

# 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*

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## The SHARP Conference Welcomes Gissing

21 July 2004

[The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing held its annual meeting, called “Crossing Borders,” in Lyon, from 20 to 23 July. There were 52 sessions and the very first was devoted to “Gissing abroad and in libraries.” The following are the three papers that were read—in chronological order. Gissing was also discussed, though briefly, in Mark Fairbanks’s paper: “‘At any price?’ Lawrence and Bullen, H. G. Wells and certain personal matters,” an edited version of a chapter of his PhD thesis on the firm of Lawrence and Bullen, who, from 1891 to 1898, were Gissing’s principal publishers.]

### Gissing in Translation

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

In the Summer 1950 number of the *Western Humanities Review* the American scholar Russell Kirk asked a question which he answered creditably: “Who knows George Gissing?” Naturally he meant: Who knows him now in England and the United States? If he had been as fully informed as many of us are currently, he could have rather startlingly replied: Japanese intellectuals and academics do, and they read him both in English and in their own language.

In his lifetime Gissing made for himself an enviable artistic reputation in the wake of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy as one of the leading English novelists of his day, but as the early decades of the twentieth century elapsed, it became self-evident that the critical tools commonly used to analyze his works were grievously inadequate and that they only led to dead ends. This state of things has been altered beyond recognition and Gissing now enjoys the status of one of the most respected Victorian novelists. It is reflected in the many translations of his works which have appeared in the last few decades. Could he know of them to-day, he would see in them, however poor some may be, a splendid revenge of time. It was his hope that, short of being adequately recognized in his own country, with which he had a lifelong quarrel, his artistic originality would be acknowledged abroad. Yet he was aware that, considering the laws that ruled inter-

national copyright, the high esteem in which he was held among the foreign intelligentsia could be no guarantee of a decent income.

Let me begin with some figures and statistics. Gissing wrote the equivalent of over 30 volumes, that is 22 novels, a travel narrative entitled *By the Ionian Sea*, a volume of semi-autobiographical essays, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, some criticism of Charles Dickens's works, and 115 short stories which have been imperfectly collected, most of them posthumously, in half a dozen volumes. Since 1890, by which time he was thirty-three, 11 of the novels, *By the Ionian Sea* and the *Ryecroft Papers* have been translated, some of them several times into the same language, not to speak of 41 short stories of which there have been 69 foreign versions in 7 languages published in collections, anthologies or periodicals. Of the original English volumes of Gissing's works over 60 translations, quite a few reprinted many times, particularly in Japan, have been published in 14 languages: French, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Polish, Russian, Greek, Japanese, Chinese and Korean. By and large, with the exception of *The Crown of Life* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*, there is no doubt that all Gissing's books recognized as his strongest have appeared in foreign versions, as many as 10 for the *Ryecroft Papers*, 9 for *New Grub Street*, 7 for *By the Ionian Sea* and 5 for *The Odd Women*. We do not know the incentives which prompted his translators to choose this or that title, but it must be conceded that, as an unacknowledged cultural community, they did their choosing felicitously.

Unsurprisingly the sources that have been tapped with a view to taking stock of all these translations have proved discouragingly deficient and incomplete. The catalogue of the British Library ignores the translations of Gissing's works, and most of those of national libraries—I am thinking of Italy, Russia and China for instance—do not offer reliable records of the work done in these countries. Gissing's correspondence, recently collected in 9 volumes, gives a few hints, as does his diary, but his other private papers do not reveal any knowledge of, say, the half-dozen Russian translations of his early novels or of the Danish translation of *Eve's Ransom*, in serial then in volume form, that was published in 1900. Indexes to newspapers and periodicals are either non-existent or frustratingly defective. Translations into minor European languages and Eastern languages are practically untraceable. Since 1920, with increasing reliability as time passed, the *Index Translationum* has been recording selected translations, but the number of overlooked foreign renderings in periodicals or in book form is by no means negligible. There have been seven editions of the

*Ryecroft Papers* in Italian for example, but it seems that what we call *dépôt légal* in this country only has imperfect equivalents in many other countries, and these Italian translations are ignored in Florence as in Rome. Because anthologies of foreign works, short stories in particular, are as a rule not taken into account, tracing them is a touch-and-go business. Sometimes oral tradition among booksellers proves an unexpected guide. A striking instance is offered by Gissing's posthumously published "The Pig and Whistle" (*The Graphic*, Christmas 1904). A Stockholm bookseller with whom I corresponded forty years ago remembered seeing a Swedish version of it in a popular periodical in his country, but he could offer no date. Patient research led to the exhumation from the number of *Allt för alla* for 12 December 1924. In this case as in not a few others, chance played a crucial role in the quest for information about translations. If a bibliographer expressed publicly his gratitude to chance with a capital C, it would be unfair to call him a wag. Any bibliographer working in the neglected field of translation is bound to be heavily indebted to contingencies.

The quality of translations, even when the translator's language is not familiar to the bibliographer, can occasionally be criticized with some degree of severity. A certain Dutch translator of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* revealed his ignorance of the physical aspect of the Reading Room of the British Museum, now unambiguously rebaptized the British Library, by the way he translated an allusion to the Big Dome. When a translator, Chinese or Romanian, gives his or her rendering of *New Grub Street* a title which is an obviously literal translation of the original title, he or she betrays an unforgivable degree of ignorance. Hardly more rational or linguistically perceptive is the developing habit of phonetically imitating an English title like *The Nether World*, as though it had no specific meaning in the original language. The Japanese and the Chinese have made themselves guilty of such a strange practice. Some French titles which now strike us as unsuitable, could have been rejected as impossible right from the first. Thus the short tale entitled "Two Collectors" could not possibly be rendered into French by "Deux Collectionneurs" because if one of the men concerned is a book collector of sorts (who builds collections of books that he sells as soon as they are complete according to his lights), the other man is a book scout. The ambiguity being untransferable into French, another form of ambiguity had of necessity to be created, in another semantic field.

Faithfulness to the English original was manifestly not always a criterion of much weight in the eyes of the translator and/or his publisher a hundred years ago or even more recently. The Russian translations of the

titles originally published by Smith, Elder & Co. are mere abstracts. The French translation of *Thyrza* published in 1928 in a series aimed at an obviously low-brow readership is three times shorter than the story written by Gissing in the 1880s. Sometimes a short story would not be signed, the translator caring little for the doubtful honour of seeing his or her name associated with the work for sale. The history of the French version of *Demos*, the first Gissing novel to be translated into any foreign language, is documented in a way which is fairly representative of the average capacities of French translators in those days. When the author visited his translator in Paris in 1888, he was surprised to discover that she could not speak English. The two-volume translation published by Hachette some eighteen months later revealed that Fanny Le Breton, who does not seem ever to have crossed the Channel, condensed the narrative as she went along, and Gissing made fun of her capacities on the occasion of the publication of a German translation of the same novel, which, though not quite satisfactory in all respects, compared very favourably with its French counterpart. In the later case of *Born in Exile*, published as *Né en exil* in 1933, only the publisher was guilty, as the translator Marie Canavaggia explained to me years ago. Finding the novel too long, he demanded of the translator that she should make substantial cuts. Apparently no public protest against this defacement of Gissing's masterly novel reached the publisher; indeed there is evidence that the book sold well—which after all probably means that the cuts were quite acceptably made.

Footnotes which present-day readers would welcome when cultural and historical difficulties crop up in the original were very rarely to be found in the translations of Gissing's novels until the last few decades, but a pleasant and significant exception must be noted, partly because it was encouraged by Gissing himself when his translator Gabrielle Fleury tackled the French version of *New Grub Street* at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the decision not to give the translator's name on the front cover or the title page introduced a misconceived mystery into the genesis of the French version of this English novel. Several English obituarists of Gissing set afloat an extraordinary rumour, namely that Gissing had such a remarkable command of the French language that he himself had translated his novel!

Introductions to translations of novels were apparently voted undesirable in the nineteenth century; indeed any biographical information about an author was thought irrelevant in his books. So the Dutch translation of *Eve's Ransom* published in 1904 with an introduction which, by present-

day standards, is extremely sketchy and poorly informed, must somehow be saluted as a collector's item issued at a time when Gissing studies were still in infancy. The only valuable introduction to a Gissing translation issued before the Second World War was that to the French version of *Born in Exile*. Its author, Émile Henriot, a highly cultured man, was a pioneer in that he was the first critic who placed *Born in Exile* in the tradition of major works by Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Turgenev and Jacobsen.

All these Gissing texts in a variety of languages have in store, for the scholar, the linguist and the bibliophile, an assortment of surprises most of which are still unrecorded. Suffice it to list a few. A signal example is the revised German translation of *New Grub Street*, originally serialized in a forgotten Austrian daily newspaper, and worthily reissued by Hans Magnus Enzensberger in 1986, in three different formats so as to tempt collectors of curiosities; another instance is the Polish translation of "A Poor Gentleman" which, one soon realizes, is not an offshoot of the English original, but was translated from the unsigned French version by Gabrielle Fleury which appeared in the *Revue Bleue*; a third interesting case is the Italian translation of the *Ryecroft Papers* published by the Edizioni Paoline, in which the number of original essays was unaccountably apt to vary according to the successive impressions. It is convenient to go on with the two Chinese translations of *New Grub Street* which appeared in the same year (1986) in Beijing and Shanghai and the two Japanese translations of *The Odd Women* which were published in Tokyo again in the same year (1988), and to proceed with the two serializations of *La Rue des Meurt-de-Faim*, Gabrielle Fleury's edited translation of *New Grub Street*, in the daily and weekly editions of the *Journal des Débats*. But the oddest bibliographical situation that has been come across concerns the French translation of *Born in Exile*, which has already been mentioned twice. Many variants are known that range from the special review copies to those of the sixth thousand through the first edition, the third, fourth, and fifth thousands. Of course there is nothing exceptional in this for a French book of the interwar period; complications begin when you compare the copyright pages of all these impressions. In all variants we read that the original edition consisted of 40 numbered copies printed on *papier alfa* and another 10, again printed on *papier alfa* which were unnumbered, but the extraordinary thing is that for each new printing of 1,000 copies two variants are extant. We are told on the copyright page either that the 40 copies were numbered 1 to 40 (which was correct) or that they were numbered 1 to 25! Now, how can such a fantastic situation be accounted for? Sound reasoning rejects the

possibility, during the book's life, of a neat succession of correct and incorrect numbering. So we are led to imagine two big heaps of copies in sheets side by side, the second pile having been printed as soon as the printers' error was detected. After this the binders must have turned alternately to each pile, so that no paper should be wasted. A rare case of a printers' blunder of the first magnitude being converted into a binders' game. A crowning mistake remained to be made, and an opportunity came into existence in 1951, that is probably years after the sixth thousand was sold out. The publishers decided at the time to reprint another thousand copies. The only file copy being one of the third thousand, they called the new printing the fourth thousand. It should have been the seventh. The front cover, which had been red and white, became blue and white.

To conclude on a neutral note, it seems safe to say that, all things being duly considered, the translations of Gissing's works, though they pose some curious problems, represent no exceptional case. Translators being as a rule self-appointed cultural intermediaries, the quality of whose work is largely sanctioned by extra-cultural factors, it is hardly surprising that they scarcely ever achieve celebrity, not to speak of generating wealth. The names of Gissing's translators are almost always known, but of people who failed to carry out their projects, there scarcely exists any record. Still we know of a number of such projects that failed to materialize. For instance Georges Art, who translated *Eve's Ransom* for the *Revue de Paris* in 1898, had to acknowledge himself beaten when it came to placing his translation of *The Town Traveller*. Another failure was that of the oddly named Amélie Chevalier de la Petite Rivière, who repeatedly promised to translate *The Whirlpool*, but only promised! On the German side Frau Sacher Masoch and Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski imagined they were capable of translating *The Odd Women*, but the two attempts were flops. However, translations could have unpredictable consequences—marriage between author and translator was one of them. In the case of Gissing and Gabrielle Fleury translating and being translated were steps towards mutual understanding. Yet, just as there is no spotless translation, there is no cloudless human union.

Well, for want of time, this paper has been a mere impressionistic overview of *some* of the problems raised by the translations of George Gissing's works. A full-length study of all editions in English and in foreign languages will be published at the end of the present year by the Rivendale Press.

# George Gissing and Libraries

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Shortly before his death in France in December 1903, George Gissing wrote to a friend asking him whether Geneva had a good public library. Gissing noted that “the need of books” was “becoming a serious matter” for him, a plaintive cry that he had voiced in two earlier letters that year. This was not a new phenomenon, nor one occasioned simply by his self-imposed exile from England, as throughout his life Gissing expressed similar sentiments about needing books, periodicals and access to libraries.

Gissing was a voracious reader, who probably read “thousands of books” during his life. Some books he bought; others he received gratis; but his prime source for accessing and reading books was undoubtedly via libraries. Similarly, although he occasionally subscribed to periodicals, he frequently read the dailies, weeklies, reviews and other journals that were so important to him in library reading rooms. In this paper I want to outline Gissing’s considerable use of these institutions, focusing on which libraries he used, where and when; why he used them; and whenever possible, what items he actually borrowed from them.

So broad was Gissing’s use of libraries of all kinds that I have had to limit my coverage. I will not cover his extensive use of the British Museum Library, nor the libraries he used whilst abroad, nor his reading practices in respect of the family libraries. Instead I will concentrate on Gissing’s use of those libraries in England, which can be broadly construed as available to the general public. Evidence from Gissing’s letters, diaries and other materials reveals that he used a bewildering array and number of libraries, including the relatively newly formed Free Public Libraries, for which permissive legislation had first been passed in 1850, and which during the latter part of his life saw a massive upsurge in interest and spread: Gissing himself visited at least seven English public library systems, including Exeter, Bristol and Brixton. Many books were also obtained from circulating libraries, including Mudie’s and the Grosvenor in London, and others in Eastbourne, small seaside resorts near Bristol, and Epsom. Gissing also utilised more miscellaneous reading facilities, including libraries associated with Literary Societies and Institutes, and, from June 1897, the most famous subscription library of them all, the London Library founded in 1841.

It hardly mattered where he was, what he was doing or what state of mind or health he was in, he had to have access to a library of some sort.

Once in 1895 whilst on a family holiday in the Yarmouth area he passed a few hours waiting to report an incident to the local police station reading in the public library next door. Such was his closeness to libraries that he nearly applied for the post of public librarian in Yarmouth in 1885, but was put off by the low salary.

Why did Gissing use so many libraries and for what purposes? One obvious reason is that he did not have enough money to buy the range of books and periodicals that he wanted to read. But Gissing visited libraries for various reasons. Early in his career he needed to expand his knowledge of literature by reading around extensively, whilst he used reference libraries (especially the British Museum) to chase up the detail needed for whatever he was working on. As a writer, he felt that he had to keep up with the latest published novels for comparison, and also that he needed access to the dailies and weeklies, reviews and other journals to inform him of what was happening in the world at large and in literary life. Finally, and perhaps a reason that became more important as he grew older, there was reading for pleasure, including re-reading old favourites, which in Gissing's case generally meant the classical literature of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Gissing's family was closely linked with the Wakefield Mechanics' Institute library, and it is possible that the young George borrowed books from there, although I have not as yet found any clear evidence. Similarly, whilst studying at Owens College in Manchester in the early 1870s, it seems unlikely that the bookish George did not use Manchester Public Library, opened in a blaze of publicity in 1852, and which his younger brother William certainly used. However, from this period there is only one non-specific reference by Gissing to being in Manchester "rushing about to various libraries with a note book."

The first direct reference to institutional library usage comes in a letter written during his time in America to another brother, Algernon, in November 1876, when Gissing describes Boston's "glorious" and "excellently patronised" public library, commenting that "there are very few books that ... it does not contain." He later revealed that he had borrowed works by George Eliot, Goethe and some dozen novels by George Sand from Boston. This American experience left him fired up about the educational value of public libraries, and in another letter to Algernon written a year after his return to England in October 1877, he declaimed: "what a scandalous condition England is in with regard to public libraries." He contrasted the situation in Britain with the United States, where "there is not a town of the least pretensions... which has not its excellent Free Library," pouring particular



scorn on the position in London. By the late 1870s there was only one genuine public library in the whole of London, although many of the major Midland and Northern industrial towns, including Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham had established libraries, as well as less industrialised places such as Oxford, Cardiff and Hereford. London, however, lagged behind in public library development until the closing decades of the century. Gissing saw the establishment of “a thorough network of public libraries” as part of his recipe for educating the working classes, but following his disillusionment with the politics of the masses, Gissing quickly lost interest in the reading needs of the “quarter educated,” and the social potential of the public library.

Gissing probably frequented the circulating libraries (as well as the British Museum) in the early 1880s, although it is difficult to tell precisely which ones he used. In late 1885 he writes of not having a “library subscription now,” implying that he had one before, and his letters contain occasional oblique references to Mudie’s and certain booksellers, who often ran their own small circulating libraries. Early in 1886 Gissing wrote to his sister Ellen that he and Algernon had a subscription at the Grosvenor, a circulating library linked with the Grosvenor Art Gallery opened in New Bond Street in 1877. Gissing may have had his own subscription to the Grosvenor prior to 1886, as it had added a circulating library and newspaper reading rooms in 1880 and Gissing first mentions visiting the Gallery in May 1882. The Grosvenor’s circulating library, whose annual subscription of one guinea for two volumes was similar to Mudie’s, claimed to offer its readers greater freedom of choice than Mudie’s, including English and foreign language circulating collections, a reference library and a reading room with major English, American, Colonial and foreign newspapers and reviews. In early 1888 Gissing writes that he now has his own subscription to the Grosvenor, and his diary lists what books he was taking off their shelves, including items by Hardy, Dostoevsky and Tolstoi. What is noticeable about the twenty-nine volumes borrowed from the Grosvenor between March and July 1888 is the high quality of many, the fact that a good number were in French, and that the vast majority had been published within the previous two or three years.

In January 1891 Gissing moved to Exeter and in February, having already sampled the free public library’s reading room, he joined the lending section, which he at first described as “fairly good,” borrowing volumes in the biographical “Men of Letters” series, books on geology and two works by Isaac Disraeli. But Exeter Public Library was rather small, with a total

stock of just over 14,000 books in 1891, and Gissing was soon complaining that he was feeling “the want of new books.” Of the sixteen books noted in his diary as borrowed from the public library, none were less than five years old. Gissing had also considered joining the older Devon and Exeter Institution, which boasted “25,000 volumes of sterling universal literature” and a well-stocked reading room, but the requirement to be elected by the committee, and the annual subscription of three guineas probably dissuaded him. Instead in June 1891 he joined the Exeter Literary Society, whose annual fee was only half a guinea, and which he described as having a “good reading room” and a “fair circulating library.” At least here Gissing did have better access to more recent publications; of the thirty-eight volumes that he probably borrowed from the Literary Society, some sixteen had been published in the previous five years, with six from 1891.

Examining Gissing’s reading habits in Exeter is revealing. His diaries (and occasionally his letters) sometimes indicate precisely which books he borrowed from which libraries, but they are not always so definite. At Exeter he was a member of two libraries, so the diary entry “got from lib Henry James’s *The Tragic Muse*” does not pinpoint which. Moreover Gissing often just refers to having read a named book, without any indication of where it came from. Judicious use of contemporary library catalogues can help us to form an opinion, but not be exact. For instance, when Gissing moved to Epsom in the summer of 1894, he joined Andrews Circulating Library in the High Street, which he noted was “connected with Mudie’s.” Over the next two years or so, his diaries record some twenty books as having been “got from lib”, the assumption being that the “lib” is Andrews’. Contemporary Mudie’s Library catalogues lend weight to this assumption, as without exception all twenty items are listed in them, including the foreign language novels, which are found in the separate “Catalogue of Foreign Works.”

Similarly we know that Gissing joined the London Library in June 1897 for an annual fee of £3, which meant that as a country member some fifteen volumes at a time could be sent directly to him. Then the London Library had a stock of some 200,000, including the kind of “solid old books,” non-fiction, foreign and classical works that Gissing turned to in later life, and his diaries and letters include comments about obtaining books from London, or that “a lot of interesting books have just come from the library,” without the library being clearly specified. We may assume that such material did come from the London Library, especially, as we can with the

seven books itemised in two letters of August 1898 to Gabrielle Fleury, if we are able to point to appropriate entries in the Library's catalogue.

The Exeter experience indicates that Gissing perceived and used public and circulating libraries for different purposes. His main reason for using public libraries was often the free access offered by their reading rooms to a wide range of newspapers and journals, which at Brixton and Birmingham for example he could even read on a Sunday afternoon. When Gissing briefly stayed in Birmingham in November 1892, their Central Library, which he praised as astonishing and admirable, stocked upwards of 500 newspapers and journals. Its reference department was "not practically inferior to the British Museum," with its stock of some 115,000 volumes, including all books "of any moment published during the past year."

Initially he also seemed pleased with the Tate Public Library in Brixton, London, which he joined in the spring of 1893. Various letters suggest that it was the quality of its reading room that appealed, and initially he also obtained "a good variety of books" from it. The newly opened Central Library had nearly 25,000 volumes, and shelf space for a further 25,000, making it amongst the biggest public libraries in London. But when compared with Mudie's, the choice at most public libraries was limited, both in quantity and quality, and especially in respect of currency, and it wasn't long before Gissing was again complaining that he could "seldom get a new book at our Public Library here." When we examine the twenty-five titles that Gissing probably borrowed from Brixton Public Library, only seven had been published in the past five years, justifying his comments about the lack of new books. Mudie's by comparison stocked such material immediately and in multiple copies, although an ironic concern of Gissing's was that when he did subscribe to Mudie's he spent too much valuable time reading what he referred to as trash.

Access to libraries and reading rooms was such an integral part of Gissing's life that the factor had to be taken into consideration when he was deciding where to live, once he had moved away from Central London. The experiment of Exeter was not successful, despite his possibly correct claim "that at Exeter" he was "greatly better off for periodical literature" than he ever was in London. At one stage in 1891 he considered moving to a small seaside resort near Bristol, but had some concerns about "the library difficulty," and he flirted with moving closer to his brother, but was afraid that "the remoteness from reading-rooms and libraries would be destructive" to him. Birmingham, or the Midlands in general, was another possible location, given its "excellent... free libraries." But eventually in 1893 he was

lured back to London, because “of Tate’s Library” in Brixton, deliberately taking rooms within ten minutes’ walk of the new reading room and what was claimed would be “by far the best local library in London.”

The following year Gissing moved again, and the quality of library provision figures prominently in his decision on where to go. He wrote to Algernon “if it were not for the library question, ... there are many ... villages in Surrey... where rents are very low,” whilst another letter from a friend suggests that Gissing was quizzing him about which towns had suitable libraries. When he did settle in Epsom, it was Andrews Circulating Library that he joined, although shortly after moving there he walked a fair few miles to Wimbledon to visit the nearest public library. This had been opened in 1887, but was another relatively small public library, which carried just over 10,000 books, and less than 200 newspapers and periodicals in its reading room. Apart perhaps from the attraction of being free, it could not compete with what Andrews Library had to offer. This trip was one of Gissing’s last serious encounters with the British public library system, apart from reluctantly using a reading room in Central London in early 1895 “for want of better.” Neither Epsom, nor Dorking where Gissing lived for a while in the late 1890s, opened public libraries until well after Gissing’s death. Instead, as we have noted, Gissing relied on circulating libraries and, increasingly, the London Library for his book reading.

George Gissing was a very heavy reader of books, newspapers and periodicals. On the one hand he was well served by spending much of his life in and around the London area, as this gave him access to the British Museum Library, major circulating libraries and eventually the London Library. But for a man who was always very anxious about his finances, most of these incurred a cost. On the other hand he was less well served by living in London, which generally lacked those public library reading rooms that comprised such an important part of his reading habits, and which he could visit for free and even on Sundays. Had he lived in Birmingham or Manchester, their public libraries not only would have met this requirement, but might also have competed more effectively with the range and currency of their book stock.

Gissing’s library perceptions and needs are perhaps unusual, especially the major importance he attached to having physical access to libraries, such that it could determine where he lived. Gissing also wanted to read the very latest published books, and in this regard the contemporary public library generally did not shape up, as its stock was not only limited in size, but was invariably slightly out-of-date. Such problems undoubtedly reflect

the restricted finances that many public libraries suffered from during this period. Conversely however, Gissing much appreciated their reading rooms, at a time when their role was just beginning to be questioned by professional public librarians.

Circulating libraries tend to emerge positively from Gissing's diaries and letters. All too often they can be brushed aside as mere purveyors of trashy novels, a view with which Gissing agreed to some extent. But, some circulating libraries, such as the Grosvenor and in particular Mudie's, had such massive resources, that Gissing was able to read many of the rather obscure books that made up much of his reading diet. Andrews' library in Epsom for instance provided him with at least three very recently published novels in Italian. And in his mind Gissing always associated having access to new books with a subscription at a circulating library, and not the public library alternative.

There is much more in Gissing's reading habits and practices that needs studying, including a comprehensive review of what exactly he did read during his life, and a fuller examination of the contemporary records to tease out more precisely from where that reading matter came. The librarian of the London Library at the time commented that "we can often predict what a great novelist's next work will be like from the books he has out of the library," and it might prove illuminating to plot what Gissing was reading against what he was writing. And putting aside the literary nature of the individual involved, we possess in the case of this one committed reader from the final quarter of the nineteenth century, plenty of material to help us examine in great detail his exact reading practices and come to a better understanding of the interplay between that reader and those institutions that provided him with access to his reading material.

### **George Gissing, International Copyright and Late Victorian Publishing**

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In the very early years of the nineteenth century, while international markets for foreign works were still limited by slow communication and slower transportation, there was little concept of an international copyright. Without protection for an author's work abroad, there was no incentive for a foreign publisher to pay the original author or publisher for reprinting or translation. As communication, transportation, and trade improved, books,

plays, artwork and music began to command an international audience, and authors and publishers pressed for an international copyright that would allow them to sell their works abroad and restrict unauthorized editions. The publishing histories of George Gissing's works demonstrate the increasing value and importance of international copyrights to authors and publishers.

After his first novel, all but two of Gissing's books were published abroad during his lifetime. Seventeen of his books were published in the United States and 16 were published in colonial or Canadian editions. Three titles were reprinted in English on the continent and seven contracts for translations were agreed upon but not all were published.

From 1880, when he published his first novel, until 1891, George Gissing was little concerned with foreign rights, beyond being flattered that his works were actually available abroad or translated into other languages. Indeed, in 1888 when Fanny Le Breton, who translated *Demos* into French, asked what he would charge for the rights to translate *Thyrza* he replied '*Mais je ne vous demanderai rien du tout; pour le moment, c'en est assez d'être traduit en Français.*'<sup>1</sup> After 1891 Gissing began to take a great interest in foreign rights sales, using his agents to negotiate on his behalf. The change came about not only because of Gissing's greater sophistication as a professional author, but because changes in international copyright and the growth of foreign markets made those rights much more valuable. This was especially true for the American market after the United States finally passed the Chace Act in 1891, allowing non-citizens to acquire copyright in the United States as long as the work was printed there. Until then British authors had no rights in the United States and their works were routinely pirated or received only token payments. British authors fared better on the Continent. Copyright agreements between England, France, and other nations gave British authors protection. The Berne Convention of 1886 further enhanced authors' rights.

The concept of copyright is not universal and its history too complex to be dealt with in any detail here.<sup>2</sup> Copyright, as law and as concept, has been and still is evolving. In its earliest days, as an exclusive privilege granted by a city-state such as Venice it served to protect a printer-publisher from having his work and investment reprinted by competitors. With the spread of the Reformation the privilege also served as censorship. England was the first state to replace privilege with copyright, doing so with the Statute of Queen Anne in 1709 (8 Anne, c. 19). The Statute, for 'The Encouragement of Learning,' also transferred ownership of copyright after publication from

a common law right to that of a statutory right with limited duration, in this case fourteen years, renewable for another term of fourteen years. In 1787 the framers of the American Constitution considered copyright to be important enough to include a clause in the Constitution authorizing Congress to ‘promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for limited times, to authors and inventors, the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.’ The United States Congress passed the first American copyright law in 1791, reserving copyright to American citizens or residents. It would be 100 years before the United States would grant copyright to non-Americans and another 85 more years before it would cease to require foreign authors to have their works printed in the United States as a condition of acquiring American copyright.

In Great Britain there were, as Nowell-Smith summarizes, five copyright and related customs acts between 1838 and 1855 and four more between 1875 and 1886.<sup>3</sup> The 1838 act was meant to grant British copyright protection to foreign authors if their countries reciprocated. No orders in council as authorized by the act were ever granted. The act of 1844, the first to use the term ‘international copyright,’ repealed the 1838 act and allowed the Queen to sign copyright conventions with other nations. The first was with Prussia in 1846. The act of 1852 recognized a convention signed with France in 1851. This was also the first act to provide for translations. Conventions were later signed between Britain and Belgium (1855), Spain (1857), and Sardinia (1861). Other acts imposed penalties on the importation of reprints into Britain or the British colonies, a growing concern for British publishers as the English-speaking world expanded. Enforcing the law in the colonies was difficult, especially in Canada, as British editions at six shillings, plus the cost of shipping, could not compete with American editions at \$1 or less. The export of books from Britain to Canada amounted to £70,000 in 1876, behind the £300,000 exported to the United States and the £330,000 exported to Australia.

The sales of Gissing’s publications reflect the growing importance of international copyright and a world market for literature. Gissing’s first successful novel, *Demos, a Story of English Socialism*, was published in 1886 by Smith, Elder. Gissing had sold all of the rights to Smith, Elder and they in turn sold serial reprint rights to the *Manchester Weekly Times* for £25 and volume reprint rights to Tauchnitz in Germany for £20. When Fanny Le Breton inquired about French translation rights in 1888 she was told that the novel, for translation purposes, was in the public domain. Copyright law in England at that time required that authors note on the title

page that translation rights were reserved and that the translation had to be published within three years of registration and deposit. The entire period during which translations were protected was only five years. A German translation of *Demos* by Clara Steinitz in 1892 was also done without any record of payment being entered into Smith, Elder's 'Translation Book,' a ledger they kept of translation and other rights sales. After passage of the Berne Convention (1886, ratified in 1887) and the accompanying legislation in Great Britain, copyright for translations was extended to ten years. Later acts would extend the translation period, but at the time, in the late 1880s, translations were seen to be in some sense original creations in their own right and there was opposition to granting them the same rights as reprints. Gissing's translations, at least those recorded in Smith Elder's Translation Book, brought in far less than did his English language reprints. For example, the translation rights to *Thyrza* were sold to a D. Steinhoff of Baden-Baden in 1891 for £5 and to Eve Paul-Margueritte in 1913 for £2 1s 8d. The rights to translate *New Grub Street* were sold to Adele Berger in Germany for £8 in 1891 and to Edith (Gabrielle) Fleury for £5 5s in 1898 with an additional £5 5s on publication in 1901. Georges Art paid £10 to translate *Eve's Ransom* (1898) and only £1 to translate Gissing's short story "The Lodger in Maze Pond."

Sales of British novels on the Continent were dominated by the Leipzig firm of Tauchnitz. Started in 1837 by Christian Bernhard Tauchnitz, the company issued its first Collection of British Authors in 1841. As Nowell-Smith suggests, the early reprints were done before English copyrights were protected in Germany, but Tauchnitz was afterwards careful to issue his reprints as "copyright" editions. Tauchnitz signed his first agreements with British publishers in 1843, and after the Anglo-German copyright convention, Tauchnitz publications were protected in Germany and would appear throughout the continent as agreements were concluded between Britain and other states. Tauchnitz, briefly challenged by the rival firms of Heinemann and Balestier and earlier, Asher, eventually had 4,000 titles in their Library of British and American Authors. Although Tauchnitz would pay hundreds for the best sellers of the day when required, he generally paid £20 to £30 for Continental reprint rights; Stevenson, for example, only received £20 for *Treasure Island*. Tauchnitz paid £20 for *Demos* in 1886 and £30 for *New Grub Street* in 1891. Heinemann published a Continental edition of *Denzil Quarrier* (1892) and was to publish one of *The Odd Women* in 1893, paying 25 and 35 guineas, an amount that Gissing's publisher, Lawrence and Bullen, split with him (£13 2s 6d and £18 7s 6d).



The colonial market in Australia, India, South Africa, and Canada was generally dominated by Petherick and George Bell, and by Robertson in Australia. Edward Augustus Petherick, who had started in bookselling at the age of 15 with Robertson's in Melbourne in 1862, came to London in 1870 and in 1887 set up his own business but went bankrupt in 1894, probably due to a worsening market in Australia after the financial crisis there in 1892. Although he owed £50,000 to publishers at his bankruptcy, he claimed to have purchased £180,000 from publishers in distribution or reprint rights. George Bell & Sons took over Petherick's list after his bankruptcy and became major colonial agents. By 1901, according to Nowell-Smith, Bell had 27 agents in Canada, 35 in New Zealand, over 50 in Australia and in Africa, and agents in Hong Kong, Singapore, the West Indies, and elsewhere. Over 15 other British publishers, including Macmillan and Methuen, were also involved in the colonial market. Bell and Petherick between them published colonial editions of ten of Gissing's novels, Heinemann published one (*The Odd Women*), and Methuen published their two Gissing novels, *The Town Traveller* and *The Crown of Life*, in their own Colonial Library. The colonial publishers would purchase sheets or unbound quires from the first printing of the one-volume edition of the novels, usually, in Gissing's case, in quantities of 1,000 to 1,500. Smith, Elder sold their copies in quires at 1s to Petherick, selling 1,500 copies of the 1889 edition of *The Nether World*, 1,500 of *New Grub Street*, and 1,000 copies of the 1,750 copies printed for the 1891 edition of *Thyrza*. Their £200 return, less printing costs, gave them a profit on colonial sales of over £135. Lawrence and Bullen sold their copies to Petherick or Bell for 10 ½d a copy, Gissing getting half-profits.

You can see something of the development of international copyright in Gissing's contracts. Publishing contracts during this period were quite simple and informal. Gissing's agreements with Smith, Elder were simple receipts. His receipt for *Demos*, signed 8 March 1886, is a simple printed form with the words "Received of Messrs. Smith, Elder the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ in payment for the entire copyright of \_\_\_\_\_ which is hereby assigned to them." The word "of" was struck out and "at home and abroad" written in before the title. Gissing's receipt for *New Grub Street*, dated 8 January 1891, has "at home and abroad" printed on the slip and "including the United States of America" written in above the line. Smith did not succeed in placing *New Grub Street* in America, assuming that they tried. They did sell plates and early sheets of Gissing's *A Life's Morning* to Lippincott in 1888 for £60, the plates costing Smith, Elder almost £16, and

they sold reprint rights to *The Nether World* in 1889 for £15 to Harper Brothers in New York. Harper published it for 45 cents in their Franklin-Square Library. Although no record of the rights sale of *Demos* to Harper appears in Smith's records, Harper did tell Gissing that they had purchased the rights to *Demos* for £10, publishing it in 1886 as number 522 in their "Handy Series," at 25 cents.

Copyright in the United States was reserved to American citizens or residents who intended to become citizens. American citizens could acquire both British and American copyright if their books were published first in Britain and copy of the title-page deposited in Washington prior to publication in the United States. Copies had then to be deposited in the British Museum and Library of Congress within specified times. With the passage of the Chace Act, the book had to be published simultaneously in both countries. A 1909 revision to the American copyright eased that requirement by granting a thirty-day extension for deposit and another thirty for American manufacture. The American edition also had to bear a prominent copyright notice, so books printed in Great Britain for shipment to the United States had to print new title-page versos with the American copyright notice. The Chace Act was not retroactive: Doyle's *Study in Scarlet* and *Sign of Four*, published before 1891, were widely pirated in the States before and after 1891.

After the American copyright law of 1891 Gissing's novels found regular sale in America. Theoretically, simultaneous publication in both England and America were required to protect copyright and the Americans also required American manufacture. *Eve's Ransom*, for example, was published in England by Lawrence and Bullen in 1895 from plates sent by Appleton, the American publisher. The trade could go the other way as well, as when Lawrence and Bullen sold plates to R. F. Fenno in New York for the 1896 American edition of *The Unclassed*, originally published by Chapman and Hall in 1884. The simultaneous publication was in practice somewhat of a fiction, as Gissing complained when American publishers delayed their publication and its consequent payment of advances to him.<sup>4</sup> Gissing's American earnings varied. He did not use an agent in his dealings with Lawrence and Bullen and they generally negotiated American and other foreign sales on their own, giving Gissing half profits on foreign sales. When Gissing kept his foreign rights, his agent was sometimes able to arrange very good sales terms: £50 from Dodd, Mead in 1898 for his critical study of Dickens, £100 advances from Frederick Stokes in New York for *The Town Traveller* in 1898 and for *The Crown of Life* in 1899.

Stokes also arranged for and paid a small royalty for Canadian editions of those two novels. His agent was also able to get £100 from Holt for the American edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan* in 1901.

The stability brought about by international copyright conventions and the changes to American law made foreign rights sales a matter of course for authors on both sides of the Atlantic. For Gissing, whose career bridged this important period when modern publishing was developing, it meant advances that approached those of his British publications and the dissemination of his works to a world-wide audience, both English-speaking and in translation.

<sup>1</sup>Gissing George, *Collected Letters*, ed. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, Vol. III (1992), p. 271, 17 October 1888.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent outline of copyright in this period, see Simon Nowell-Smith's *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>Nowell-Smith, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>See his complaint about Dodd, Mead's delay in publishing the American edition of *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (London: Blackie, 1898). Dodd had paid a £50 advance.

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**From *Veranilda* to *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*  
The Correspondence between Clara Collet and Morley Roberts**  
(third and penultimate instalment)

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

Wadhurst

5.3.05

Many thanks for your note. We'll talk about the Châlet. Your invitation is very kind and sweet. I've heard again from Gabrielle. I really think she must be better.

We shall be delighted to see you here on the 27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> or when you like. My wife thinks you very delightful & hopes you will think this place so. You will if the sun shines. She fell down & hurt her foot & was in bed three days. She is now about again but can't walk much yet. I've been ill all the time, but I'm used to it.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

Glad you liked "Lady P."

The reference to Clara's ch  let seems to indicate that she had rented or was to rent a small house in the Basque country as Gabrielle Fleury in a letter of the period wrote to her that she had seen "votre propri  taire."

The letter from Gabrielle to Roberts, dated 27 February 1905, is in the Berg Collection. She echoed his statement that he had declined William Robertson Nicoll's offer to publish his biography of Gissing and reported a remark of Gissing's about Bijou: "Funny little chap!"

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Authors' Club  
3 Whitehall Court S.W.

23.3.05

Dear Miss Collet,

I'm not yet well enough to come out at night especially as I see the surgeon every day at 6 p.m. & after that I'm very much knocked out till the morning. However I mean to see you some evening soon & will take my chance of finding you unless I get so well that I can send you word beforehand. Please don't think about giving me dinner. It is always late before I can eat while this is going on.

I've had a pleasing time with my dentist to-day in addition to all my other woes.

Yours always sincerely  
Morley Roberts

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Authors' Club  
3 Whitehall Court S.W.

24.3.05

Dear Miss Collet,

My blessed nerves won't let me come to a concert & sit quietly & besides while the operation wound is raw I don't want to go to any public function where the people are outnumbered a million million times by the microbes. I'm very fond of music but for many years have had none but my wife's playing. Fortunately she plays well.

I'm going to try to come to no. 4 this evening but can't be sure I shall feel well enough. If I don't you will know why.

Always yours sincerely  
Morley Roberts

By no. 4 he meant 4 Vernon Chambers, Theobald's Road, W.C., his correspondent's home address.

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Authors' Club  
3 Whitehall Court S.W.

25.3.05

Dear Miss Collet,

I'm sorry I didn't see you again before you went but I shall be in town when you return. I hope you will try to get to Tappington Grange tho' I can't be there. Please send a line to my wife. She will, I know, be delighted to see you. Don't forget that the house is within 4 minutes walk of Wadhurst Station & any of the posters will direct you.

I see the doctor every day & get on slowly. But he won't let me leave town yet. As soon as he is satisfied for me to visit him every other day I shall go home. I wish I was there now! My compliments to your sister.

Always yours sincerely  
Morley Roberts

The envelope has a London postmark 27 March 1905 and is addressed to Miss C. E. Collet, Crantock, 59 Warrior Square, St. Leonards on Sea. Clara's sister was almost certainly Edith (1862-1946). A photograph of her can be found in Jane Miller's recent book *Relations* (Cape, 2003), pp. 210 and 221. Clara's letter to Roberts's wife is not available, but the latter's reply is, with an envelope bearing a Wadhurst Station Road postmark AP 2 05.

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Saturday [1 April 05]

Dear Miss Collet

Your letter about Naomi is so exceedingly kind that I hardly know how to answer it, especially as I have to say that it is chiefly Mr. Roberts' fault that she cannot take advantage of your kind offer. He says that Naomi is already doing far too much intellectual work and that he wishes she could not see a book for a year. As a matter of fact she is never without one in her hand and in addition to this constant reading she is learning both French and German. She is by no means in very strong or in robust health, and altho' we came here chiefly on my husband's account, one additional cause of our moving was our doctor's desire that she too should live in the country. But if she cannot come up to town I do hope that you will soon be able to come here for a few days. I think Mr. Roberts is better but oh! still so much room for improvement and I scarcely dare let myself hope—

Dear Miss Collet thank you ever ever so much, & with Naomi's love & my sincere regards

Believe me truly yours  
Alice B. Roberts

Naomi Hamlyn (1888-1941) was the younger daughter, Vere Hamlyn (c. 1886-1909) the elder daughter of Mrs. Roberts, formerly Mrs. Hamlyn. Further information about the family can be found in footnote 4 to Gissing's letter to Gabrielle Fleury of 4 November 1898 (*Collected Letters*, Volume 7, p. 219).

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Roberts's next letter, dated 2.4.05, must have been misdated as the envelope bears a London SW postmark which reads distinctly MAR 31 '05. Its contents once more show him in a state of painful excitement which characterises the most part of his work.

Authors' Club  
3 Whitehall Court S.W.

2.4.05

Dear Miss Collet,

I'm going home this afternoon so I cannot accept your kind invitation for to-morrow. I have had a pretty rough time of it but am improving. I fear however that I shall have to come up next week early to see the doctor as I'm a fool at doing what has to be done. Indeed, if I'm not lucky I may have to come up every other day for a month. I'm sick to death of being alone in London & indeed I feel as if I hated town. I'm very glad you went to Wadhurst, & only regret that I wasn't there to meet you. But that will come some other time!

Yours very sincerely  
Morley Roberts

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst, Sussex

5.4.05 [postmark 4<sup>th</sup>]

Dear Miss Collet,

I am very sorry that you are displeased with me but in a matter like this I think it is well to have a strong opinion & to act up to it. Naomi is already too much given to study & working with books. She treats the lightest reading as study & is never satisfied till she is sure she understands each new word or expression. She is also learning French & German, & considering that she really *ought* to be out in the open air all day I venture to think it impossibly inadvisable to add Latin & Greek & mathematics. They might

take her away from books (of one kind) & make her think, but as I would prefer her to touch no books & not to think at all for a year or two you see where I stand. What I object to in a young girl of anything but robust physique & some definite ailments to dread, is the mental greediness for knowledge of all kinds. I daresay you are too healthy to follow this but I'm not & know what it implies.

You know well that I appreciate your kindness in this matter, and if I seem brutal to you, please believe that I am only doing what I think I ought to do. I don't often, I admit. Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

Interestingly Roberts's letter describes his stepdaughter Naomi as a new Jessica Morgan, letting the while transpire his anti-intellectualism, especially as it could manifest itself in young women.

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst, Sussex

9.4.05

My dear Miss Collet,

The surgeon kept me so long on Friday that I was quite unable to come in & see you. I apologise for not writing about this before. But the truth is that the process of cure is so slow & annoying that I am hardly myself. I have now to come up to town almost every day as I find I can't do what ought to be done by myself. However in another week or two I hope to be out of the surgeon's hands & at work. Just now work is almost impossible.

Next week (or this week rather) if I am at all fit I hope to come to see you. Many thanks for your last letter.

With best regards

Yours always sincerely

Morley Roberts

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Tappington Grange

13.4. [05]

I hope to be able to arrange what you suggest for next week as I'm still coming up to the surgeon's every other day.

I've so much to do that I doubt if I shall be able to take any holiday for some months. However we shall see!

Yours very sincerely  
Morley Roberts

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Wadhurst

18.4.05

I meant to have come to see you in Whitehall yesterday but I was kept so long by the surgeon that it wasn't possible. I think now that it will be Friday before I can come as I'm full up to-morrow with business. I'm beginning a new book & am certainly better. Nevertheless I'm not out of the doctors' hands & it may be a long time before I am. This cold snap is very unpleasant to me.

MR

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst, Sussex

21.4.05

Dear Miss Collet,

It was very silly of me to forget that to-day was Good Friday. I always forget it & make a fool of myself in consequence. Now I don't think I shall be in town till Wednesday. I spend most of my time, when in London, in a doctor's waiting room & when I'm finished with I'm not in a state to see anyone. My trains down here are awkward too. The result of both these things is that I've not come to see you. The antrum business is a very long & slow one & makes me nervous & weary. However I've begun a new book. I'll try my best to have a talk with you soon, but if I don't you mustn't put it down to any lack of desire to have it. If I come to have tea at no. 4, I can't get down here till after seven, & so I shall probably look in at Whitehall, trusting that you won't mind.

I'm sorry to hear about Mme Fleury. What has been the matter with Gabrielle? It is annoying about the Châlet.

My wife sends her kindest regards to you.

Yours very sincerely,  
Morley Roberts

[P.S. of five lines crossed out.] This P.S. wasn't for you! I thought I was adding it to a letter to my agent.



The contents of the penultimate paragraph make full sense in the light of Gabrielle Fleury's letter to Clara Collet of 16 April from Ciboure. She explained that Mme Fleury had been "very ill indeed lately, so ill that Dr Blazy was quite anxious & told me he did not know when & if I sld be able to leave her, that I must be prepared to a fatal accident, etc, etc. She is slowly getting a little better, though, & I was waiting day after day, in the hope that I cld tell you something definite about my coming, or not coming." She went on as follows: "I myself was far from well lately, — laryngitis again, fever, bad headaches, etc. I had to see the Dr, who prescribed things.—And it is not finished: will you believe that the *chalet* gives me no end of trouble just now. As soon as Mme Lacombe was away & the house shut up, I was struck by frightful smells which alarmed me so much, that I asked the Dr to come & inspect the place. He did so & declared the W.C. were in so bad conditions that he thought the house was unhealthy & advised me *not* to take it—except if the man wld—& cld—do thorough repairs. It seems that is impossible, owing to the peculiar building of the house, so that I am trying, with the Dr's help, to get out of the business, which is not quite easy, as things were so advanced. Of course the good thing is that the lease is not signed yet, & even not yet discussed (I mean each item of it). I am frightfully grieved & all my plans upset with that; still I do not think it wld be advisable to neglect the Dr's advice, & it is better to renounce that nice chalet altogether, if it is really impossible to make things quite right in it. What think you?"

To all appearances Roberts's agent was A. P. Watt, with whose services Gissing had chosen to dispense after the publication of *Born in Exile*.

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst, Sussex

Thursday night

[A note at top in a strange hand reads: Postmark May (? 2) 1905]

Dear Miss Collet,

I have just come back from town and my wife tells me that she has asked Gabrielle to come here, if you can spare her, from Monday to Wednesday. But to-day the surgeon declared there must be a further small operation & I am to undergo it next Monday at 12. He says I must stay in town that night in case of haemorrhage & therefore, after talking it over with my wife, it seems best to ask Gabrielle to come from Wednesday to Friday instead. I hope this will suit you both equally well, and that you will forgive me for being such a ruffian as to have another operation. However this time it won't be a serious one and I ought to be all right on Tuesday. I should not like to be away when Gabrielle came.

With many apologies & with affectionate regards (if I may be allowed so to phrase the state of my mind) to you both, believe me

Yours always sincerely  
Morley Roberts

Gabrielle did go to England in early May, as is shown by a letter from Mme Fleury to Clara Collet dated 11 May 1905 among other correspondence, notably the following letter.

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst, Sussex

10.6.05

Dear Miss Collet,

How go things with you? I was sorry not to see you & Gabrielle together but it couldn't be helped for I was ill except the two days she stayed with us. The antrum, however, seems now to be getting somewhat better. In a few short years it may be well. (This reminds me of Gissing!)

I'm in the thick of a new book, have in fact done more than a half. You won't like it, but it has strength here & there & much disagreeableness for such as shut their eyes to all things but the pleasant.

Gabrielle read a few pages of what I did about G. G. & though it was what you know I am sure she approved of it. I don't know whether she told you that she made the same offer you did, that is she wanted to pay me for writing the book. She was very insistent about it but I refused with more or less firmness. Since then I have consulted the secretary of the Authors' Soc. without mentioning any names & he thought it was a transaction I might reasonably enter into. I still have my doubts but I am inclined, if you & Gabrielle are of the same opinion & will act together, to consider the matter again. Of course you may be of another mind now. However if you are not I have been thinking that I might write the book & *sell* it to you & Gabrielle, handing you jointly the M.S. & leaving the date of publication entirely to you & your heirs and assigns. I think I might reserve a small royalty, so long as I & my wife (or my wife) lived, but otherwise it would be the property of you two. You might think of this and speak to Gabrielle about it. If I deal with you both & *sell* the book & have a definite writing about it I can't see why I shouldn't do it. I leave the matter entirely to you, merely premising that I shall probably write the book some day whatever happens & will leave it to you & G. in any case. But this mayn't be for years. If you

thought the other way best you would have to give me a date for delivery & then I should do it.

The weather has been very wet here but as we wanted rain I don't cry out.

Our best regards to you.

Yours very sincerely

Morley Roberts

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Wadhurst

20.6.05

All right. I would have answered before but have had a bad week of [illegible word] & gloom. We will talk when we meet about this matter which in any case must be for some year or two ahead. I'm hard at the new book 'The Idlers.' You will find it disagreeable but with some truth of a sort in it. But I'm in no state to write. I want a year off.

We go to the Lakes on the 4<sup>th</sup> but I shall have to work most of the month.

I had a note from G. to-day. She sent me my old Catullus & Pliny's Letters after all. I'm very glad to have them.

Yours always sincerely

Morley Roberts

*The Idlers* was published by F. V. White later in 1905. By "my old Catullus and Pliny's Letters" we are probably to understand books which Roberts had once given to Gissing and which Gabrielle had just returned to their former owner. It may be relevant to observe that Gissing noted on three occasions in his diary (1 and 3 February and 1 December 1895) that he read some Catullus, but he did so in a copy which A. H. Bullen had sent him. As for Pliny, his diary records his reading the Latin author's letters on 4 October 1889 in the days of the Quadrilateral, again on 8 February 1891, Brodribb's selections from Pliny's Letters on 7 May 1895, and "some Pliny" on 27 August 1895 after writing "Raw Material," the first of the twenty sketches which C. K. Shorter had commissioned for serial publication in the *Sketch* earlier in the year.

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Tappington Grange  
Wadhurst

21.7.05

Dear Miss Collet,

We are back again after a fortnight at the Lakes. I did so badly with regard to gout that I had to return & hope early in August (or rather I fear) that I shall go to Buxton. I finished my new book. It is highly disagreeable,

cynical, & I suppose will be called [illegible word] because it hasn't any definite standpoint. However we shall see. I've not had *Will Warburton* yet but will buy it when I get to town next Wednesday. Tell me if it is good. I really *pray* that it is. I have no news except that the conduct of the antrum is still *chronic*. I look upon it as a habitual drunkard. Yet I still hope to reclaim it by patience. Will you credit me with any?

Yours always sincerely  
Morley Roberts

Buxton is a spa in Derbyshire. *Will Warburton* was published on 23 June 1905, and as the next card shows Clara sent him a copy immediately.

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23.7.05

Many thanks for G's book. I've read most of it already & like it better than anything since 94 except Ryecroft. G. never did anything really well unless it was easy to him, that is, unless he was very full of it. I'm reminded of a saying of a great man you never heard of. "We do that best which we do easiest." It is amazingly true, though one must guard it by saying that the effort to begin *may* be exceedingly difficult. I'm glad that this book is so good, for the fact that I didn't like Veranilda made me very miserable when I read it. It showed me so plainly that one's own notions of one's work may be the poorest guide to their value, always a disconcerting thing for an artist to discover. I fancy I may have to come up on Friday instead of Wednesday. I will make an effort to see you, of course, & *not* at the office. Could you tell me if a 'Captain' Freeman (late ss. Roddam) is now a Marine Examiner for the B.T.?

With best regards from us both,  
Yours  
M. R.

'Captain' Freeman has not been identified. "B. T." is the Board of Trade.

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Wadhurst

23.8.[05]

I had a letter from Gabrielle but am too ill to answer it. When you write tell her that. I expect to be in town for a third operation in a day or two as

the antral trouble has come on again rather badly. I'll let you know how I get on.

Our best regards.

Yours

Morley Roberts

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25.8.05

I shall be in town on Monday at Charing X at 11.11 & sh<sup>d</sup> be very much pleased to have lunch with you about 1 p.m. if that day will suit you. Let me know if I shall call at your office & send up my card or meet you elsewhere. My club is shut up at present as it's being decorated.

The operation will be Tuesday at 16 Fitzroy Square. I expect to be there at least a week.

M. R.

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16 Fitzroy Square

[29 August 1905]

All right, I believe

Best regards

Morley Roberts

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Fitzroy Square

Thursday [31 August]

Many thanks but going out is impossible for me for some time, I fear. It was a knock-out this time!

My best regards,

Morley Roberts

\*\*\*

Wadhurst

10/9 [05]

I brought your book[s] down here & will send them on shortly. I suppose I ought to have stayed in town longer but it bored me to death. I'm getting on all right, though; at least I think so.

Yours,

M. R.

\*\*\*

Wadhurst

20/9/05

I'm afraid that the news is rather mediocre. Nevertheless I suppose I *do* advance. I'm waiting now to be well enough to go to Buxton & *may* go on Friday. I find I pick up very slowly nowadays, there is no such thing as quickness in healing about me. The surgeon says I shall be well in three months. I am content if that is really the truth. I can't work or write and even reading is rather a weariness to me. If I go to Buxton this week I will let you know. We will foregather on my return. I shall write to Gabrielle the moment I feel well enough to undertake a letter; a card is all I'm capable of just now. I've no news for you. We are all as usual here. As you see I don't *want* anything but health so I won't burden you with commissions.

Yours always sincerely  
Morley Roberts

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Stationery of the Crescent Hotel, Buxton, a large establishment boasting both telephone and electric light.

4.10.05

My dear Miss Collet,

Just a line to say that it is supposed by the authorities and bystanders that I am getting well with some rapidity. As for myself I have my doubts, for my nerves are still shocking, and at times I very much doubt if I'm quite responsible for my actions! This is, of course, a joke, but it has a suspicion of the truth at the bottom of it. I've not felt fit enough to write to Gabrielle yet, but I shall do so the moment I do. I daresay you can judge from my writing that I am physically all over the shop & without that calm command of all my faculties which so distinguishes me.

I hope you are well & doing good work and feeling on good terms with yourself.

Believe me  
Yours very sincerely  
Morley Roberts

In the letters from Gabrielle Fleury to Roberts held by the Berg Collection there is a gap of some five years from early 1905 to early 1910.

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Buxton

7.10.05

Many thanks for Castle Rackrent. I can see it is good, but strange to say I never read a word of M. E. before.

I'm recovering again after something of a collapse & expect to be in town next week, when I hope to see you.

M. R.

*Castle Rackrent*, a novel by Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) published in 1800. Together with Elizabeth Gaskell, Maria Edgeworth was one of Clara Collet's favourite novelists. She figures prominently in Gissing's correspondence with Miss Collet (*Collected Letters*, vol. V). In her recollections of Gissing, Gabrielle Fleury wrote: "On Maria Edgeworth—he greatly admired her intellectual power, her characterization. Her 'Essay on Self-Justification' a marvellous satire."

Clara Collet published an essay on "Maria Edgeworth and Charity," in the *Charity Organization Review*, November 1889, pp. 418-24. Had Gissing read the present note to her, he would not have been surprised to discover that Roberts had "never read a word of M. E. before."

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15.10.[05]

Dear Miss Collet,

I had to return suddenly as my wife's only remaining sister died on Thursday. It is a frightful blow to all of us, but most of all to my wife. I can't tell you at present if Buxton did me any good. I will try to see you soon. Your sanity & native shrewdness & humour ought to do me good. I feel all to pieces.

Yours always sincerely

Morley Roberts

Mrs. Roberts, née Selous (c. 1852-1911), is known to have had two sisters: Emily, two years her senior, wife of Rodney John Fennessy, whom Gissing met in 1889 at their home in Hyde Park Mansions, where were held Shakespeare Society readings; and Constance, who was two years younger.

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Tappington Grange, Wadhurst

27.10.[05]

I'm *very* sorry I can't come after all. I find from Miss Hallard's letter that she has nothing immediate to suggest & has not yet read Rachel Marr.

I'm now sending it to her. I've written to Gabrielle to say I can't afford to have the trip for pleasure only, but I've said I mean to go to S<sup>t</sup> Jean de Luz in the late winter. And I do mean it. I trust you are having a good time. We get along. I am certainly better.

Yours

Morley Roberts

I'm sending 'The Idlers' to you at your Chambers.

"Miss Hallard," that is Alys Hallard, was the pseudonym of Alice Ward (1859-1939), an English friend of Gabrielle who lived in Paris. A journalist and translator, she was the correspondent of the *Author*, the journal of the Society of Authors. She wrote on Gissing and his works on various occasions. Details about her many activities can be found in Gissing's diary and correspondence. As is shown here, she was planning to translate Roberts's 1903 novel *Rachel Marr*, but the project did not materialize. For detailed information about her, see R. D. Best, "Alice Ward and the Gissings," *Gissing Newsletter*, October 1978, pp. 2-20, and January 1979, pp. 6-21, as well as P. Coustillas, "Four Unpublished Letters from Gabrielle Fleury to Alice Ward," July 1979, pp. 1-14.— Clara Collet was then in Paris.

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Wadhurst

3.11.05

I hope you got my other card saying that 'Paris was off' for me. Instead I've to go north to Carlisle & Scotland.

I've begun a new book & hope it will be better than the last.

My best regards.

Yours

Morley Roberts

I've sent 'The Idlers' to no. 4. I don't ask you to think it even half-good.

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### **Book Reviews**

Mitsuharu Matsuoka (ed.), *The World of Gissing: In the Year of the Centenary*, Tokyo: Eihosha, 2003.

This useful volume was published to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Gissing's death. The cover displays Gissing's portrait against a dark sky broken by streaks of orange light from the sun, which hangs half above the horizon. It may be a moment of sunrise, but some would take it



as a moment of sunset. Whichever it is, setting the portrait against such a glowing sky makes Gissing look like a prophet. But if he is a prophet, what is his prophecy? It is by no means a simple message that can be summarized in a short paragraph. The book reveals him in his ambivalence and complexity.

The book's subtitle, in a faithful English translation, is *Attempts to Investigate his Whole World*. In Japan, as in other countries, Gissing has been known best as the author of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*; indeed, *Ryecroft* was so beloved by readers who were high-school or university students before and after World War II, and read it as one of their English textbooks, that it has eclipsed his other works. The present book's editor, Mitsuharu Matsuoka, says in his preface that it is his wish, as well as the wish of his co-authors, to show Japanese readers the many various and versatile aspects of Gissing.

Of the 15 chapters, 11 are written by relatively young Japanese scholars. One of these 11 chapters covers Gissing's short stories; each of the others deals with a single significant work. The other four chapters are by the so-called founding fathers (or might they better be called brothers?) of the *Gissing Journal* and, through it, Gissing studies: Pierre Coustillas, Shigeru Koike and Jacob Korg. Korg's two chapters, on the life of Gissing and on those novels and novellas not covered elsewhere in this book are Japanese translations of previous publications, while Coustillas's chapter on the history of Gissing criticism is a translation of the paper he read in abridged form at the Gissing Conference in London last year. Koike's chapter on Gissing and Dickens was written especially for this book. Matsuoka acknowledges in his preface how much we owe to the academic achievements of these three predecessors.

In the chapters by Japanese authors, the first few pages are devoted to a fairly detailed account of the plot of the novel under consideration, or to a summary of content in the case of a book like *By the Ionian Sea*. This is very helpful not only for newcomers to Gissing's world but also to those familiar with his works, because names, dates, places, and incidents often slip from memory and are not always easy to track down.

Following the summary, each author presents his or her reading of the novel. Because these are the most interesting sections, it seems appropriate to give a brief description of their content, even though such short descriptions cannot, of course, cover an author's entire argument.

The Japanese authors are all university teachers. Instead of including their titles and affiliations, however, let me just add Ms. and Mr. to their

names, for Gissing would be pleased to learn that, among the scholars following the founding fathers, we have women as well as men. What follows is the table of contents and brief descriptions of some chapters.

The Editor's Preface (Mitsuharu Matsuoka)  
Message to Japanese Gissingites (Pierre Coustillas)  
Gissing Bibliography (Mitsuharu Matsuoka)

Ch. 1. The Life of Gissing (Jacob Korg)

Translation of "George Gissing," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Ira B. Nadel and William E. Fredemann.

Ch. 2. A Cavalcade of Gissing Criticism in the Last Hundred Years (Pierre Coustillas)

Translation of Coustillas's paper on the subject as mentioned above.

Ch. 3. *The Unclassed* (Ms Harumi Kuramochi)

H. Kuramochi relates the novel to the social problems of the latter half of the nineteenth century: the poverty of the lower classes (mentioning some of the movements to improve their living conditions); the difficulties poor women faced in supporting themselves; and the decline of traditional Christian faith. She points out that even though the novel depicts ruthless realities, it is not entirely pessimistic in its approach to the two main characters, Osmond Waymark and Ida Starr, unlike the situation in *Workers in the Dawn*.

Ch. 4. *The Nether World* (Mr. Saburo Kuramochi)

This essay begins by surveying the history of political unrest centered in Clerkenwell, the scene of *The Nether World*, and discusses how the place, together with the death of his first wife, inspired Gissing to write the novel. S. Kuramochi also argues that while the novel faithfully reflects the lives of working people, each worker is given his own personality and values, instead of being presented as a stereotype.

Ch. 5. *New Grub Street* (Mr. Mitsuharu Matsuoka)

The contemporary circumstances that alienated "unpractical" writers from Victorian society are discussed. Then Matsuoka argues that although Gissing makes use of his own experiences as an unsuccessful novelist, he is both critical of, as well as sympathetic to, those writers' idealism and aloofness. He adds that Gissing is also ambivalent about educating the poor.

Indeed, his ambivalence toward all aspects of Victorian society is what most characterizes Gissing, Matsuoka says.

Ch. 6. *Born in Exile* (Mr. Ryota Kanayama)

Kanayama poses a question: Is Godwin Peak a mutant or a creature controlled by heredity (referring to Darwinism, eugenics, and such works as Théodule-Armand Ribot's *L'hérédité psychologique*). Godwin's downfall is due to his lower middle-class background as well as to his hypocrisy, he argues; a person of higher social class could have overcome the handicap of such hypocrisy. Thus Peak's tragedy is due to his social situation rather than to heredity. Gissing who, unlike Peak, had a firm intellectual belief in himself, seems to be exorcising his former self by presenting his double in Peak, Kanayama says.

Ch. 7. *The Odd Women* (Ms. Mihoko Takeda)

Takeda focuses on Monica, who is situated on the periphery (or beyond safe boundaries) of London at the end of the century, and whom she regards as a "female flâneur." Takeda proceeds to analyze what she calls Monica's hysteria, suggesting that it arises because she is forced into the traditional female stereotype mould, while in fact she is torn between heterosexual love and her interest in Rhoda. Takeda concludes that, in spite of his sympathetic insight into the situation of women in Victorian society, Gissing's view of women is both progressive and conventional.

Ch. 8. *Sleeping Fires* (Ms Ayaka Komiya)

This short novel is exceptional among Gissing's fiction because of its happy ending, Komiya says. Unlike the heroes of Gissing's other novels, who repulse the realities around them and assume escapist attitudes, Edmund Langley ultimately finds his happiness in everyday life. Komiya discusses the influence of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám* on this novella on the basis of internal and external evidence.

Ch. 9. *The Whirlpool* (Ryoko Ota)

Ota takes up some of the problems which beset the main characters and approaches the novel by juxtaposing alternative choices: whether one should marry or enjoy a life of celibacy; whether one should live in a flat or in a house in the country; whether or not a man should have an occupation; whether a woman should be a housewife or have a career of her own. She pays special attention to the treatment of flats and houses, relating them to

the novel's theme. In her final section she considers the novel in the context of adultery in literature.

Ch. 10. *By the Ionian Sea* (Mr. Yukimitsu Namiki)

Namiki examines how reading ancient Roman history motivated Gissing to travel to Calabria and inspired him to write *By the Ionian Sea*. He also compares this book with travel writing by other authors and concludes that what distinguishes *By the Ionian Sea* is the images of ancient Greece and Rome which Gissing is perpetually reconstructing, even from slight associations, in his mind's eye, and Gissing's interest in the contemporary people he encounters in the course of his travels.

Ch. 11. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Mr. Noriaki Kato)

Kato points out, quoting from other critics, the melancholy tone, aloofness, and nihilistic attitude seen in Ryecroft. For all that, he argues, *Ryecroft* lets its readers share its protagonist's experiences and gives them chances to review their own values and way of living.

Ch. 12. The Other Novels (Jacob Korg)

A translation from *George Gissing: A Critical Biography*.

Ch. 13. The Short Stories (Mr. Takashi Kouzawa)

Gissing's representative short stories—such as “The Day of Silence,” “Raw Material,” and “The Light on the Tower”—are introduced with their plots and themes. Frustration and defeat are the repeated context of these stories, but Kouzawa says some of them seem to suggest that, amidst disappointment and illusion, people can be blessed with modest hope and happiness.

Ch. 14. Gissing and Dickens (Shigeru Koike)

Gissing's books and essays on Dickens are introduced, with particular attention to *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*. Koike claims that, in spite of his unpretentious and unsystematic approach to Dickens, Gissing was actually breaking new ground and presenting what have now become some of the basic concepts about Dickens.

Ch. 15. Gissing Information Resources (Mitsuharu Matsuoka)

Chronology of Gissing's Life and Works

On the whole, the essays which I have introduced above are challenging and stimulating, although a few tend to be more a general introduction to a work than a personal reading of it.

The last chapter is a marvellous contribution to Gissing studies that provides a variety of information about academic tools: international conferences on Gissing, relevant institutes, and Gissing on the Internet, bookshops specializing in materials by and about Gissing, in addition to Japanese translations of his books, and books and articles on Gissing by Japanese researchers in particular. Matsuoka has already made a great contribution by creating digital versions of Gissing texts, and his efforts have been widely appreciated by all Gissingites in other countries. Indeed, the entire book will benefit specialists in English literature more than the general readers for whom this work seems to have been originally intended.

It has to be admitted here that the book's stance is rather ambiguous in that regard. The editor chose to deal with those novels that have Japanese translations, obviously keeping in mind those general readers who have to depend on translated texts. In each article, however, those passages quoted from the original text—which are essential in following the argument—are printed without Japanese translation (except in Chapter 14), which makes me suspect that the book is, after all, meant to be appreciated by readers who are already students of the subject and do not have to depend on translations. If so, it is regrettable that such important novels as *Demos* and *The Emancipated* were not allotted individual chapters, although they are taken up in Chapter 12.

Given the present difficult situation surrounding the publication of academic books, however, I do not intend to criticize the editor. If all the quotations from the original texts had been translated, or more chapters added, this book would have become too voluminous to be published at a moderate price. I can well imagine the compromises which Mr. Matsuoka had to make.

We might say that things have remained unchanged since the days of *New Grub Street*, and that if we are to be “practical,” the best way to introduce general readers to Gissing is to have one of his novels made into a TV drama, with a popular star as the hero or heroine. On the other hand, many things have changed greatly since then, literature among them; it no longer relates itself to contemporary reality in the way Gissing's works do. Thus, all in all, this is a difficult age for efforts to invite the average reader into Gissing's world. For that reason, it is all the more delightful that Japanese scholars have commemorated this centenary by placing this garland of a book before his grave.— Fumio Hojoh

George Gissing, *Vid Joniska havet*, translation and introduction by Christina Sjöholm, Stockholm: Atlantis, 2004.

In the wake of the recent English edition edited by Pierre Coustillas for Signal Books and Interlink in 2003, the present Swedish translation of Gissing's account of his Calabrian journey in 1897 was published last spring by the Swedish firm Atlantis. The translation, and the introduction which precedes it, are the work of Christina Sjöholm, the Gissing specialist and author of the critical study *The Vice of Wedlock: The Theme of Marriage in George Gissing's Novels*, published by Almqvist & Wiksell in 1994. For Swedish readers this new book is a long awaited contribution to a better knowledge of the author's achievement since the latest translation dated back to 1982, when the Swedish version of *New Grub Street* came out after those of the *Ryecroft Papers* (1929) and *The Odd Women* (1980).

Consequently, introducing Gissing to a Swedish readership little acquainted with the man and his main themes demands both method and a wide overview helping to connect the successive phases of the man's life, the growth of the artist and the social context of his time. Dr. Sjöholm's introduction shows both a commendable mastery of method and a full consciousness of the intricate network of cultural background and the personally experienced which sustains Gissing's fiction. Relating the phases of the author's life, she guides us simultaneously through the social and literary currents of his day, indeed sometimes anticipating later developments. Methodically, she surveys the topicality of the novelist's approach to matters such as marriage, gender equality, the impact of industrialized society on the environment, the emergence of mass consumer culture, his loathing of all manifestations of militarism and unjustly exercised authority. As she observes, the essence of the novel he had just finished before writing his travel narrative, *The Crown of Life*, with its anti-militarist credo, can clearly be traced in *By the Ionian Sea*. Just as Gissing was able to revive the past through his prose, his fiction evinces a capacity to bridge the gap of time and cultural alienation and evoke topics which preoccupy us to-day. Emphasizing the influence of his social commitment in his novels, Christina Sjöholm points out how in *By the Ionian Sea* the individual hardships of the Italian poor roused his pity, all the more when they were borne with dignity, while those who abused their power met with his unreserved scorn. Lambeth and Hellas were never far from each other in his reactions to needless violence and suffering. Travelling off the beaten tracks of emerging mass tourism, Gissing saw his journey, as Christina Sjöholm reminds

us, both as a fulfilment of his long-cherished wish to visit the places whose names had so captivated him ever since his childhood and a quest for a classical heritage which was gradually sinking into oblivion in England at that time.

Besides providing Swedish readers uninitiated into the customs of late Victorian England with keys to cultural notions such as the particular three-volume system, the censoring power of the circulating libraries, the social connotations of continental trips for contemporary travellers, and the role of the indispensable Baedeker to which they clung in moments of despair, Dr. Sjöholm situates *By the Ionian Sea* in the biographical context of the author's life: "The background of the journey depicted in *By the Ionian Sea* was the chaos ruling his private life as he left his family in 1897. His longing to get away, his longing for silence, peace and the beauty of the past bestows upon his journey the distinctive character of an escape." Nevertheless, if the journey was an escape from the increasingly unbearable reality of his married life, it was as much an escape into the past, and Dr. Sjöholm enables the reader of to-day to discover the inner landscapes hidden beneath the surface of what contemporary readers considered to be more than an ordinary piece of travel writing.

As Christina Sjöholm points out, the critics of his time were somewhat surprised when discovering within the gloomy chronicler of misery these previously unknown predilections for the history of antiquity, for art, architecture, nature, food, music and people. In other words, all that represents "the beauty of life." They were not merely surprised, they were taken with the travel narrative, which unlike so many others, conveyed such a personal perception of the seldom visited Italian south. Few, very few, Gissing had been warned, dared to travel further south than Naples, the starting point of his journey. Only those aware of his view of the south as the cradle of western civilization can fully comprehend the blend of irony and humour that prompted him to note down his Neapolitan friends' reaction to his travelling to the wild South with its barbaric dialects and fever-struck coastal areas.

Although *By the Ionian Sea* bears the stamp of Gissing the attentive observer of social phenomena, it is his passion for antiquity which leaves its most instructive mark on the book. The Magna Græcia he had studied since his youth emerges from under the thin surface of late nineteenth-century Calabria. The reality of the past comes through in the narrative as he at length sees places he had only been able to imagine while reading Gibbon and Lenormant. The purely bookish notion of the period fades, the

past is resuscitated for the reader's benefit, and it is significant, as Christina Sjöholm comments, that those images of the past were at their most vivid during his illness at Cotrone. Not even the sight of the unassuming stream which is the latest avatar of the once mighty Galæsus manages to dampen his enthusiasm.

The introduction skilfully invites us to take into account the various layers of the narrative. "One is struck by the colourful descriptions so starkly contrasting with the grey-toned settings of the author's novels... The personal tone in which he is addressing the reader creates the illusion of travelling in time and space, feeling as though he were his travelling companion... One may discern the approaching autumn in the author's mental landscape: the sober vision of life settling within him, the dispassionate sense of nostalgia, the awareness that he will never revisit these places, the intimation of his own mortality conveyed by his days of illness in Cotrone. From this time onwards his health was to decline steadily; he only had six more years to live."

The Swedish translation perfectly captures the tone and mood of this last lonely journey to "the wild south." Stylistically faithful to the original, the translation shows more than a knowledge of the text and the period. It bears witness to imaginative insight into the author's state of mind that autumn in Calabria. While relating details about the Italian landscapes, the food, the aspect of people, the greediness or kindness of those he encounters, Gissing gradually reveals the deeply personal dimension of his narrative. The translation reflects this. The Italian words and phrases expressive of his joy at pronouncing those living remnants of antiquity have been retained without being explained. In this way the reader encounters Italy in a manner similar to his. The notes, a shortened version of those provided by Pierre Coustillas to the Signal Books critical edition, are aimed at a readership less interested in historical detail than in the personal impressions of a late nineteenth-century traveller in Italy. The endpapers, a beautiful color-print replica of a nineteenth-century map of southern Italy, allow the reader to follow Gissing's journey through the successive chapters. Linguistically, one notes how the Swedish language mimics with surprising ease the movements of the original text. The passages where the present and the past intermingle with dreamy outbursts show the strength of the translation. Gissing's musing on the boat to Paola in chapter I is one of them. None of these aspects have been lost in translation: "It was as though I voyaged quite alone in the silence of this magic sea. [...] The stillness of a dead world laid its spell on all that lived."



The Swedish edition is a valuable new contribution to Gissing's literary heritage, promising to reach new readers previously unacquainted with his work. As Pierre Coustillas observed in his introduction to the recent English edition, Gissing's writing of *By the Ionian Sea* was "a labour of love," and one senses that the same spirit animated the Swedish translator's work. One cannot be closer to the sources of Gissing's art than when studying his relationship to that lost world of antiquity. Magna Græcia, as Christina Sjöholm concludes, was the only world in which George Gissing, "who so penetratingly analyzed the most burning problems of modern society, ever felt completely at home."— Annika Juuso Savary

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### Notes and News

The full-length primary bibliography of Gissing's works which Pierre Coustillas has been preparing for years will be published in December by the Rivendale Press (P.O. Box 97, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4GH). It will cover all his published writings from 1874, when he was a student at Owens College, to 2004 (books and pamphlets, contributions to books, short stories, poems, articles and reviews, letters to editors, correspondence, selections of his works). To these eight parts will be added three appendices: A will be devoted to the Modern Library editions of *New Grub Street* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (about 150 variants in all); B will deal with the main lost works, that is "Mrs. Grundy's Enemies," "Clement Dorricott" and "Among the Prophets," while C will consist in a checklist of the publications of works in volume form published by other members of the Gissing family, that is the novelist's father, T. W. Gissing, his brother Algernon, his sister Ellen, and his son Alfred.

All the editions of Gissing's works issued as books or pamphlets, starting with the first of *Workers in the Dawn* and ending with the privately printed, limited edition of *An Art Exhibition in Boston* (2004), will be described, the entries including the basic bibliographical presentation, notes on composition and publication, presentation copies, reviews of first and other significant editions. Not only English, American and Colonial editions will be studied, but also foreign editions (Japanese in particular) and translations (into 14 languages ranging from French to Chinese, from Dutch to Greek and Romanian). The present location of manuscripts, when known, has been given, and the manuscripts of all the novels, when they

are accessible, have received the attention they deserve. The book is to contain a number of black and white and colour illustrations.

Another forthcoming publication, of a most unexpected nature, is a booklet, consisting of the first three chapters of *Born in Exile*, which is to appear under the imprint of the Paris publishers Editions Autrement, with an afterword by Pierre Coustillas, and a short comment on the present day relevance of the novel by David Grylls. The booklet will belong to an English series which will promote the reading of major Victorian and Edwardian novelists. The English series, which is to be launched simultaneously with a French one next year, will include Conrad, Hardy, Lawrence, Dickens, Collins, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Saki, Meredith and Galsworthy. The French series, of which a sample volume has appeared, is entitled “Eclats de lire”; the title of the English series has not yet been revealed. The sample in hand, the passage in *Les Misérables* on the battle of Waterloo, is 80 pages long.

As usual, despite the facilities offered by numberless websites, the existence of some books, recent or not so recent, is revealed several years after publication. One such case is *Edwardians: London Life and Letters 1901-1914*, by John Paterson (Chicago : Ivan R. Dee, 1996). Gissing is mentioned in it half a dozen times, but not very accurately. The first allusion prompts one to wonder about the author’s working methods. “When the novelist Gissing was called into Lambeth to identify the corpse of poor Mary Ann, once his wife, once a lively young woman with dark glossy hair, he just couldn’t recognize her. Wasted by time and starvation her body had mummified.” As Gissing, save for his failure to recognize Nell, wrote down such details neither in his diary nor in his correspondence, one looks for a possible source until, on p. 281, the author reveals his secret. He has consulted one of the worst books published twenty years ago, Anthony West’s *H. G. Wells: Aspects of a Life*, pp. 270-71. Frederick Crews is quoted on the back of the jacket as writing that Paterson is a wise and witty chronicler. An unreliable one as well, we can add. His book was remaindered eight years after publication.

Paul Delany’s volume, *Literature, Money and the Market* (Basingstoke and New York : Palgrave, 2002) should also have been mentioned earlier. It is a very different book. Chapter 4, which deals with “Money, marriage and the writer’s life: Gissing and Woolf,” should be read carefully, but will all readers agree that *New Grub Street* and *A Room of One’s Own* “are the

two most renowned examinations of the modern literary market-place”? Is it fair to say that Delany, writing in the early twenty-first century, sides with Milvain rather than with Reardon? “In a Darwinian view,” he writes, “Amy is acting naturally in transferring her affections from Reardon, the weaker male, to Jasper Mylvain [*sic*], the stronger.”

Francesco Marroni has published two volumes likely to be of interest to Victorianists who can read Italian. In *Disarmonie vittoriane*, a collection of detailed studies of six novels or short stories of the latter half of the nineteenth century which focuses on Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, Gissing and Hardy, he devotes a long chapter to *The Whirlpool*, which he subtitles “Gissing, la vocazione e la modernità.” His careful analysis of the modernist elements of a novel which he admires is well-documented and convincing. A stimulating thematic and structural study, it should be translated into English. The division of Alma’s life into three phases invites full agreement, and his discussion of the part played by correspondence between the characters is markedly innovative. The Gissing (and George Moore) chapter in *Miti e mondi vittoriani*, which deals with the working-class novels, is less complimentary to Gissing. Perhaps the critic should read or reread carefully an oft-reprinted illuminating essay commissioned from the novelist in 1895, “The Place of Realism in Fiction.” Gissing was a scrupulous artist and a sincere one at that; he would not suppress his personality in order to please the shallow-minded among his readers. As for Gissing’s so-called lack of humour, when Marroni approaches the subject, he is on the wrong tack. The chapter on the subject in *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* gives the lie to his outworn arguments. Gissing wrote to H. H. Sturmer on 1 February 1898 apropos of his forthcoming book on Dickens: “If any one tells you that it shows a gross inability to understand [him] as a humourist, suspend your judgment. I am quite prepared for that sentence from the reviewers.” This quotation settles the point.

Gissing was commemorated in both Wakefield and Ciboure this summer. On the former event Anthony Petyt reports: “The Gissing Trust in collaboration with the Cathedral Poets mounted an exhibition on the ‘Life and Works of George Gissing’ in Wakefield Cathedral. The exhibition was launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004 and was scheduled to run for a month. The Mayor of Wakefield, the Precentor of Wakefield Cathedral and representatives of the Gissing Trust, the Cathedral Poets, Wakefield Historical Society and Wakefield Civic Society attended the launch. The exhibition had sections covering Gissing’s novels, short stories, Dickens studies, and

poetry, and translations of his books. There were also sections on the Gissing family, their connections with Wakefield, their achievements in the literary world and the work of the Gissing Trust.”

In Ciboure, where Gissing lived from July 1901 to June 1902, a small exhibition was organized on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September, that is on the two National Heritage days, at the Office du Tourisme, housed in the house where Ravel was born on the Quay, in honour of five public figures who resided locally in the last century, all American except Gissing, who was the first chronologically. Of the four Americans, who spent months or years in Ciboure, three were writers: Louis Bromfield (who wrote *The Rains Came* in the 1930s in a room overlooking the sea at the top of the Fort of Socoa), Charles Wertenbaker (who spent the last years of his life in Ciboure and died there in 1955) and Irwin Shaw (the latter had a house in nearby Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and lived there also in the 1950s), the fourth was Orson Welles, a friend of the Wertenbakers. A number of Gissing’s books were on show, notably the Harvester editions of the *Ryecroft Papers* and *The Nether World*, the 1985 Modern Library reissue of *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women* in the old Nelson edition and the French translation of the same title, and the Hogarth edition of *The Whirlpool*. Photographs of Gissing in 1893, 1895 and 1901 and of the houses in which he lived in Ciboure (Pension Larréa and Villa Lannes) and Ispoure (Maison Elgue) taken in recent years were also on show, as well as views of the entrance to the cemetery in Saint-Jean-de-Luz and of Gissing’s grave with the commemorative plaque which was placed on it last December. The exhibition had been organized by Guy Lalanne, deputy mayor of Ciboure, and the staff of the Office du Tourisme. Visitors could see several copies of the booklet recently published to commemorate the centenary of Gissing’s death locally.

In reply to an enquiry, Kate Shearman of Everyman Paperbacks informs us that their editions of *The Day of Silence and Other Stories*, *Born in Exile* and *In the Year of Jubilee* are out of print. New editions are unlikely.

We hear that John Sloan has been invited to contribute two entries on Gissing and Grub Street to the O.U.P. *Encyclopedia of British Literary History*.

Our attention has been drawn to an audio book of *Sleeping Fires* offered on the net at [www.books2audio.com](http://www.books2audio.com). This site is a books and audio service which has a collection of books in the public domain and has converted

them into audio books using A.T. & T.'s Natural Voice Technology. *Sleeping Fires* in audio format runs 274 minutes and sells at \$8. Four books by Gissing's friend W. H. Hudson are also available: *Far Away and Long Ago*, *Afoot in England*, *A Shepherd's Life*, all at \$12, as well as *A Traveller in Little Things* at \$10.

All Virginia Woolf's articles on Gissing are apparently recorded, and several of them have been reprinted in books and periodicals, but a recently discovered letter about him, for sale at \$3,500, should be added to the canon. Addressed to one Miss Middlebrook, it is dated 10 October 1932. The seller is David J. Holmes Autographs.

Ken Ellis of London NW3 wonders whether he is the first to draw attention to P. G. Wodehouse's references to Gissing. In *Ice in the Bedroom* (1961) Wodehouse's characters discuss Gissing at the end of Chapter 4. A female romantic novelist is tired of writing what the critics call tripe. She has gone to the suburbs to write a work of serious literature, a book about squalor and suffering, like the works of George Gissing, "grey as a stevedore's undervest." Few of our readers are likely to have in mind these characteristic details.

Christine Huguet read a paper at a French conference early this year, on "History and Art: Excess in George Gissing's *Demos*." As it will not be published until possibly 2006, she has sent us the following abstract of it: "The artist in quest of adequate modes of representation of excess not infrequently turns his hand to the historical novel, a genre overtly legitimising the imagination. But he cannot overlook the fact that addressing a specific past and calling upon collective memory also render his task as an illusionist far more complicated. In *Demos* George Gissing meets the challenge and evinces keen awareness of the necessity both to accommodate the possibilities suggested by his material and to avoid being constrained by it, hence the deconstructive subtitle, "A Story of English Socialism," a clear warning of imaginative departure from mere factuality. This article examines Gissing's metahistorical enquiry with a view to defining how far pliant historiographic de/reconstruction of unrest and agitation may facilitate the integration of the artist's own excessive responses."

Two interesting reviews of biographies of men who contributed to increase Gissing's posthumous reputation were published in the *Times Literary Supplement* earlier this year. Piers Moore Ede reviewed *In Search of H.*

V. Morton, by Michael Bartholomew (Methuen, £18.99) on 16 July, p. 32, and Anthony Curtis reviewed Philip Ziegler's *Rupert Hart-Davis, Man of Letters* (Chatto and Windus, £20) on 23 July, p. 31. Readers will readily connect Morton with his genial comments on *By the Ionian Sea* and Hart-Davis with the Gissing-Wells correspondence.

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## Recent Publications

### Volumes and Pamphlets

Volume II of the Grayswood Press edition of the *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, which was described in our July number, is now available in both hardback and paperback from the publishers. The design of the jacket of the hardback and the front cover of the paperback is the same as for Volume I, but the colour is greyish green. The book is basically a new edition of *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, edited and introduced by Simon J. James with an afterword by David Parker, but the volume also contains four appendices and a long essay on Gissing and Chesterton by David L. Derus.

George Gissing, *An Art Exhibition in Boston, "Elaine": Rosenthal and Tojetti*. With an introduction by Pierre Coustillas. Privately printed, 2004. Edition limited to forty-five copies, hand-set in Centaur type and printed at the Tragara Press. Gissing's article was originally published, under the title of "'Elaine': Rosenthal and Tojetti," on p. 3 of the Boston weekly *Commonwealth* for 28 October 1876. The introduction covers pp. 5-8, the article pp. 9-12. Card covers. Green marbled dust jacket.

*Homage to a Great Man of Letters: Remembering George Gissing, 1857-1903*. A centenary gathering in the Basque country on 28 December 2003. A memorial address by Pierre Coustillas, with a preface by John Spiers. Privately published as a gift to participants, and to other friends. Sussex, 2004. This is a 16-page pamphlet with card covers. Front cover: portrait of Gissing by Alfred Ellis (1893); inside front cover: entrance to the grave-yard at St. Jean-de-Luz, where he is buried. P. 4, photograph of the restored grave, with the new plaque. Pp. 5-6, preface by John Spiers. Pp. 7-9, memorial address in French. Pp. 10-12, memorial address in English. Pp. 13-15, photographs taken during the ceremony as well as of the Maison Elgue, Ispoure, where Gissing died. Back cover:

Gissing's death certificate. One hundred copies have been printed, none of which are for sale.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Tot, i.e. Thomas Steinfeld, "Das Best ist nichts," *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 June 2003, Feuilleton. The reviewer calls *Am Ionischen Meer* "a little gem."

Anon., "Am Ionischen Meer," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 5 July 2003, p. 6.

Kate Taylor, "Gissing Trust," *Wakefield Express*, 7 May 2004, p. 16. Followed by "Exhibition pays tribute to novelist," 11 June, p. 30, and by "Special Day for Gissing," 2 July, p. 1 and "Cathedral Poets," p. 19. See under "Notes and News."

Magnus Eriksson, "Rappt och lustfyllt när Gissing reser i Kalabrien," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 May 2004 (Kultur, p. 6). Review of the Swedish translation of *By the Ionian Sea*. Another review of *Vid Joniska havet*, "Annorlunda temperament," by Tore Winqvist, appeared in *Upsala Nya Tidning* on 30 June, p. 10.

Irene Iarocci, "Arte dell'Ospitalità in Italia," *Osservatore Romano*, 28 July 2004, p. 3. A long review of a book on the art of hospitality in Italy by Stefano Bonilli (Rome : Editalia, 2004, pp. 271), in which appear many foreign travellers including Montaigne, Andersen, Goethe, Stendhal, Dumas, Strutt, Lear, Gregorovius and Gissing. Coriolano Paparazzo and the kindly porter at the railway station in Squillace are duly mentioned.

Carlo Carlino, "Un gentleman inglese alla scoperta del Sud," *Calabria* (the monthly review of the Regional Council of Calabria), July 2004, pp. 44-48. Review article of the Signal Books edition of *By the Ionian Sea* with the following illustrations: portrait of Gissing by Lily Waldron, lithograph by Rothenstein, front cover of the book, two views of Crotona and Reggio by Leo de Littrow, and portraits of Calabrian women reproduced from the first two editions (1901 and 1905) of the book.

Chris Baggs, "The Public Library in Fiction: George Gissing's *Spellbound*," *Library History*, Vol. 20, July 2004, pp. 137-46. An important article which breaks new ground.

Anon., "Brief Notices," *Dickensian*, Summer (misdated Spring) 2004, p. 167. Notice of Vol. I of the *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*. The July issue of the *Dickens Magazine*, a publication of Grayswood Press, mentioned Gissing's work on Dickens appreciatively in half a dozen critical contexts.

Richard Pearson, "George Gissing and the Ethnographer's 'I': Civilization in *The Nether World* and *Eve's Ransom*," *Critical Survey*, Vol. 16, no. 1, Summer 2004, pp. 35-51.

Robin Woolven, "George Gissing's London residences, 1877-1891," *Camden History Review*, Vol. 28 (2004), pp. 7-11. This article, the author says, is an abbreviated version of notes for a walk led for an international audience attending the conference "Gissing and the City," held at London University in July 2003 to commemorate the centenary of the novelist's death. Illustrations: 1. Gissing in 1884 2. View along Colville Place in 2004 3. No. 70 Huntley Street as seen from Capper Street 4. Certificate of Gissing's marriage to Nell Harrison, 27 October 1879.

Sunita Rappai, "Restless spirit of the great Victorian rebel," *Camden New Journal*, 23 September 2004, p. v. Illustrated commentary on Robin Woolven's article mentioned in previous entry, with portrait of Gissing in 1901, and the same views of Colville Place and Huntley Street.

Hiroko Ishizuka, *The Victorians in the Mediterranean*, Tokyo: Kaibunsha, 2004. A substantial illustrated volume dealing with Elizabeth Gaskell, Disraeli, Dickens, George Eliot, Gissing, Sherlock Holmes, E. M. Forster and John Singer Sargent. Illustrations: Gissing in 1895, the funicular on the slopes of Etna, and Raphael's St. Cecilia.

Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff (eds.), *The Victorians since 1901*, Manchester University Press, 2004. On p. 4 Gissing is mentioned in a significant context as a writer co-opted into the modernist canon.

Pierre Coustillas, entries on George Gissing, Algernon Gissing and Morley Roberts in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* which was published in 60 volumes and on the internet on 23 September 2004. Many other distinguished persons who in some way or other belonged to the Gissing circle, Edward Clodd, Clara Collet and Miss Orme for instance, will be found in this new edition of the DNB.



