around this extraordinary eyrie, to take a quick look at the outside and inside of the cathedral, and venture if they can among the ruins of the Norman castle.

Not unnaturally, both the author, Daniele Cristofaro, who is deputy mayor of Squillace, and Francesco Pregoni, the Administrative Director for Calabria of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs, have a more exalted view of their subject. They write with eloquence about the power and historical interest of the photographs reproduced in the book, which is of about the same size as that devoted to Giuseppe Benassai. The magic of photos lies in their intrinsic capacity to stop the passing of time. The selection falls into four categories: places, persons, events and professional activities.

The relations between them and what Gissing had to say of Squillace in his diary, his letters and *By the Ionian Sea* will be fairly explicit to any reader who is familiar with these sources. As we go through the volume, we are shown the evolution of the town from pre-World War I to post-World War II. The pageant begins with the medieval bridge called the Devil's Bridge, the main streets and buildings, including the cathedral, the ruins of the Santa Chiara monastery and those of the San Domenico convent. The latter were pulled down in 1928 so as to make space for an elementary school. It goes on with the street in which Gissing, after an uncomfortable journey from Catanzaro, stopped at the variously called Osteria Centrale and Albergo Nazionale in the Via Damiano Assanti. We then discover a good many photos of the 1920s and 1930s showing a variety of human types, fascist leaders and church dignitaries in the days of

Mussolini's dictatorship, and portraits of men and women made outside or in studios.

Some of these photos, considering Gissing's remarks about animals being a not unimportant part of the population, are very likely more amusing now than they were originally intended to be. An undated one, which probably dates back to the interwar period, shows a youngish woman sitting on her doorstep among a dozen chickens obviously interested in her doings, and beaming a cheerful welcome to the photographer. As we get nearer to the present day, we come across some photos that would have astonished Gissing and his successive wives. At most that of the female football team taken in the 1970s would have reminded him of what he called in his *Commonplace Book* callisthenics!

The book is well produced and the passing of time is already giving it ironical significance in places. Thus, when Avvocato Giuseppe Chillà (1897-1955), "fervente socialista," is shown just before the 1952 general election addressing an assembly of voters, he stands above a poster which reads "Per la rinascita del Mezzogiorno." How long, we inevitably ask ourselves, will it be necessary for forward-looking Southerners to clamour for the renaissance of the deep South? Much progress has been made, but the way to progress is like the way to Tipperary.— Pierre Coustillas

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Notes and News

Until recently the link between Gissing and Spain was signalled by his familiarity with *Don Quixote*, which he read in childhood and celebrated in verse at the time in "Epitaph on the Tomb of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza." It was also noticeable in the largely successful efforts he made in the last two years of his life to rediscover *Don Quixote* in the original, read some modern Spanish novels and see something of Northern Spain, a visit which Gabrielle related in her colourful essay "Across the Pyrenees." In Spain Gissing's name was practically unknown.

Now thanks to the research conducted last month by Manuel Huguet, a native of Spain whose wife Christine read papers on Gissing at the Amsterdam Conference and last July at the IES Conference in London, it appears that things concerning Gissing have begun to change beyond the Pyrenees. An enquiry on the internet has produced modest, yet suggestive, results. As noted elsewhere in this number, a translation of *The Odd Women* was published in March 2001 and the publishers, Alba Editorial, were delighted to

hear that their Gissing volume had caught the eye of readers outside their country. The book, Señor Huguet tells us, should be seen in the light of a growing interest in Victorian novelists, notably Wilkie Collins and Charlotte Brontë. Besides, the Spanish translation of *The Odd Women*, entitled *Mujeres sin parejas*, can be obtained on a CD which includes 100 works by a large number of authors from Libros en Kiosco Guadalajara. We also hear that a “programa de doctorado” for winter and spring 2004, on “Woman and Public Space in Anglo-saxon Literature,” includes *The Odd Women* along with such novels as *Daisy Miller* and *The House of Mirth* (for information please apply to Mt.gomez@ua.es). In an introductory presentation of a translation of Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno* we are reminded that Gissing and Karl Marx are characters in the novel. Gissing also appears in a study of *Sons and Lovers* by José L. Caramés Lage, of the University of Oviedo, as he does, marginally we suppose, in a history of anarchism by George Woodcock translated into Spanish. Far more substantial is an article in English, “Naturalism and Modes of Literary Production in George Gissing’s *New Grub Street*,” by José Maria Díaz Lage, of the University of Santiago de Compostela, published in *Atlantis*, Vol. XXIV, no. 2, December 2002, pp. 73-83. The influence of Fredric Jameson, Raymond Williams and John Carey on the author is obvious enough.

However, to judge by the very small number of books of Gissing interest in the Biblioteca Nacional, it seems that few titles are likely to be represented in the libraries of Spanish universities. Quite unexpectedly the Biblioteca Nacional holds copies of the old Tauchnitz editions of *Demos* and *New Grub Street*.

As announced in our January number, Richard Dennis lectured before an audience of 100 to 150 people on “George Gissing: London’s Restless Analyst” at University College London on 2 March. The text of his lecture will be published in our July issue with a few illustrations.

A photograph of Gissing was sold at auction on e-Bay in March. There were many bidders, we are told. The portrait was one of four by Alfred Ellis recorded in Gissing’s diary (entry for 2 September 1893), but only two are known to posterity.

A biography of Grant Allen by Professor Peter Morton, of Flinders University, has been accepted for publication by Palgrave Macmillan.

Michèle Kohler reported last month that there has been some correspondence on the internet about the number of copies of their books that Victorian novelists received from their publishers. As a rule it seems to have been six. Most of Gissing's publishers sent him half a dozen but one exception comes to mind, A. & C. Black, and the author mentioned his embarrassment in his correspondence. American publishers were less generous, at least with English authors. Presentation copies of Gissing's American editions of his books are extremely scarce.

Among forthcoming publications are a paper on *Demos* read by Christine Huguet at the SFEVE symposium which took place last January at the University of Paris XIII, an article by Robin Woolven due to appear in the *Camden History Review*, and a review of *The World of Gissing* (ed. Mitsuharu Matsuoka) in the May number of the well-known Japanese monthly *Eigo Seinen*. The reviewer will be a new name, Tat Ohno, of Kumamoto University.

Professor Yoshiyuki Fujikawa of Komazawa University, who is also professor emeritus of Tokyo University, reviewed *The World of Gissing* in a weekly paper, *Shukan Dokushojin* (The Weekly Reader), in its issue of 26 March. Rather than a review proper of the book, the article can be said to reflect the author's opinion on Gissing in general, praising Gissing's cultural commitment and his pioneering ecological views.

Denis Clodd, the late Alan Clodd's brother, has sent us photographs taken by his daughter Kate last October when she and her sister Alison gathered at the Golders Green crematorium in London, where Alan's ashes were scattered over the lawn. The tablet which was put up at the time on an arcade along the flowerbeds reads: "Alan Clodd 1918-2002 Bibliophile & Publisher Friend of poets & writers."

Recent Publications

Volumes

Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens, Volume I Essays, Introductions and Reviews, edited and introduced by Pierre Coustillas with an afterword by Alan S. Watts, Grayswood: Grayswood Press

(Rockfield, Ash Tree Close, Grayswood, Surrey GU27 2DS), 2004. Pp. xii + 261. Contents: Introduction (44 pages), two essays, ten introductions to the Rochester Edition, introduction to the Autograph Edition of *David Copperfield*, two reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Alan S. Watts's Afterword and five appendices including an article by the editor on the two introductions to *David Copperfield*. ISBN 0-9546247-0-X cloth £30. ISBN 0-9546247-1-8 paper £15.

George Gissing, *Mujeres sin pareja (The Odd Women)*, translated into Spanish by Alejandro Palomas, Barcelona: Alba Editorial (Camps i Fabrés, 3-11; 4° 1ª, 08006 Barcelona), 2001. Pp. 558. Note on the text, map of the London of *The Odd Women* and translation. Biographical information on Gissing is to be found on the front flap of the card covers and a presentation of the novel is printed on the back cover. Front cover illustration: "Spring, Haverstock Hill," 1881 (detail) by George Clausen. ISBN 84-8428-077-2. Euros 26.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, ed. John Goode, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 5th impression in the larger format. Same pictorial cover as in previous impressions. ISBN 0-19-283658-7. £7.99 or \$11.95.

Articles, reviews, etc.

George Gorniak, "George Gissing 1857-1903," *Dickens Magazine*, Series 3, Issue 1, December 2003 (mainly on *A Tale of Two Cities*). A very good general article, illustrated with one of Alfred Ellis's two portraits of Gissing (1893), photos of several dustjackets and the famous one showing Gissing together with Hornung, Conan Doyle and Wells in Rome.

Jim Barloon, "Book Reviews," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Winter 2003, pp. 375-76. Review of Paul Delany's *Literature, Money and the Market: From Trollope to Amis*. Also "Endnotes," pp. 392-93. Detailed announcement of the three volumes of the Grayswood Press edition of Gissing's works on Dickens.

Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay (ed.), *Le Voyage dans la littérature anglo-saxonne* (Ivry-sur-Seine: Editions A3, 2003). Gissing's work is mentioned or discussed on pp. 10, 17, 124-26 and 139.

Gordon Bowker, "Orwell and Gissing," *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 January 2004, p. 15. Letter on Orwell's pseudonym.

Anon., "Smallweed," *Guardian*, 3 January 2004, p. 18. Article partly devoted to Gissing.

James Campbell, "A Chekhov of the North," *Guardian*, 31 January 2004, pp. 20-23. Article on David Storey, the Wakefield-born novelist and playwright with allusions to Gissing. Storey used *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* as a model for his novel *A Serious Man* (1998).

Ian Thomson, "A Hymn to Hellenic Culture," *Spectator*, 7 February 2004, p. 29. Review of the Signal Books edition of *By the Ionian Sea*.

Francesco Badolato, "'Sulle rive dello Ionio' parla inglese e tedesco," *Il Crotonese*, 17-19 February 2004, p. 17. Review of *By the Ionian Sea* (Signal Books) and of the German translation (Wiborada), with portrait of Gissing in 1895 and photograph of the Piazza Vittoria, Crotona.

James Le Fanu, "Ways of minimising the effects of low-frequency noise," *Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 2004, page unknown. Quotes a passage from the *Ryecroft Papers* (Winter XXVI) in a significant context: "It is familiarity with life that makes time speed quickly. When every day is a step in the unknown, as for children, the days are long with gathering of experience."

D. J. Taylor, "Battered and Broke," *Rare Book Review*, February 2004, pp. 24-26. Article on the centenary of Gissing's death, with a portrait of him (1901) and an additional piece on the value of first editions of some of his novels.

Judy Stove, "Remembering George Gissing," *New Criterion*, February 2004, pp. 27-32. Another article on the centenary of the writer's death.

Annette R. Federico, "Book Reviews," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, Vol. 47 (2004), no. 1, p. 80. Review of Paul Delany's *Literature, Money and the Market*.

"For a man whose life's business it has been to study the English tongue, what joy can equal that of marking the happy ease wherewith Shakespeare surpasses, in mere command of words, every achievement of those even

who, apart from him, are great?" (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Summer, XXVII).