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Gissing in Italy

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

In the eyes of a number of readers who are in a privileged situation to watch the phenomenon, the status of *By the Ionian Sea* among Gissing's works and in the travel literature about Italy, especially Southern Italy, is changing. The book has never been out of print for a long time since 1901 and it has found many friendly critics, an anthology of whose enthusiastic statements would put to shame any publisher who ever turned down a proposal to reprint the volume. To collectors a first edition of *By the Ionian Sea* has always been a desirable item, partly perhaps, some rare book dealers would say, because clean copies in the white cloth chosen by Chapman and Hall are not easy to procure. Readers of this journal will remember how eloquent Christopher Morley became about Gissing's only travel narrative in the haunting stanzas of his "Ballade of Books Unbought." For his part, Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers, could not resist the temptation to reissue it – without permission, as was his usual practice – in 1920, printing 700 copies on Van Gelder paper "for sale in America," plus 25 numbered copies on Japan vellum. As recently as 1992, when Alan Anderson ceased publishing his remarkable series of volumes in tasteful limited editions at the Tragara Press, he celebrated the event by publishing not only a bibliography of the volumes which had appeared under his imprint, but a superb handset edition of *By the Ionian Sea*, out of series, in two different formats which have already become as rare as the scarcest Gissing three-deckers. These are tangible signs of the affection of some of the writer's admirers for a book which occupies a special place in his career – his only travel narrative, it relates his colourful experiences in the deep Italian south, where he was free of marital bondage and could visit scenes which had haunted him since childhood.

It is difficult to say exactly when interest in Gissing's account of his ramblings by the Ionian Sea, which never conspicuously waned, began to intensify, but it is neither unreasonable

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nor far-fetched to note that Shigeru Koike's new Japanese translation, published by Shubun International in 1988 and coming in the wake of the Century Hutchinson English reprint of 1986, was a turning-point. It drew the attention of another (more famous) Tokyo publisher, Iwanami Shoten, who asked Professor Koike to prepare a new revised edition of his translation for the popular Iwanami Library, and the three successive printings of the book in the new format must have reached a fairly large readership. This attractive Japanese paperback, still more eye-catching than earlier Gissing translations in the same series, came out in 1994. It must have been about that time that Wulfgang Stahl began to plan a journey in Gissing's footsteps, encouraged by the availability of a new American edition of the book, undated but issued by the Marlboro Press in 1991. It is a strange paperback which betrays no attempt at originality in that it is a photographic reprint of the 1920 Mosher edition, misprints included. In Italy Mauro Francesco Minervino, the author of a critical assessment of Gissing beautifully entitled *La vita desiderata* (1993), bethought himself of the regrettable unavailability of Margherita Guidacci's translation, a former good seller in Cappelli Universale from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, and he got Edizioni di Torino to reprint an edited version of it, also in 1993, under a slightly different title, *Sulle rive dello Ionio: Un vittoriano al sud*. Then Wulfgang Stahl's project of revisiting those places from Paola to Taranto to Reggio, where Gissing had been travelling with Francois Lenormant's book in his luggage, materialized in early 1996, and some idea of his enquiry was given by the traveller himself at the Amsterdam Conference last September. Much that Gissing saw and described in his diary, then in his book, can still be seen to-day, and the slide show with which we were treated may conceivably prompt other Gissing admirers who share his Mediterranean passion to go and have a walk on the left bank of the Galeso or take a close look at the inside of the Farmacia Leone in Catanzaro. Some record of Wulfgang Stahl's peregrinations can be found in his short bibliographical piece: "C'è novita: News from Calabria" (*Gissing Journal*, July 1998). When it appeared, two more foreign travellers, the writer of the present article and his wife, at long last responding to a long-standing invitation, were preparing for the journey, an account of which is printed hereafter. It took place in October 1998.

Meanwhile another traveller, neither French nor English, but American, who was unknown to them, had somehow been propelled on the Gissing trail by the international debate

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on the origin of the word *paparazzo/paparazzi*, as he himself explained in a private conversation. He was to return to the shores of the Ionian Sea earlier this year, still unaware of all the published comments on *By the Ionian Sea*, which he began to discover in the spring, when he got in touch with several scholars currently busy with Gissing's works. By then the annotated French translation of the travel narrative had appeared as well as other significant work on Gissing and Italy. Thanks to the following paragraphs, kindly sent by John Keahey, we take a jump into the near future:

St. Martin's Press (Thomas Dunne Books) has agreed to publish a book detailing trips I took in early 1998 and early 1999, following in the footsteps of George Gissing, who immortalized his journey in *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*. It is scheduled for publication in the spring of 2000, ninety-nine years following the original publication date of Gissing's narrative, under the title *A Sweet and Glorious Land: Revisiting the Ionian Sea*.

I first read *By the Ionian Sea* in November 1997 – precisely one hundred years from the midst of his trip to Magna Graecia, the former Greek cities in the South of Italy. It was my first experience with George Gissing; I

had stumbled upon the book more from my desire to read early travel narratives about Italy than to study a late-Victorian writer. Now that I have discovered GG, of course, I cannot stop.

To prepare for my early 1998 trip, I read Jacob Korg's biography and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. I also scoured the Internet, discovering a wealth of information on a variety of Gissing web sites.

After making the initial trip to Southern Italy and convincing the publisher – or at least my agent convinced the publisher – that there was a book there, I returned in the early part of this year and covered ground I had missed in my first adventure. Ironically, I was to discover that Pierre and H  l  ne Coustillas, who had traversed that ground in the 1960s, retraced their steps again in the fall of 1998 – in between my two journeys.

After the initial draft was written, I began contacting Gissing scholars for help with photographs and to verify some of my statements about Gissing's life. Jacob Korg, Paul Mattheisen, and Pierre and H  l  ne were most helpful. Then I sent my manuscript to Pierre prior to visiting him in France earlier this summer. He is a most precise reader. He verified the Gissing material and caught a number of typos. Those changes, contained in what became the fourth draft, are now in the hands of Thomas Dunne and St. Martin's. I suspect that, thanks to Pierre, it is one of the cleanest manuscripts they have ever received.

I am not a scholar or historian. There is no original research about Gissing, the Greeks, or the Romans, or later Italian history in this book.

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What is new are my impressions of Southern Italy and how it contrasts from the days GG walked along the shores of the Ionian Sea. George wrote for a readership that was probably as well-educated as he was about ancient history and therefore he assumed his readers had extensive knowledge of the subject matter. Current generations, of course, are not as well steeped in such knowledge, so I attempted to keep it all in perspective with a re-telling of historical events, as well as trying to shed light on the Southern Italian people and their place within a nation that, for an eternity and under numerous overlords, they believe they have never had a place in.

Gissing's travel narrative, although a major and – to lovers of travel literature – a very significant landmark in the rich tradition of foreign journeys to Southern Italy, represents only one aspect of his passionate interest in and knowledge of Italy. Recent work on the subject includes the volume co-edited by Paul Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, *With Gissing in Italy: The Memoirs of Brian Bor   Dunne* (Ohio University Press, 1999), which shows us Gissing as he was seen by Dunne in Siena, then in Rome, from the autumn of 1897 to the following spring. Professor Marilyn Saveson's review in the present supplement must be allowed to speak for itself, but it is worth noting here that Dunne was undoubtedly privileged to hear many details about his friend's ramblings in Campania, Apulia, Basilicata and Calabria. Of this journey he has little to say because in his memoirs he is mainly concerned to relate anecdotes of which he had firsthand knowledge. Yet readers of the volume will find in it a dramatic incident which out of delicacy Gissing recorded neither in his diary nor in the serial and book versions, which are not strictly identical, of *By the Ionian Sea*. The key to it is given under the word "bandit" in the subject index to *With Gissing in Italy*. Personal impressions of the book can be found on the Internet (Amazon.com) – they range from the presentation by Paul

Mattheisen to responses by Albert Vogeler, Jacob Korg and John Keahey. A review by Martha Vogeler is soon to be published in *Choice*, a journal used by librarians when ordering new books, others are expected to appear in Italy, in the wake of that by Francesco Badolato (*Corriere di Roma*, 15 June 1999, p. 15). Among the latest that have reached us is that by Jonathan Keates, an enthusiastic reviewer of several volumes of the *Collected Letters* ("Hearing giggles in the Vatican," *Spectator*, 11 September 1999, pp. 41-42). In his paragraph on Dunne Keates ironically observes: "Son of the Republican Chief Justice of Arizona, he was brought up in that peculiarly intense atmosphere of Irish-American Catholicism where the faithful often seem

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more devout than the Holy Father himself." Indeed to Gissing Dunne's religious fervour was a rich source of amusement. The anecdote about the papal mass which Gissing had promised to attend in the Sistine Chapel, Dunne having with great difficulty obtained a ticket for him, is as good as any in a book which overbrims with delightful *aperçus* of the two men's conversations. "Don't you feel you should see Pope Leo?" Dunne asked in amazement at 5.30 a.m. when he called at Gissing's *pensione* and found him in a cold sweat. "Well," the reply came, "I *would* like to see the old duffer. But I am ill."

Another volume, just out, on Gissing and Italy, is Francesco Badolato's edition of Gissing's letters from the land of the sun, *La terra del sole: Lettere dall'Italia e dalla Grecia* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 1999). The letters, translated and annotated, correspond to Gissing's three journeys to the two countries concerned; they cover the same periods as those covered by the passages from the diary in *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina* by the same editor (Rome: Herder, 1989). Besides the Taranto swing-bridge as cover illustration, the volume, a tall octavo, carries the photograph of Gissing in his macfarlane in 1895 as frontispiece, a selection of sketches from Gissing's diary, the Temple of Ceres at Paestum, watercolours of Greek sites by Maria Dimitriadou and some paintings by Leo de Littrow as illustrations in the text. The book was announced in *Il Indice dei libri del mese* (September 1999, p. 30).

Just as notable as the volumes devoted to him by specialists are the many articles and book chapters by writers who were not hitherto recognized as such. Luisa Villa's *Figure del risentimento*, with its long study of a major type of character in Gissing's fiction is a distinguished successor to the special number of *Merope* on the novelist published by the Università "G. D'Annunzio" di Chieti-Pescara (September 1993), let alone the space allowed to him in the *Rivista di Studi vittoriani* issued by the same university. An article on *Will Warburton* by Professor Villa will appear in this journal next year. And, for the record not to be too strikingly incomplete, mention must be made of the volumes, English and Italian, devoted to travel literature and to Italian towns where Gissing stayed in the 1880s and 1890s. A number of them are referred to in the following article. An additional example was briefly reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* some time ago, Martin Garrett's *Traveller's Literary Companion to Italy* (Brighton: In Print Publishing, 1998). Gissing is adequately represented in this volume with an evocation of his ramble by the Ionian Sea and an extract from his chapter on Naples.

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Anthologists, it would seem, fight shy of the diary. As regards the main towns visited by Gissing, the series published by Rubbettino on Cosenza (1991), Crotona (1992), Reggio Calabria (1993) and Catanzaro (1994) will be most helpful to readers desirous to compare his impressions with the findings of historians.

He was interested in plaques and tablets. One more, commemorating him, Coriolano Papparazzo, Ennio Flaiano and Federico Fellini, will be unveiled in Catanzaro on 23 October. Even in his more optimistic moments, including that on his deathbed when he expressed his

belief that his work would not be forgotten to-morrow, could he have dreamt of such a thing? The answer is likely to be an emphatic NO.

* * *

Revisiting the Shores of the Ionian Sea

PIERRE COUSTILLAS

Over thirty years ago, at the time Professor Jacob Korg edited the *Gissing Newsletter*, an incomplete English version of a diary my wife and I had kept while travelling in Gissing's footsteps in Southern Italy was published in that journal. We were then already immersed in topographical and other kinds of research, and the diary we kept, which was not intended for publication, but of which Jacob Korg kindly decided to print extracts, was a brief account of our experiences from Paris to Calabria and back, via Milan (we travelled by *train auto-couchettes* between the two cities, accompanied by our modest car, a Renault Dauphine), Siena, Naples, Capri, Paestum, Taranto, Metaponto, Crotona, Catanzaro, Cosenza and back to Catanzaro, on to Squillace, Locri, Reggio, back to Naples (actually Castellammare), stopping briefly at Paola on the way, then on to Monte Cassino and Siena. The rather scrappy account, which some old subscribers may remember having read in the numbers of the *Newsletter* for April, September and December 1966, and December 1967, offered a markedly personal approach to all that we had seen and heard some sixty-eight years after Gissing, in the autumn of 1897, ventured into the deep Italian South, of which he had read so much since childhood. The present account will be no less personal and, even in this scholarly quarterly in which "impertinent egos" find little space available, we do not feel that we have to offer apologies. Unlike Pascal in another – very different – context, we do not think that the "self" is hateful. We merely hope that it will never be unduly obtrusive. As we drove along or walked about, we followed Gissing very closely, but

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off and on we were also conscious that besides the immense historical background of which so many traces still confront the traveller, we were crossing the path of this or that nineteenth- or twentieth-century traveller, François Lenormant, Paul Bourget, Norman Douglas, H. V. Morton and Paul Theroux, let alone some brave pioneering compilers like Augustus Hare and the anonymous historians and scholars who helped Baedeker, Murray and others to produce volumes that no serious researcher can ignore with impunity. Throughout our journey we were in quest of what is remembered of other travellers' past, but also in a far more modest way of our own past, those twenty-three days from 16 August to 8 September 1965, which left us with such glowing memories to look back upon.

Equipped with a few books such as our 1912 Baedeker for Southern Italy, photocopies of all the relevant pages in Gissing's diary and a small notebook where miscellaneous information likely to be collected on our way could be jotted down, we left Lille on 7 October 1998 by the 10.19 TGV and reached Roissy airport within an hour. At about 15.30 we landed at Capodichino airport, glad to rediscover what Gissing called Old Vesuvius, which has of late behaved fairly decently to the hundreds of thousands of human creatures who have made their permanent homes around it. Having rented a car, we started on our way, but driving a car you are unfamiliar with in a town like Naples, where the word discipline is unknown to natives, is a nerve-racking experience. Although we had to focus most of our attention on the lawless traffic, we could easily ascertain that the poor districts had not changed considerably. An old colour postcard showing a narrow street with washing hanging out of windows or across the street that we reproduced in black and white in our French edition of *By the Ionian Sea* is not likely to

become archaic in the near future. True, the horse-drawn vehicles have been replaced by motor-cars, but the rest stands unchanged. Many Neapolitan buildings would seem to have looked old and dirty from the very day when masons decided they had completed their work.

First we wished to revisit Massa Lubrense on the Sorrentine peninsula, where John Wood Shortridge and his wife Carmela settled down with their growing family after leaving Capri in the late 1880s. It would have been rewarding to take a few photographs of the house and its surroundings as well as of the island of Capri as Gissing in 1888 and again in early 1890 saw it from the Villa Cozzolino, but owing to the congested traffic, we got there too late. The Via

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Partenope, short though it be, is the kind of road you discover only when you realise that you have just reached the end of it. As parking your car in a supposedly safe place is time-consuming, you are eventually left with the choice of acknowledging yourself beaten or of taking a snap at nightfall. In his 1878 book, *Dolce Napoli*, which disappointed Gissing when he read it at the British Museum in 1889, W. J. A. Stamer wrote that “the Massa road is ankle deep in dust” and the numerous lanes are “hemmed in by walls ten feet in height, which completely shut out the view.” We saw no objectionable dust, but the high walls are still a characteristic of the area, and the entrance to the villa, a rusty iron gate ready to creak for a fresh coat of paint, hardly allows a peep of the villa proper, and no glimpse at all of Capri beyond. The gate is supported by two pillars, at the top of which appear “Villa” on the left, and “Cozzolino” on the right. Perhaps the name, which was in use a hundred years ago, was revived in recent decades, for the owner or tenant to whom we spoke in 1965 did not know it and we had wondered at the time whether the house was the one we were anxious to locate. The two identifying words now stand out clearly on metal plates that look quite old. Perhaps after years of oblivion they were rediscovered and given a second lease of life. The house looked shut up, but a smiling old man who lives on the other side of the winding road confirmed in his best French, which was far superior to our purely passive Italian, that the shaggy garden of the villa was full of lemon- and orange-trees – the descendants of those seen by Gissing. As so often happened later, we thought that a third visit, preceded by some explanatory correspondence, would be in order.

Reaching our next stage, Paestum, of which Gissing wrote feelingly after his visit on 20 November 1888 (see diary for that day as well as text and illustrations in the *Collected Letters*), presented difficulties because of the poor signposting. Motorists travelling by night are not much helped by what they see, and distances are not indicated with sufficient frequency; when you get near to Paestum, they are indicated nowhere. But our patience – what remained of it – was richly rewarded when we at length reached the Hotel Le Palme, built on the side of a straight road which with others, parallel or perpendicular, formed a grid which daylight next morning did not make more rational than the gloom of ages in which we drove at random on our way from Massa. Le Palme is a splendid, spacious hotel inside which nobody can feel lost, linguistically or otherwise. The receptionist – Marysa to everyone around her – spoke fluently what Gissing called “the four languages,” that is English, German, French and Italian. The

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quietness of the place was only a few decibels above the silence of the ancient world so memorably celebrated at the end of *By the Ionian Sea*. Finding the temples some time after nine o'clock the next day was not easier than had been the quest for Le Palme. Decent signposts had not been planted during the night and local people were vague when it came to giving directions and reckoning distances in a jungle of roads punctuated by *semafori*. The innocent epithet *sinistro* (left) threatened to assume its English or French meaning.

Paestum has changed a good deal since 1888 or even 1965. The Temple of Neptune and the

traditionally misnamed Basilica, around which Virgil saw roses flowering twice a year, were being restored, and consequently, with scaffoldings and large plastic sheets all around them, no fit cynosure for the camera, but the smaller Temple of Ceres exhibited its loveliness in the sunshine. Excavations have proceeded regularly in the last decades, so that one can now form a clear idea of the vast area covered by the ancient city, a colony founded by Sybaris about 600 B.C. and conquered by Rome over three hundred years later, and of the situation in its midst of the three remaining temples. Some views from the air reproduced in an album on *Paestum and Vela* (Salerno: Matonti Editions, 1996) convey something of the splendour of this major Greek colony. The museum has much to offer to the visitor, notably discoveries made as recently as 1968, in the so-called Diver's Grave, with its wall painting of two lovers facing each other at a funereal feast and of the diver himself, who is shown on his way to the unknown. Both pictures would doubtless have elicited words of admiration from Gissing, who was so impressed by this dead world among which he noted a very few manifestations of life, the presence of lizards for instance; their successors are many, darting about as on that autumn day when he was walking about nostalgically, intent on reanimating the plain for his intellectual satisfaction.

Any map will show that for the modern traveller who is inclined to leave aside Paola and Cosenza for visits on his return journey, the shortest route to Taranto is across the Italian peninsula, through Basilicata. In 1965, when there were few *autostrade* and no *superstrade* linking the main towns, we had left Castellammare at 10 a.m. and arrived at Taranto at 5.30 p.m., covering 350 km in seven and a half hours, going through Salerno, Battipaglia, Eboli (best known to present-day readers and tourists through the title of Carlo Levi's book *Christ stopped at Eboli*), Vietri di Potenza, Potenza, Tricarico, Matera, Laterza, Castellaneta and Massafra. The enumeration itself conveys the inordinate length of the winding route. Now, having left Paestum

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fairly late, we thought we might be better advised not to travel via Matera, as this might delay our arrival considerably. So we first aimed at Eboli. Then, reaching Taranto via Metaponto, where we planned to stop only on our way back, would be a quicker journey. It proved to be almost too quick, since we arrived at Taranto at 6 p.m., only four hours after leaving Paestum. The route we followed, through countless tunnels and over many viaducts, was highly picturesque, superbly hilly, offering a succession of views that more or less repeated each other with their white, yellow or pink villages clinging to their crags in such a way as to discourage invaders. The main roads systematically steer clear of these small villages in which tourists, especially in autumn and winter, must be so rare as to deserve the status of a protected species – *una specie protetta*, a phrase that the editor of *Calabria Sconosciuta* uses negatively on the back cover of his quarterly magazine when he has failed to find an advertiser willing to buy that space.

As Gissing himself had noted, the town of Taranto is indeed two towns, the small *città vecchia*, situated on an isthmus which separates the gulf to which it gives its name, the Mare Grande, from the landlocked sea, the Mare Piccolo, and the *borgo nuovo*, which faces the sea and has extended considerably in the last hundred years. The 1892 edition of Murray's handbook gave the population as 30,000. Paul Holberton in his book *South Italy: A Traveller's Guide* (John Murray, 1992), a remarkable volume unfortunately spoilt by its author's frequent fits of ill-humour, says that the population of the town is now close to a quarter of a million. Coming from the Tyrrhenian side of the boot as we did, we drove through an industrial zone, with an oil refinery, which would have horrified Gissing as much as did the factory chimneys of Piraeus, then along one side of the old city, catching glimpses of the tall ramshackle buildings separated by alleys so narrow, as Gissing wrote, that "in many places one [can] touch both sides with outstretched arms," but we could not descry the cathedral dedicated to St. Cataldus, the first bishop of Taranto in the second century. The prelate's Irish origin is something of an oddity,

largely concealed by the Italianized form of his name, Cataldo, an avatar which suits well the Italians' liking for assimilation by which Gissing was so often rebaptized Giorgio for local use. A day or two after our arrival we walked to the *città vecchia* and visited the *duomo*, with its chapel inlaid with fine marbles and a bust of the saint, of life-size, in silver. Inside as much as outside, everything is close packed, and one feels the artistic influence of Byzantium, ages after Taras became Tarentum. If only stones could speak!

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Short of locating exactly the room of the Albergo d'Europa (now Residence Hotel Europa), where Gissing had settled on his arrival from Cosenza after a pause for lunch at Sibari, we could at least photograph the freshly renovated hotel from several angles: indeed he could see the old town on one side, beyond the *ponte girevole* (swing-bridge), and the Mare Piccolo and the arsenal on the other. And beyond the vast expanse of water, he could surmise the presence of the river celebrated by Virgil and Horace, the name of which, to this very day, fluctuates surprisingly. (Holberton calls it Galese.) The Galeso, which was no more signposted in 1965 than in 1897, can no longer escape the notice of the traveller bent on tracing it after reading Virgil, Horace and Martial among the Ancients, François Lenormant, Gissing, and Norman Douglas among more recent writers. Not only is there a Via Galeso, easy enough to find on local maps, but a signpost on the road to Martina Franca which tells you the way to the famous river and its banks that so many writers and travellers have sung in verse or prose. Yet, what with the tortuous lane you have to follow and dogs that try to discourage you, you may well wonder, as you proceed haltingly, whether you will eventually reach your goal. In 1965, like Gissing and Douglas we had had to enquire about the exact location of the Galeso, and it is obvious that Holberton, probably unaware of the passage of some of his more famous predecessors, did some research of his own. He wrote of Taranto and the Galeso in this strain some eight years ago:

The ancient city was founded on an ingrowing peninsula, enclosing except for a narrow channel to the sea a great basin (the Mare Piccolo) fed by freshwater streams, one of these the river Galese (Galesus) which Virgil called "black," much to the confusion of Neoclassic travellers, who sought some mineral reason. Then only a century after Virgil Martial called the same river "white." Virgil's epithet is now taken to mean densely shaded by trees; Martial was referring to the whiteness of the wool that was washed in it. (p. 116)

Densely shaded the banks certainly were in the year of our first journey, but Virgil's epithet, which was doubtless present in Gissing's mind, is even more appropriate to-day. The photographs we took thirty-three years apart show that the trees and reeds among which the Galeso makes its way have grown considerably, the reeds in particular. At first sight it seems that the brave little river, only a few hundred yards long, is practically choked by the vegetation growing in its bed. Still the swift, steady current of limpid water, where it can be seen at all, is stronger than the natural obstacles in its way, and it runs triumphantly into the Mare Piccolo, its

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peaceful race being punctuated by the cries of a variety of fowls to which the whole area is a paradise. As you walk on the left bank of the stream (the right one is not accessible), wherever the water can be seen flowing between the reeds, all sorts of fishes swimming in shoals or proudly advertising their individuality invariably reward the patient observer. A man with sophisticated tackle showed us his impressive catch, but he – modestly – refused to be

impressed. Fauna and flora were a source of wonder. We saw no goatman with his goats this time, yet goats or sheep had obviously been there recently. Following the short river to its end requires patience; however, once you are on the shore of the Mare Piccolo, the beautiful view of it and of Taranto beyond, is not one that you forget as soon as you retrace your steps.

No time had to be devoted to the quest for murex shells. About twenty years after Lenormant's fascinating peregrinations, Gissing had been told that the building of the arsenal had resulted in the huge heaps of shells being removed, and H. V. Morton, decades later, could only confirm – and explain – what happened in the nineteenth century when Taranto began to develop into a large industrial town. So, in addition to the old town, inside which we were warned at the grandly named Hotel Palace that it could be *pericoloso* to venture, we concentrated our research on sites or buildings mentioned by Gissing in his diary or his travel narrative. Thus the Aquila d'Oro, no longer extant as a hotel, where his companion from Cosenza, the commercial traveller Questa, dined better and less expensively than Gissing did at the Albergo d'Europa on 19 November 1897. A visit to the Archivio di Stato, Via F. di Palma, proved profitable as it led to the exhumation from a 1983 book, *La Città al borgo: Taranto fra '800 e '900* (Mandesa Editore) of an excellent illustration featuring the Aquila d'Oro in its heyday. The ground floor of the stately building at the crossing of the Via Margherita and the Via Umberto I is now occupied by the Credito italiano. It was a pleasure for us to realize that Gissing's name functioned as a passport: our main interlocutor was familiar with Margherita Guidacci's translation of *By the Ionian Sea*, first issued by the Bologna publisher Cappelli in his attractive series Cappelli Universale. We strongly felt we were *sulle rive dello Jonio*, though we had mixed feelings about the ecological disaster we had witnessed on our way to the Galeso – a new road had been built parallel with the railway line and heaps of rubbish signalled the presence of man as spoiler of his own environment.

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The quest for the Palazzo Mannarini (a more likely spelling than that in the diary) was but moderately successful; having been de- or re-baptized, the building was impossible to identify for certain. Wilfred Thesiger, the young English vice-consul who misstressed the name of the town in which he was temporarily living, was new in the post in 1897, and little or no trace of him in Taranto is spontaneously identifiable; he has been altogether overshadowed by a more famous son. Some four years later he was to be transferred to Belgrade. His residence while in Taranto being situated on the canal, he had a most desirable address with a view of either the Mare Grande and the *borgo nuovo* (the young woman at the Archivio favoured this choice) or the Mare Piccolo and the arsenal; his apartments were also very close to Gissing's hotel. Gissing's other personal contact, Eduardo Caruso, Soprastante dei Musei e Scavi, was the Director of the Museum, and he proved still more elusive in records. An attractively produced guide book to *Le Musée National, Tarente* (Milan: Federico Garolla Editore, 1988), which offers a history of the museum by way of introduction, ignores Caruso altogether. It mentions his predecessor (1896-97), Giovanni Patroni, adding that by the time he was replaced by Quintino Quagliati in the year after Gissing's visit, the Museum had fallen into a deplorable state of neglect. Does this strong phrase, one wonders, cast a slur on Caruso's capacities? Gissing was delighted with his jovial manner and the account he gave of E. A. Freeman's "bullying air & tone" in Sicily, but he was dismayed by the director's never having heard of the Galeso and its cultural connotations. Perhaps Caruso was only an interim director or he was primarily Superintendent of Excavations. Needless to say, the Museum has been much improved in the last hundred years, and it contains an impressive number of items, some of which we remembered having seen among the treasures exhibited in the Palazzo Grassi, Venice, in 1996. The Western Greeks occupied Taras for centuries and, as the city far surpassed all the other towns of Magna Græcia in splendour and importance, the antiquities unearthed in the

neighbourhood have helped to fill many rooms of the museum. Of special interest to the Gissing reader are those masks of which he made sketches that were reproduced in the first two editions of *By the Ionian Sea*. Being preserved in glass cases, they proved difficult to photograph, as did photos of old-time Crotona on show in that city a few days later. Paul Holberton, an art historian, writes that the Corinthian and Attic vases of the highest quality are represented in the Museum and that it is "one of the most important collection of Greek vases in the world." But the visitor

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will not grudge his admiration for the Greek marble sculpture, the mosaic fragments and the delicate jewelry on show. It is a pity the staff were less than knowledgeable and helpful, seeming stolidly indifferent to the priceless objects in their trust. Is it reasonable to speculate that they must be descendants of those people about whom Gissing wrote in his diary on 23 November: "In this place one notices how hard put to it most people are to occupy their time. The dreary empty shops, with men sprawling about on chairs." The passing of time has not greatly affected some typical Mediterranean scenes.

We had arrived in Taranto in the evening of 8 October. We left on the 11th, the end of our first stage being Metaponto, celebrated for the remains of its Greek temple in what used to be "one of the most powerful colonies of Magna Græcia," says Murray's *Hand-Book* for 1892. The distance from Taranto to Metaponto is only 45 km, and we knew that we had promised our old friend Francesco Badolato of Bovalino Marina (Calabria) and Besana Brianza (Milan) to meet him at the railway station at 12.55. He had telephoned every night since our arrival in Italy to make sure that all was well with us and he had decided to join us and revisit a number of sites known to him since childhood. But distances on the good road which skirts the shore of the Ionian Sea are quickly covered. The day was a Sunday and there was next to no traffic. So we arrived well in time to go independently to the temple and take photographs from suitable angles. Only two visitors appeared later, foreigners like ourselves. The Calabrian mountains, which had descended closer to the shore as we got farther from Taranto, did not look at their best; like the two days and a half we had spent there, that Sunday was untypical because of its clouded sky, and the temperature was more characteristic of autumn than of summer. Still we were soon to feel again, as we had done after landing at Naples, that clocks and calendar were working backward. The surroundings of the Tavola Paladina or of the Tavola dei Paladini, as Gissing preferred to write, have not changed much in thirty years. In *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean* Paul Theroux recorded his impressions in words that few travellers would not be prepared to make their own, even though they travelled east-west instead of west-east. "From Metaponto to Taranto on the coastal railway line there were miles of pine woods and pine barrens on a flat plain stretching inland from the wide sandy coast, and there were dunes nearer the shore covered with shrub and heather, some of the pine twisted sideways by the strong onshore wind. This counts as wilderness in Italy" (Penguin edition, p. 208).

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At Metaponto one revives after a long stretch of road on a barren shore. The Museum we had seen under construction near the temple, had become too small and it was now transferred to a site much nearer the railway station in a semi-rural, semi-urban environment, so that, pending our rendezvous at the station we could devote the whole of our time to a close examination of the ruins in their setting of flowering shrubs and trees and well-trimmed grass. The disfiguring wall (ten feet high, Gissing wrote) has long disappeared, so long ago that Baedeker no longer mentioned it in 1912. The full-page illustration in the first edition of *By the Ionian Sea* shows what an eyesore it was at the turn of the century and, incidentally, this black and white drawing cannot reasonably be Gissing's work, as some commentators familiar with

his talent for sketching have liked to imagine. The anonymous artist who touched up some of his rough drawings for use in the first edition is known to have had models, postcards bought on the spot for instance. Formerly we ourselves had been shown a photograph much like this black and white representation of the temple, reduced to fifteen columns of the peristyle, ten on the north and five on the south side. A surprise awaited us this time when we arrived. An Italian gentleman got out of his car at the same time as we got out of ours, and exchanged a few words with the guardian in the little office at the entrance to the ruins. On realizing that we were French, when we tried to find out whether we had to pay to go in (access is free), he addressed us in our native language, and as we volunteered the non-esoteric information that we were in the footsteps of a nineteenth-century English writer, the man spontaneously pronounced Gissing's name! He had read the Italian translation of the travel book we had in our luggage. It turned out that this comely, well-informed stranger was a professor of geology living in Rossano, a picturesque mountain town some hundred kilometres south of Metaponto, and that he collected books on travel in Southern Italy. He gave us his card, which reads Tonino Caracciolo, as well as an illustrated booklet to which he had collaborated, *Sahrawi: Un popolo in esilio*, a people he had recently come to know at first hand and whose struggle for independence he supports. Later in the afternoon, when we reached Rossano, where our friend Francesco wished to pay a brief call on a former colleague of his, we learnt that Dott. Caracciolo was a former mayor of Rossano.

Contrary to some pessimistic expectations, we succeeded in reaching the Metaponto railway station in time, stopping on our way there at a *cartoleria* which, quite surprisingly, was open on Sunday. Francesco did not have to wait. We did not ask him, but a quick look at a map

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tells the traveller that, considering the distance from Bovalino and the average speed of trains on that line which runs from Reggio to Brindisi, he must have got up very early that day so as to be in Metaponto at lunch time. This coming together was a major event in our journey; it affected its course in a tangible manner later to be related and made it even more of a success than we dared hope for. With his typical Calabrian desire to honour his guests, he had planned a few pleasant encounters of which we knew nothing. During the most part of our journey he acted as a cicerone, also as a host during our stay at Bovalino and was only to leave us at Paola on the day we left for Cosenza. But a question arose immediately – was the Metaponto station the same as that we had seen and photographed in 1965? The main building now looked all the larger as there seemed to be nobody inside or outside. There Gissing spent the rest of one night after arriving from Taranto at 4.15 a.m., being told when he woke up that “no carriage or horse was to be had [...] because a foreigner comes only once in a hundred years.” An undoubted sign that much progress has been made is that while in 1897 the little museum behind the station had been closed and its contents sent to Naples, a new museum of some genuine interest, though more modest than that of Taranto, awaits the traveller. Gissing must have been misled by his copy of Murray's guide book, which was obsolete five years after publication: “A small collection of architectural fragments found among the ruins may be seen in a house close to the Stat. Horse and Man to the Temples, 3 frs.” The plural was hardly justified. Even nowadays, very few people go out of their way to visit the basement stones rather misleadingly styled La Chiesa di Sansone. Confronted with the solitude round the station one cannot fail to give a thought to Pythagoras, as Gissing did. “Pythag[oras] died at Metap[onto] 497 B.C.,” he wrote in his diary. “They still call the multiplication table – tavola pitagorica.” In such a place, one's mind actually engages in a dialogue with the past, remote or recent. Gissing's meditations turned to Lenormant and his forty-five page chapter. The French archeologist waxed poetic on leaving Metaponto for Cotrone. Why, Dominique Fernandez asked in his 1965 volume, *Mère Méditerranée*, why has Lenormant never been reprinted? Why, we ask in turn, has he never

been translated into English? Gissing's eloquence found its way into *By the Ionian Sea* and it proved communicative, for H. V. Morton was to write feelingly of his own impressions: "Such places bear high-sounding names which live only in a few stray references from Greek and Roman writers. This is Magna Græcia; this is a country for scholars. Only those who remember

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the part played in the history of mankind by cities now ruined or vanished are able to imagine the lonely landscape as it once was, covered with streets, houses, palaces, temples and market places, and to visualize the fleets and navies of the ancient world busy in docks and harbours" (p. 209). Gissing had such visions – in Cotrone, and on his deathbed at Ispoure. He could only imagine the shores of the Ionian Sea in sunshine, a commodity too often missing in his native Yorkshire, and indeed missing in Metaponto itself during our visit.

So southward we proceeded, but the sun went on sulking, and although Francesco had secretly planned a visit to Sibari and its archeological site, no amount of bell-ringing could arouse any human attention. So we were not luckier than Gissing, who noted in his diary that "towards Sybaris, one crosses a few tracts of wild wood and strangely broken land; esp[ecially] a magnificent great wood, with many marshes and dull streams, through the middle of which flows the Sinno (the Siris)." Not a friendly land to visitors in his day, for Baedeker as late as 1912 warned them ominously: "Malarious district." Again one must give free rein to one's imagination, for malaria is now unknown along the coast.

At Cotrone, the ancient Kroton, now Crotone, we had much to do, and the considerable growth of the city, which boasted a population of only 8,000 in 1897, did not make it easier for us to find the aptly named Hotel Helios at nightfall. Our choice proved a judicious one. The tourists who had flocked south in the summer had long retreated to their homes, whether in Turin, Milan or Trieste, so peace reigned under its roof. The hotel is on the road to Cape Colonna, a memorable place on account of its situation – the farthest cape east and consequently, all things being relative, the closest to Greece. No car will carry you to that attractive, splendidly situated hotel unless you drive in bottom gear. In Room 208 you can rest comfortably. The restaurant being temporarily closed, we were instructed to go to a nearby establishment, where the noise was as plentiful as the food. To anyone who has forgotten that as a rule the Italians are rather fond of noise, this restaurant is a suitable place for recycling some basic notions *in situ*. Night had fallen early, an unsurprising "discovery" made by all foreigners travelling east, but the sun at the Hotel Helios, the sun that came from Greece and illuminated the smooth surface of the Ionian Sea, told us early that we could, indeed should, set forth as soon as possible. The single standing column of the Lacinian Promontory beckoned to us insistently. We now had a chance of doing something that Gissing, to whom Cotrone nearly

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meant death, had been unable to do. Indeed in 1965 we had approached the column and taken a photograph, but only shortly before nightfall, being accompanied by *carabinieri* and their families, *bambini* included, who had well-meaningly wished to show us the way, a sure means of making a short journey a long one. The wealth of details to be found in Gissing's diary, in his correspondence (how touching his postcards to Bullen and Clodd: "now I am lingering here, knowing I shall never see the place again, & unwilling to leave") and in *By the Ionian Sea* was present in our minds. Not only could we imagine him looking at the column with his pair of field glasses, but we remembered that pair of glasses which we had held in our own hands in 1971, when Alfred Gissing had sent it to us for the exhibition held on the premises of the National Book League in London and again later when we had carried it back to Switzerland together with other personal objects we had had on loan. Instead of taking an inland road to the

Cape, as in 1965, we were now able to follow a new road by the shore, along which Gissing would surely have walked, enjoying the beautiful view. The column stood, partly fenced off, solitary as ever, against the deep blue sea, in the silent and austere scenery of the Cape.

Of Crotona we had not seen much on our previous trip. The smoke that rose above painfully modern factories had reminded us of horrors witnessed many times in post-Victorian England; we had missed the cemetery, so graphically described in chapter VIII of the travel narrative, because the gates were already closed by the time we got there, but we had photographed it from afar and admired the view from the long promenade now running past it. To this, as our old diary testifies, should be added a visit to the *duomo* which had rather confirmed than infirmed Gissing's impressions, and glimpses of some alleys with washing hanging between the two sides *à la napolitaine*. Shrouded in the thick fog of time was the recollection of ancient Croton, one of the most famous cities of Magna Græcia, brought low from its former glory by its rivalry with Sybaris. We had seen many sites, we still had the feel of the place, but we had made no discovery of a nature that could, say, find its way into an annotated edition of the book. Perhaps unfairly, we had found it more difficult than at Metaponto to visualize the splendour of the city's history called up in a handbook like Murray's in which we read that the climate twenty-five centuries ago "was supposed to have peculiar influence in producing strength and beauty of form. Milo and many other celebrated wrestlers at the Olympic games were natives of Croton. Its fame as the residence of Pythagoras and the principal seat of his school of philosophy, contributed to raise its celebrity to the highest point.

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It had also a famous school of medicine, and was the birthplace of Alemæon, to whom the introduction of the study of human anatomy is ascribed, and of Democedes, the physician of Darius, King of Persia." (p. 267)

However, it was essentially with Gissing's own past that our minds were filled from the moment we got back into the town, and 12 October was to be a very busy day. On our way back from Capo Colonna, we stopped at the cemetery, with its thousands of graves. There was buried Dr. Riccardo Sculco, whom Gissing and Norman Douglas both vividly described, and probably most of the members of the staff of the Albergo Concordia, including the matronly hostess, whom Sculco treated so condescendingly. In that same cemetery probably also lay the arrogant *sindaco* into whose thick skull the notion that Gissing was a most disinterested scholar in the footsteps of another most distinguished scholar, François Lenormant, Membre de l'Institut de France, could not penetrate. The words *senza nulla toccare* have stuck to his name: the passage has been quoted and translated more than once. Were the graves of all those men and women, or at least of those whose names were known to us, to be found in this vast *campo santo*? Scholars feed on dates, on newspaper articles, on obituaries, on census returns, on photographs preserved by descendants, items which scholars can only find in towns or villages where records are carefully kept and classified. The staff of the cemetery were prepared to help, but their main, if not only, aid was their memory, coupled, it must be said, with a peerless knowledge of the place. Some good work could certainly be done, yet most obviously preliminary research had to be undertaken in the town hall. So there we went. Registers of deaths, if any were available for the period concerned, must be consulted. However, at this point, indeed a little earlier, luck began to assist us, though not in the way we hoped for. A few days before, our friend Francesco, who knew that we had some topographical and demographic enquiries to conduct in Crotona and that Gissing's stay in the town now assumed a semi-historical, semi-literary dimension, had written to the editor of the local paper, *Il Crotonese*, on the off-chance that he might like to publish a paragraph or two on the presence in the city of two foreigners, French people in the footsteps of an English novelist who had written at some length on Crotona as it was a hundred years ago. A message had been sent to us at the hotel that an interview might be arranged there in the

afternoon. Now, who fortuitously turned up in a room next to that we were in at the town hall but the newspaper editor himself, Signor Domenico Napolitano? Forthwith he took us to the

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albergo we had been unable to discover three decades earlier, and where Gissing, for a couple of days, had been within an ace of death.

Thanks to that disinterested guide a major obstacle in our way was cleared when he told us that the Albergo Concordia was now called Albergo Italia, to which you gain access, as in the old days, by ascending a steep flight of stairs under the arcades (now 12 Piazza Vittoria). Curiously, it looked as though the proprietress, Signora Lina Pezziniti, had been expecting our call; for instance, she had some photocopies ready to give us. It would only be mildly exaggerated to say that she knew all about Gissing who, ever since Dr. Sculco called him a poet in reply to Norman Douglas's genial questions about his predecessor, has been vouchsafed a double career in that part of the world. At least she had read *By the Ionian Sea* in its Italian version. The first thing that struck us the moment we stepped into the small hall were two large framed articles hanging on the wall, a sight which aroused appreciative exclamations. These two substantial pieces, which apparently found no readers outside Calabria, were written by Virgilio Squillace, sub-editor for the Crotone section of the *Gazzetta del Sud*, and printed in his paper to commemorate the centenary of Gissing's memorable stay in the town. The title of the earlier one, which appeared on 1 April 1997, makes tantalizing reading: "*Una vecchia fotografia rivela dov'era il 'Concordia,' citato dai tre illustri viaggiatori e studiosi nelle loro opere. Ecco l'Albergo di Gissing, Douglas, Lenormant. Sommessa proposta d'una targa commemorativa.*" The text offers a comment on the successive visits of the French historian, the English novelist (who travelled with a copy of *La Grande-Grèce* in his luggage), and the humanist and traveller over a period of some forty years, *By the Ionian Sea* being praised as "one of the most fascinating travel narratives on Southern Italy." The author rejoices that the building has suffered no structural changes since the 1890s and confirms what Lenormant wrote in chapter X of his second volume, namely that the Albergo della Concordia was indeed in the 1870s the only hotel in the town; and so it remained for another two decades, as can be deduced from Murray's *Hand-Book* ("Clean, good food. Carriage, 50c."). The article is illustrated by a photograph reproduced from an old postcard, now in the collection of Signor Mario Tassone, which shows the colonnade mentioned in chapter VII of Gissing's narrative, and the name of the Concordia in large letters fixed on the balconies of the first floor. The costumes of the people on the piazza and on the pavement definitely suggest a decade prior to the advent of the motor-car. The crucial

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Cotrone: Piazza Vittoria. The former “Concordia” was in the three-balconied building at the corner by the Cathedral

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passage establishing Lenormant’s stay in the albergo – *l’unico albergo, la seule auberge* – is quoted with another from Norman Douglas’s *Old Calabria* in its train: “The shade of George Gissing haunts these chambers and passages...,” and there follows the journalist’s reproachful admonition to the successive local authorities, who have so far failed to pay tribute to the three writers (“*Amarono questa città*”: they loved that city). Incidentally, the writer could have said “four,” for indeed Paul Bourget’s description, in chapter XXV of his *Sensations d’Italie*, dated 30 November 1890, of the only hotel there was in Cotrone tallies with that of the Concordia. Nevertheless, considering that the proprietress, whose establishment he praises with moderation, was thirty-eight years of age and her daughter twenty-three, with granddaughters of six and under, it would seem that Gissing’s hostess was an altogether different person, to date unidentified. The present landlady kindly took us along the passage described by Gissing, showing us some of the rooms, in particular the one at the far end, which she thought might have been the larger one he moved to when he was taken ill.

The second article in the lobby, published on 6 April 1997, proved no less interesting. Its title seems to announce only a repeat performance, but the contents are largely new: “*All’interno è intatto come un secolo fa l’albergo che ospitò Gissing, Douglas e Lenormant. Dal «Concordia» all’«Italia» cento anni. La visita d’un nipote del poeta.*” The illustrations are again suggestive. The first shows the façade of the Concordia in *una fotografia d’epoca* with at least thirty people on the piazza and on the pavement in front of the hotel. Again the scene suggests pre-1914 years, as no motor-car is in sight. The other illustrations are photographs of the high ceiling of a bedroom, of the ceiling arching over a balcony, and of a room with a window opening into the arcades. Obviously the present owner and her family, Lina Pezziniti together with her sister Angela and their brother Francesco Antonio, have a sense of tradition, which makes one wonder whether some of their information might be derived from old visitors’ books handed down by previous owners, in particular the Bruni family before 1949. Who was the *nipote del poeta* is a question nobody is likely to answer without some previous genealogical pondering. Alfred Gissing might have visited Crotona with some *allievi* (pupils), the latter mentioned by Lina Pezziniti as accompanying the *nipote*, since he was in charge of a Unesco school in Switzerland just after World War II, but he was no nephew of the “poet”-novelist, and anyone who met him would find it hard to imagine him moved to tears during his visit and

asking to be allowed into the rooms that he might kiss the walls. One's thoughts turn to Algernon Gissing's two sons, Roland and Alwin, but in the years 1958-60 mentioned by Lina Pezziniti, they both lived in Canada. So fresh mysteries now attach to the "unassuming, almost invisible hotel," as Virgilio Squillace calls it, an establishment which is nonetheless "*un monumento culturale di grande importanza per questa città.*"

Of course one would like to identify all the staff of the albergo in late 1897, but official records in Italy are not as easy to consult as they would be in England or in France, and the promise made the next day by Dr. Tommaso Tedesco, the architect at the Ufficio beni culturali, has not been followed by tangible results. One must be content with the sad report offered by Norman Douglas in *Old Calabria*, published in 1915, but based on information collected during visits from 1907 to 1912 according to his introduction to the Modern Library edition of the book (1928). He reviewed the "hideous gaps" made by death: "The kindly Vice-Consul at Catanzaro [Pasquale Cricelli, who behaved so amicably to Gissing] is no more; the mayor of Cotrone [Berlinghieri, whom Gissing strongly disliked] has likewise joined the majority; the housemaid of the 'Concordia,' the domestic serf with dark and fiercely flashing eyes – dead! And dead mine hostess," who seemed to be surprised at Gissing's demand for food. And dead, too, was the amiable guardian of the cemetery, "dead like those whose graves he tended, like Gissing himself. He expired in February 1901 – the year of the publication of the 'Ionian Sea,' and they showed me his tomb near the right side of the entrance; a poor little grave, with a wooden cross bearing a number, which will soon be removed to make room for another one."

Well, Norman Douglas's touching account is not to be contradicted. The guardian's grave is no longer to be seen, nor could his name be given us. But the cemetery by the sea remains "a fair green spot, enclosed in a high wall and set with flowering plants and comely cypresses that look well against their background of barren clay-hills."

The interview by Antonella Cosentini, who had in hand the current edition of *Sulle rive dello Ionio*, passed very pleasantly. During one full hour the *studioso francese* and his wife related how and why they found themselves again in Crotona. Photographs were taken, duly reproduced on pp. 1 and 7 in the *Crotonese* of the next day. "*Sulle orme di George Gissing*," reads the bottom of page 1. "*Viaggio in Calabria cent'anni dopo*," echoes page 7, which carries a photograph of Crotona, then Cotrone, in the first decade of the century. As we walked along the corridor leading to the editor's office, we noticed a framed engraving of the arcades with the

building in which Gissing's life for a time hung in the balance. This led the editor to give us a copy of a novel for the young, *Tonna*, by Falcone Lucifero (Il Crotonese, 1993; first published 1948), in which the drawing is reproduced together with others, all by Antonio Sfortuniano, of characteristic views of the town. Falcone Lucifero, a lawyer and politician, and a member of the aristocratic family mentioned by Lenormant and Gissing, has published about ten volumes, with subjects as different as Balzac, Savonarola or King Umberto II.

The afternoon saw us again in the cemetery, where an obliging member of the staff showed us around. Thus we had a chance of seeing and entering the mortuary chapel of the aristocratic Sculco family, an unadorned edifice with superposed rows of compartments large enough to allow the introduction of coffins. There lies the physician who attended Gissing for several decisive days: Riccardo Sculco, 1855-1931, a photograph of whom, given to Francesco Badolato in the 1970s, was reproduced in the *Collected Letters*. "*Padre, rendici digne di te!*" an inscription reads below his name and life dates. His son, who supplied the photograph, lies close to him: Silvio Sculco: 11.4.1901-7.3.1983. The Sculcos were to be commemorated a few weeks

later when Francesco, who had done some preparatory research in the 1970s (see his article in the *Gissing Newsletter*, "Meeting Dr. Sculco's Son," July 1974, pp. 7-8) sent Domenico Napolitano an article on the doctor and his patient, which was promptly published with photographs of the two men: "*Gissing & Sculco: Quella grande amicizia nata tra le stanze del 'Concordia,'*" *Il Crotonese*, 11-14 December 1998, p. 12. Other graves were shown us, which supplied us with information on some worthies known by name or personally to Gissing, notably the Marquis Lucifero who, like some of his ancestors, was a leading liberal and republican figure in his day, a happy contrast with a remote relative of his, the notorious sacrilegious bishop Antonio Lucifero, who played havoc with the remains of the Greek temple now reduced to a single column. Impossible to read the bishop's name without thinking of the epithets that Gissing hurled at him in his correspondence! The marble slab inside the Lucifero mortuary chapel that Gissing mentioned admiringly in chapter VIII of *By the Ionian Sea* is still there, "a good imitation of those noble sepulchral tablets which abound in the museum at Athens; a figure taking leave of others as if going on a journey." The Berlinghieris, whom the Italian edition of *La Grande-Grèce* identifies, are also commemorated in their own chapel in the cemetery, but the life dates and first name of the Marquis with the proud signature whose

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condescension and cultural deficiency angered Gissing could not be ascertained.

The castle and fortifications built by Charles V also engaged our attention, and we took a number of photos we had been unable to take the day before for want of time, in particular one of the old *municipio* or town hall and several of the former Albergo Concordia (with the *duomo* just beyond it) and its surroundings, that part of the city which Virgilio Squillace calls *centralissima*. We also found or made time to visit the small Museum, near the *castello*, a very interesting museum where we were given a 100-page booklet published by the Soprintendenza archeologica della Calabria, *Kroton: Scavi e ricerche archeologiche a Crotona dal 1985 al 1998*, an illustrated report on the most recent excavations. No one could now suggest as a novelty that "judicious excavations would probably be productive of more extensive discoveries," as Murray did in 1892. Much work has been done, judiciously one ventures to say, and the splendid results can be seen in the local museum and elsewhere. A more modest pamphlet was also available, *Il Tesoro di Hera*, which gives an account of the discoveries made in the sanctuary of Hera Lacinia on Capo Colonna. They were exhibited in the spring of 1996 at the Museo Barracco in Rome. Perhaps the most remarkable item we saw was a gold diadem of exquisite workmanship, dating from the sixth or fifth century B. C., thought to have crowned a likeness of Hera. In the Aragonese castle nearby an exhibition of framed photographs of nineteenth-century Cotrone was on; they showed the town as Gissing must have seen it, and among them were views similar to those that Virgilio Squillace had reproduced in his two articles. Alas, photographing objects protected by glass is as a rule disappointing, as we had first been reminded in the Taranto Museum. The view from the towers of the Castle over the harbour and the shore, with the hills in the background, is magnificent.

Satisfied with our work in Crotona, we set off early in the afternoon for Squillace, where Gissing had unpleasant experiences in one of the local inns. Francesco had told a local admirer of Gissing with whom we had corresponded for some years, Daniele Cristofaro, of our forthcoming journey in Calabria. Signor Cristofaro is co-author of a solidly documented booklet on his native Squillace, a guide for tourists in which he shows his familiarity with the history of the small town, and he it is who succeeded in identifying the priest whom Gissing met on the train to Reggio on 10 December 1897. He is currently completing a volume on Squillace as seen by foreign travellers, notably Edward Lear, Lenormant, Gissing and, a long time before them,

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lesser known figures such as Saint-Non, Henry Swinburne and R. K. Craven. Strikingly, his home is in Viale Cassiodoro, a name which, perhaps surprisingly to the uninitiated, still means much locally. Despite his and his family's absence, his flat will remain for us a symbol of Calabrian hospitality, a characteristic of local inhabitants which has been celebrated for a long time, by François Lenormant among the earliest travellers. And we are aware that referring to Lenormant once more in this social context is probably tantamount to an admission that we still have to acquaint ourselves with those pioneering travellers mentioned by Cesare Mulé in the early chapters of his book *Gli scrittori stranieri e la Calabria* (undated, but published in the 1960s). Our experience of hotels came temporarily to an end at Cotrone, where the very positive assessment made by H. V. Morton on page 2 of his book was more than proved: "In all the larger towns you will find new, modern hotels, most of them air-conditioned." When we were once more on our own, in Cosenza, the contrast with what Gissing had put up with (the building in which he had to test the comfort of the "Due Lionetti" still stands and makes all comparison ludicrous) was extraordinary.

Mutatis mutandis, the description of the ascent from the shore to the topmost part of Squillace given in *La Grande-Grèce* could still serve in modern guide books. Horse-drawn vehicles have been replaced by motor-cars, but if anything the enjoyment of the winding drive to those points of the small town from which you command fine views of the Ionian Sea is increased by speed. Once there, the cool narrow streets you walk along in October seem intent on telling you what shivering they will be able to cause when, in the heart of winter, the higher hill-tops around will be covered with snow. Still, as the illustration on the cover of Daniele Cristofaro's book suggests, Squillace is not all steep streets; there are new districts in which modern houses have been built, and our headquarters for two days were in one of them. The descent to the seaside is perhaps more impressive than the ascent, and we enjoyed it in the morning of 14 October, early enough to be at the townhall of Catanzaro at 10 a.m. Arrangements had been made by Francesco with his relative Dott. Renato Santoro, a Doctor of Laws who works at the town hall.

The local authorities are familiar with Gissing's travel book, all the more so as the chapters on the town are among the most pleasant and suggestive. Did he not write as an appetiser at the end of chapter XII: "In my geography it is written that between Catanzaro and the sea lie the gardens of the Hesperides"? Nowadays the visitor who comes by car had better leave his vehicle

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in a large car-park at the foot of the town and use the funicular next to it to get to the centre. Dott. Santoro was quietly awaiting us when the three of us got out of the *funiculare*. Everything had been carefully planned. In our conversation with the representatives of the *municipio*: Avv. Aldo Costa (deputy mayor for Cultural Affairs), Dott. Antonio Davoli (a municipal councillor), Dott. Sergio Dragone (a journalist of the Ufficio Stampa) and of course Dott. Santoro, we discussed the sites we wished to see and photograph, a stage preparatory to the visit proper. We were mentally guided by Gissing's notes in his diary as well as his engaging account of his stay on the "breezy height," to which the inhabitants of Cotrone, Dr. Sculco foremost among them, had urged him not to go.

Dott. Dragone is a good deal more than a journalist and a link between the local authorities and the regional newspapers. A few years ago he published an impressive study of the city, *Catanzaro: i luoghi, le persone, la storia*, a four-volume enquiry into a complex subject devoted, as the title indicates, to the geographical characteristics, the history, and the main personalities of the past as well as the buildings and institutions that make the town different from its neighbours of comparable size. The 900 pages are studded with a wealth of illustrations, 1,500 of them, but what the blurb calls "*un'opera fondamentale per conoscere Catanzaro*" sells at a

price that is very reasonable. Dott. Dragone, as his book testifies, is a prominent local historian, and to him mainly were our questions addressed. Needless to say, one of our main questions concerned Gissing's host, Coriolano Paparazzo, owner or manager of the Albergo Centrale whom Gissing, posthumously, and Federico Fellini, by choosing the sonorous surname for a press photographer in "La dolce vita," made more famous than any of the philosophers, historians, patriots, artists, and writers listed on the inside of the four-page blurb. But the said hotel keeper has so far remained an intolerable paradox. He has become posthumously the best known figure in the city or at least the one by whom the city is best known to people who are correctly informed about the true origin of the substantive "paparazzo"; yet to us he is the most obscure. The extensive research undertaken locally has so far proved altogether vain.

The Albergo Centrale, the public gardens, the Immacolata, the painted madonnas over house doors let themselves be photographed despite the ravages of time, and the Albergo as it was, for it is no longer extant as such, was somehow resuscitated when an obliging librarian miraculously found a photograph of it reproduced in a book entitled: *Catanzaro: Immagini da*

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cartoline d'epoca, by Gianni Bruni and Franco Magro. It is a four-storeyed building, at nos. 177-181 Corso Mazzini, probably built about thirty years before Gissing's visit, practically opposite the remarkable Farmacia Leone, the fame of which doubtless owes something to Gissing. Among the many pictorial documents that we brought back home is a photograph of the former entrance to the restaurant of the Albergo. You have to watch your step, as the American phrase goes, when you get in. The ground floor premises are now occupied by a "galleria d'arte," called the Galleria Centrale, in which many beautiful photographs were exhibited. From the Villa Trieste, another name for the public gardens, we could, a hundred years after Gissing, enjoy "the glorious view seaward, looking over Squillace, away to Locri," but, unlike him, we could not visit the Museum, on one side of the gardens, as it was closed, being about to undergo renovation. The Farmacia Leone, now Farmacia Tambato, roused our admiration as it did his. The outside was no fit object for the camera because of scaffoldings which temporarily imprisoned the wrought-iron griffin, the sign hung above the shop, but the inside, with its valuable ornamentation, including the decorated ceiling, remains much as it was when Gissing was shown around it by Signor Pasquale Cricelli, the then English Vice-Consul at Catanzaro. Sergio Dragone, in his book, reproduces three old photographs of the inside and one of the griffin, quoting Gissing at length and praising him for his masterly description. Most, if not all the ornaments, by common assent give the place the air of a museum as much as a pharmacy: the finely carved wood counter, the carved lion, dated 1841, at the foot of the desk, the imposing old clock, a photograph of the inside of the shop which other sources prove to have been taken in the very year of Gissing's visit, an old framed advertisement of the "Premiato Laboratorio Chimicofarmaceutico LEONE Fondato nel 1841 - Catanzaro Palazzo Fazzari," and similar mementoes dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. One can understand the legitimate pride of the chemists Nicola and Alfonso Leone (the founder's nephews) reported by Gissing when they pointed out to him "all that they had done for the beautifying of their place of business." Their courtesy was echoed, as it were, by the present-day pharmacist, who did her best to make easier for us the taking of photographs of all these objects. Assuredly her establishment, still known to the people of Catanzaro as the Farmacia Leone, belongs to the cultural patrimony of the city.

Part of the walk round the sights of Catanzaro took place late in the morning, part after lunch, and by then we knew that it was the intention of the local authorities to organise a small

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international Gissing symposium and to put up a plaque on the front of what used to be the Albergo Centrale – a plaque which would commemorate Gissing and his host, linking them up with Federico Fellini, through whose film *Paparazzo/paparazzi* has become an international word, about the origin of which there was much discussion in the press of various countries in 1997. The appropriateness of this plan will appear striking to anybody familiar with the chapters on Catanzaro in *By the Ionian Sea*. The description of Gissing's impressions on the morning after his arrival is a fine example of his best prose, a suitable passage for any anthology on South Italy as seen by foreign travellers. Indeed some of our most pleasant discoveries were made in the municipal library, the Biblioteca comunale de Nobili, where its director, Signora Maria Teresa Stranieri, and her assistant Giacomo Borrino, showed us a number of Italian books, hitherto unknown to us, in which Gissing's journey in and book on the shores of the Ionian Sea are commented upon. A few of them are worthy of the attention of bibliographers, notably a quarto volume: *Calabria: Storia, arte e costume*, edited by Mario La Cava (Rome: Editalia, 1975), which reproduces the best part of three of Gissing's chapters on Crotona, Catanzaro and Reggio. The library holds a copy of an 1880 edition of Baedeker which we consulted in the hope of finding some details about the *alberghi* where Gissing stayed, but neither the proprietor of the Albergo Concordia in Cotrone nor that of the Albergo Centrale in Catanzaro appeared in it, and no hotel at all was given in the entry on Squillace. Gissing mentions an announcement of a theatrical performance in the Teatro comunale which he did not attend. Short of tracing the two-part programme, we could see a photograph of the inside of the theatre at the time when demolition had begun. It is to be found in chapter II, "Teatri di Catanzaro," of an unidentified book on the city. We were shown such a number of books that, when photocopies were produced, the indispensable bibliographical references were no longer easily traceable. The author of the book wrote at the end of the chapter that the old theatre was pulled down in March 1938.

After this very full day in Catanzaro, where not all that Gissing lovingly described still awaits the visitor – the old *duomo* was destroyed by the flying fortresses of World War II – the funicular took us down to the car-park, and we drove back to Squillace. Next morning on reaching the local newsagent's, wondering whether Dott. Dragone had made time to write an article on the Gissing project after he had left us at noon the previous day, we were surprised to find three articles on the subject in the local press: "*Sulle tracce di Gissing*," *Gazzetta del Sud*, 15

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October, p. 22; "*In città sulle orme di George Gissing*," by r.c., *Il Quotidiano della Calabria*, p. 16; and "*In cantiere un simposio internazionale di studio sullo scrittore inglese: Sulle orme di Gissing 'turista' in Calabria*," by Felice Pagano, *Il Domani della Calabria*, p. 17. Once we had taken a preliminary look at these friendly tokens of our presence in the deep South, we visited Squillace proper, of which we had not seen much in 1965, the weather having been a replica of that which Gissing had deplored in 1897. We had seen no one in the streets except a postman with a bag that was not overfull. We had had free access to the ruins of the old Norman castle, taking a photograph through a hole in one of its ramshackle walls. We knew that Gissing had given an uninviting description of the town itself, a description which H. V. Morton did nothing to brighten when, like his predecessor, he decided to swerve from the coast, go into the mountains and catch a peep or two of "the venerable town of Squillace," the birthplace of Cassiodorus and, Morton dutifully noted, "the place to which he retired in old age to found a monastery on the family estate." But our fading impressions, as well as the account supplied by Morton, with the exception of his evocation of the remote past of Squillace, had to be thoroughly revised. The Norman castle, where we had only encountered a stray quadruped or two, is now regarded as a historical monument worth preserving, as an architectural treasure to be protected. So much so that the brand new entrance gate, that no battering-ram, Norman or

modern, could break open, was locked and seemed to inflict upon us an “everlasting no,” much to the amusement of two Italian schoolgirls who stood by.

When you see Squillace to-day, with its castle something of a brightly consolidated ruin, you can hardly fail to realize that the Southern Development Fund, the Cassa del Mezzogiorno, has produced excellent results. We have a photograph of the entrance, taken in 1994 by our friend Francesco, which shows it visible only through scaffoldings. Gissing would have chuckled at the prospect of centuries-old ruins being repaired in Cassiodorus' home town. Doubtless the old problem of the South is still there – you do not see many young people about and you wonder where the population of the town as it appears in recent census returns may be hiding themselves. Definitely not in its historic centre, remarkably clean where it used to be so squalid decades and decades ago. And you do find attractive little shops where you can buy what tourists look for, from postcards and stamps to pottery, a local speciality. It is somewhat difficult to imagine until you are on the spot or abruptly remember the broad lines of the history

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of Squillace, that it was, and still is, the seat of a bishop. There clings to the city centre, where few tourists would venture to drive through the steep, very narrow streets, without pavements, lest meeting another car might prove difficult, a medieval atmosphere, but none of the objectionable aspects Gissing deplored. What Paul Holberton has to say about the recent history of the place fills a big gap; he met the mayor, an enlightened conservative, it would seem. At about midday, we visited the *duomo*, which was being restored. It is not an ancient building. The Roman cathedral erected in the late eleventh century suffered the fate of most buildings in this land of earthquakes when it was destroyed in the memorable year 1783.

A strange happening – fresh evidence that we live in a small world – may be recorded in passing. When we noticed, first outside, then inside the cathedral, the presence of two fairly young men with big cameras slung across their shoulders, it occurred to us that they might agree to take a photograph of the three of us with our own *macchina*. Of course such assistance could not be refused. It turned out that the elder one, having been brought up in Hyères, the Provençal town, spoke French as fluently as his native language. He was currently collecting pictorial material for a volume about Calabrian churches, but his firm published postcards of regional interest and he gave us two folding sets of eight. Inside the cover of one of them, a surprise awaited us. The title printed in green ink reads: “*Valle del Crocchio: ‘Nei giardini del Mediterraneo,’*” followed by “*Nella mia geografia sta scritto che fra Catanzaro e il mare si trovano ancora i giardini delle Esperidi’ (George R. Gissing - Sulle rive dello Ionio - 1897).*” Below the last two cards, symmetrical with the top part, was a text in Italian signed “M. F. M.,” in which Gissing was again mentioned. We pondered on this remarkable occurrence, bearing the initials in mind. Only a few days later, when we were in the presence of the man himself did we realize that “M. F. M.” meant Mauro Francesco Minervino, our Paola correspondent. We had missed a line, in diminutive type, below the publisher's imprint (GAL “Valle del Crocchio, Cropani, Catanzaro, Calabria) in which his name is printed in full.

Early in the afternoon we went to see the so-called Devil's Bridge (*il ponte del diavolo*), to which a medieval legend is attached, duly related by Daniele Cristofaro in his *Guida turistica* on the town. Gissing did not stay long enough to walk as far as the bridge (considering its present state, crossing it would amount to tempting the devil in a new manner), but he did catch a glimpse of the convent and church of Santa Chiara, ruins that still await restoration and not to

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be missed by the Gissingite who travels with a copy of *By the Ionian Sea* and the relevant passage of the diary in his luggage. Once more the effects of the 1783 earthquake are all too

conspicuous. The last stage of our enquiry – that which concerned Mons Moscius, alias Coscia di Stalletti, and the site of Cassiodorus fishponds – was undertaken in the company of a worthy guide, Daniele Cristofaro's brother, Valerio, whose familiarity with those parts is enviable. The views of the Gulf of Squillace to be had from the top of the mountain are magnificent, and from one point of vantage, within walking distance of the tunnel near which Gissing talked to men working on the railway track, we could indeed see hollow rocks where, before the successive earthquakes seriously altered the topography of the coast, the fish preserves of Cassiodorus may well have been situated. This is a suitable debate for the next symposium on the man who wrote a *History of the Goths* and was private secretary to Theodoric the Great, for there is indeed a considerable amount of activity going on locally about this engaging figure who appealed so much to Lenormant and Gissing, and was not unknown to Norman Douglas. In retrospect, it is strange to think that the two most memorable events in Gissing's very short stay at Squillace should have been connected with him – and with his unfortunate experiences at the variously named inn. It was, however, a minor satisfaction to us that we could take a photograph of the former "Osteria Centrale," alias "Albergo Nazionale," from the terrace of the home of Daniele and Valerio Cristofaro's hospitable parents.

On leaving Squillace and its environs, as the old guide books put it, our next stopping-place was one that had long been fixed in our minds, Bovalino Marina, Francesco's home town. His repeated invitations over the years were at long last to take a concrete form. On our way there, I thought of many things, but of one of them I could not have thought at all before we reached the penultimate part of our journey. Francesco Badolato, we have hinted, likes to organise his friends' sojourns when they come close to the sole and the tip of the Italian boot, that is when Reggio is not far ahead. For years he has been in touch with the Anglo-Italian Club of that city, a club founded by Ernesta Spencer Mills and her husband, whose names appeared in the ancestor of this journal, the *Gissing Newsletter*. About the time of our arrival in Italy Francesco had approached the present-day President of the Club, and it was their considered opinion that a person who had been lecturing in his university for several decades and who, like Gissing, had come within sight of Sicily, would not shy at the prospect of giving a (nearly) extempore talk on Gissing and his distinguished travel narrative a hundred years after

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the trip recounted in it. Thus it was that in the morning of 16 October, still unaware that the lecture had been announced in the *Gazzetta del sud* of the previous day (Reggio edition, "Venerdì conferenza dell'Anglo-Italian Club," p. 22), the unadventurous traveller found himself scribbling a few scrappy notes for almost immediate use. The comparative informality of the whole affair, with Signora Carla Sabbione in the chair, made it less of a perilous adventure than had been feared or imagined. Gissing, it was clear to the lecturer, was not unknown in Reggio, about which little enough is said in *By the Ionian Sea*. Photographs were taken, a local television man was seen roaming with his camera round the room, cat-footed, but as visible as a cat on a roof. The talk and the dinner that followed will remain a bright spot in our Calabrian experiences. We had had an opportunity earlier to meet a historian known to us through his books, Agazio Trombetta, author of *Saluti da Reggio Calabria: Radici e Immagini* (Reggio: Corpododici Edizioni, 1993), which shows what Reggio was like before the 1908 earthquake. We now met some correspondents like Signora Luisa Casanoto, a former President of the Club, and Michael Cronin, a contributor to this journal. Of the presents we received we particularly treasure *Il Grande Libro della Basilicata e Calabria*, ed. Enrico Sturani (Milano: Mondadori, 1987), which is at once a history and a geography of the two provinces, and offers a suggestive link between past and present. D'Annunzio said that the *Lungomare* at Reggio offers one of the most beautiful views on earth, and when you are on the spot, wherever you have travelled on the surface of the globe, you do not have the heart to contradict such an enthusiastic statement.

Evidently Reggio nowadays has but few relics of the past to show that Gissing chose to list and describe in his diary. Yet some modern writers like Paul Theroux, in his *Pillars of Hercules*, readily think of him when they reach the Straits of Messina. Some Roman remains that Gissing may have seen are still there by the *Lungomare*. The cathedral has long been rebuilt, but when you compare a pre-1908 view of its front with a postcard you bought recently (if you found one to buy, that is; an attempt not to be made on Sundays), you find that the old *duomo* did not really serve as a model. For the sonorous Latin words from the Acts of the Apostles running across the whole front that Gissing so pleasurably transcribed, a Greek version has been substituted, carved round the main portal. He regretted that of Rhegium little was discernible above ground, that modern Reggio, rebuilt after 1783, should look so new, that its streets should be so regular. If anything, his impressions would be reinforced to-day. Still the Norman fortress remains. The

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population of the city was about 16,000 at the turn of the century; it has increased tenfold. Despite the dreadful succession of catastrophes, natural or due to man's boundless capacity for evil, with which the history of the town is studded, the visitor primarily thinks of the present when walking along its streets, level or ascending in the vast amphitheatre where its invisible yet painfully remembered history has been unrolling itself dramatically or peacefully since its foundation about 720 B. C. What Gissing read in Murray's need not be updated: "the climate is particularly healthy, and adapted for the production of the fruits and flowers of both hemispheres; the date-palm attains a considerable size, and produces fruit; the castor-oil plant abounds in the gardens; the roads are bounded by the American aloe and the cactus, and the neighbourhood is one continued grove of orange, lemon, and citron trees." As though to make the beauty of the scenery even more enchanting, with Etna in front of you and Aspromonte behind, the bay of Reggio is well-known for the optical phenomenon called Fata Morgana; but it is of rare occurrence, and few travellers have been privileged to see it.

For lack of time we did not conduct any ambitious or unexpected enquiry in Reggio. After the evening meal on 16 October we drove back to Bovalino in the dark. The distance is over fifty miles and we did not reach the Via Calafapetra until 1.30 a.m. We knew we should be going again two days later, but that was a Sunday and there are many things that tourists cannot hope to do on a Sunday. For a change we visited a small town inland, Stilo, on the Saturday. It is picturesquely built in terraces, below perpendicular precipices, and famous for the splendid view of the Ionian Sea you have from it as well as for its small Byzantine church, called La Cattolica, which in Gissing's time you could not hope to reach in a diligence from the station by the sea in less than three hours. He had no chance of seeing it from his railway carriage some time after his conversation with the bright boy from Sostene, Fedele De Luca (whose card has passed from Gissing's hands into ours), and the parish priest of San Nicolà a Badolato, Don Giuseppe Minniti. On 18 October we drove again to Reggio, where Signora Sabbione showed us round many rooms of the National Museum, doubtless the most important south of Naples. Her expert comment was a treat – memorable will remain such sights as the prehistoric skeletons and the world-famous bronze warriors rescued from the bottom of the sea off nearby Riace in 1972, the equestrian Dioscuri statues and the many votive tablets from Locri. For

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material reasons, the visit lasted about an hour only – a succession of delights – and it culminated with a most unexpected discovery in the second-floor picture gallery. All readers of *By the Ionian Sea* have doubtless felt curious about the passage in the last chapter where, while deploring with the curator that the Italian government has not yet cared to take this fine *museo civico* under control, Gissing remarks that "place had been found on the walls for certain

modern pictures of local interest.” The descriptions he offers had made us despair of ever identifying the artist by then “*Morto! Morto!*” The two paintings, we were convinced, had perished in 1908; and we could entertain no hope that, unlike the visitors’ book with Lenormant’s and Gissing’s signatures nicely preserved, they had escaped the fit of gigantic madness of Earth the destroyer. But Signora Sabbione – a nice case of the nonspecialist knowing more than the specialist – had the answer. The two large paintings, entitled “La Quiete” (1868) and “Aspromonte” (1869), *olio su tela*, in perfect condition, hang side by side in the little *pinacoteca*, and the artist Giuseppe Benassai (1835-1878) has now been traced in several reference books. As for the despondent curator, Signor Claudio Sabbione, an archaeologist who supervises the excavations at Locri, has found some information about him in a specialized publication which is not likely to reach many foreign libraries, the *Bolletino dell’Associazione Amici del Museo Nazionale di Reggio Calabria, Klearchos*. In Volume XXIV (1982) D. Coppola published a long article on antiquities and the fine arts in Calabria Ulteriore I and the Museo Civico of Reggio as reflected in the *Archivio di Stato* from 1840 to 1916. In this 80-page article, the author mentions the first few directors and their assistants after the foundation of the museum in 1882 and gives one to understand that in the 1890s Giuseppe Vazzana, the *custode* that Gissing met, was allowed much freedom by the then directors, who were markedly less active than the earlier ones. Evidence of his zeal is noticeable in the praise he was given in 1886 as a “*diligente ispettore*.” Moreover his “*Carta archeologica di Calabria*,” prepared in 1893, proved very useful as it supplied a detailed inventory of all the recent archeological discoveries. (This map was deemed of sufficient interest to be published in *Klearchos* in 1966.) However, a few years after Gissing’s visit, Vazzana was involved in an important scandal. In 1901 he was accused of misappropriating gold coins given to the museum, and, as he had been for years the only person who held the keys of the collection of medals and of the show-cases, he was dismissed. Yet, when the case was taken to court in 1903, Vazzana

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was acquitted and reinstated, but it is not known whether he recovered his former post. In retrospect the affair looks unclear.

On leaving the Museo Nazionale, which may well have closed on our heels, we could again measure the full extent of Calabrian hospitality at lunch time in the home of a medical practitioner, Dott. Enzo Misiani, whose invitation had reached us through his brother-in-law, Dott. Renato Santoro, our main personal contact in Catanzaro, who was to throw much useful bibliographical light on some difficulties encountered at the local library. To Dott. Misiani we owe the discovery of one more Italian book of Gissing interest, *Cara Catanzaro*, edited by Beppe Mazzocca and Antonio Panzarella (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 1987, reprinted 1991). In this heavy quarto of 478 pages, with 38 essays printed on glazed paper and some 370 illustrations, we found much to please us. For instance, an excellent reproduction of Domenico Scarpino’s photograph of the Albergo Centrale taken c. 1905, when the palazzo was in much better condition than today and the address was Hotel Centrale, Corso Vittorio Emanuele; also one of the interior of the Farmacia Leone in 1897, with a very appropriate legend – “*La stupenda Farmacia è sulla strada principale della città. E davvero l’interno mi stupisce*” G. Gissing” – and many buildings and streets photographed at a time when they were not likely to have changed since his visit. But the most extraordinary thing in the volume is the essay by Nicola Siciliani De Cumis, “Nel mare Jonio” (pp. 353-54), in which the author observes that the continuing debate on the cultural level of the city started on 29 October 1900, when the Catanzaro weekly *La Giostra* commented in a first page article on chapter XIII of *By the Ionian Sea* as serialized a few weeks earlier in the September number of the *Fortnightly Review*. That Gissing could have understood the local dialect was thought to be unlikely. Besides, cafés were mostly frequented by vagabonds. To us, a hundred years after *La Giostra*

published the article, the most astonishing aspect of the event is that a Catanzaro newspaper, at a time when Gissing's travel narrative was still unavailable in book form, should have reacted so promptly to his opinion of the intellectual level of at least some inhabitants of the Calabrian town. Who subscribed to the *Fortnightly Review* locally, one wonders? Did Gissing ever hear of the sceptical remarks triggered by his friendly assessment of what he had heard and liked in the little frequented southern town? This would be most unlikely. We know of no contact with the genial Vice-Consul Pasquale Cricelli after 1897. Three years after his passage on the "breezy height" the *giornalista-viaggiatore*, as he was strangely called in *La Giostra*, only held converse

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about Calabria with his own recollections. Thanks to Dott. Misiani and Dott. Santoro some more progress in the quest for the background and aftermath of Gissing's visit to Calabria has been made. It is becoming increasingly clear that the material on the subject that had been collected until a few years ago was but a small part of what is actually awaiting the enterprising researcher. Sources of information do exist and, when properly identified and exploited, the work involved in further enquiries is often rewarding. Thus the catalogue of a cultural exhibition held earlier this year in Catanzaro, besides quoting significantly from *By the Ionian Sea*, offers much information on the local Museo Civico and its director in Gissing's time, Oreste Dito, a local historian whose achievements were not inconsiderable. The regional authorities, for their part, do their best to keep Gissing's memory green. A beautiful album, now in its third edition, *La Calabria*, with texts by Saverio Strati and photographs by Renato Sandrini (Rome: Mario Giuditta Editore, 1996), ends with a substantial quotation from Gissing's remarks on the conversation overheard in a Catanzaro café – the very passage selected for critical comment by *La Giostra* almost a hundred years earlier, and places him in a nostalgic retrospective context. The photographs of landscapes and townscapes in the book, not a few of them connected with the main stages of Gissing's journey, together with the sensitive, poetic evocation in four languages by Strati, make of this volume an apt *invitation au voyage*.

We left Reggio after a brief visit to Luisa Catanoso, who would have been a good guide or adviser concerning some local problems with which we are still confronted, for instance the identity of the young man who fell in 1860 in the fight against the Bourbon and in whose memory a tablet (partly transcribed by Gissing) was put up in a local street – a tablet likely to have perished in turn in 1908. But we had to return to Bovalino and do some packing in view of an early departure for Paola the next day. The journey across the Aspromonte and along the Tyrrhenian Sea is an enchantment. Our experiences in that part of our journey had little enough in common with Gissing's. He travelled from Reggio to Naples by night. "At Paola (full moon)," he noted in his diary, he "bought some cacio cavallo and bad wine." We stopped at Belmonte to buy very special (and very tasty) dried figs, and arrived at Paola, where we had an appointment with Dott. Minervino, at midday and in full sunshine. Directly we managed to find him on the Central Piazza – traffic in Paola streets is only second to that in Naples with regard

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to its difficulties and dangers, contrived by nature as well as by man and his labours – we were whisked away to the town hall. The Mayoress, a senator of the Italian Republic, received us graciously, attended by one of the deputy mayors and two ladies, an urbanist and a historian. English travellers who published accounts of their adventures in Southern Italy at a time when foreigners rarely ventured further down than Naples are so much liked by cultured Southerners that any public expression of gratitude, however belated, is unlikely to surprise the knowledgeable observer. As Virgilio Squillace wrote in his two articles on Gissing at Crotona, how can local authorities better acknowledge their debt than by giving the traveller's name to a

street or a square? Such a project in Paola was briefly discussed, and it is to be hoped that materialization will follow before long. “Mia sposa, signore!” One can imagine the scene on the beach – the husband taking hold of that large yellow leather suitcase described by B. B. Dunne in his recollections of Gissing, and letting his burden-bearing wife carry it straight up to the *albergo* from which the traveller’s peregrinations were going to start.

The cobbled road he followed from the beach is still there, and the entrance to what used to be the *albergo* where he stopped for breakfast prior to bargaining for a carriage is hardly more inviting to-day than it was in 1897; indeed it is on a par with that of the “Due Lionetti” at Cosenza. With its six windows on the top floor, the establishment was much larger than the entrance would lead one to expect. A few lemon trees and shrubs still grow at the bottom of the courtyard. Although the town, which had a population of about 8,500 in Gissing’s time has now reached about twice that figure, the sloping historical district that Gissing traversed does not seem to have changed considerably in a hundred years; the lamplight above the door of the former *albergo* hardly invites you to look inside. Still, as in Cosenza again, the old houses in the street have a congenial air reminiscent of the omnipresent decrepitude of Venice. In order fully to understand the situation of the “Leone” as Gissing brilliantly described it in chapter II of his book, not only is a visit with a capable cicerone like Mauro Francesco Minervino desirable – his knowledge of the extremely picturesque city is admirable – it must be assisted by the kind of pictorial material which he has sent in the last decade. The attractively illustrated booklet *Città di Paola: Guida Turistica* (1989), of which we have a copy in front of us (it is partly his work), is a precious aid because it contains a number of photographs with views of the “Leone” in topographical context as well as views of the seaside, of the alleys in the oldest part of the town,

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of the Piazza del Popolo with its large fountain, just above the “Leone,” of the back of the *albergo*, where, from the room into which he was led, Gissing had “a delightful prospect.” No wonder that with such a sight in front of him, the whole town bathed in sunshine, “the calm splendour of the early morning put [him] into happiest mood.” The “rushing fountains” where he had seen women draw “fair water in jugs and jars of antique beauty” during his walk about the town can still be seen, not far from the Piazza del Popolo, and an old illustration of unknown origin that Dott. Minervino gave us supplies their corporate name, *Fontana sette canali*. To judge from the women’s dress, the photo must have been taken about Gissing’s time. The water runs from two perpendicular rows of spouts to which you gain access from a platform of which only the paving seems to have been renewed. We saw the remaining tower of the old castle above our host’s home, and the railway station down by the shore, very likely rebuilt since the 1890s. It was in that last place that we bade farewell to our friend Francesco. Reaching Bovalino via Reggio by train before the day’s end was just feasible. We knew that without him our journey would not have been half what it was in interest and enjoyment. Our gratitude was commensurate with them.

According to a Michelin guide book we had procured shortly before our 1965 trip the distance from Paola to Cosenza is 42 km, and the road which winds up to the top of the hills is extremely picturesque. It offers magnificent views of both mountains and sea, but neither in 1965 nor in 1998 did we follow that road, which Gissing describes, passing “from the zone of orange and olive and cactus [...] to that of beech and oak.” The fact is that a new, modern road has been built in the last few decades, probably as picturesque as the old one in its way, but as we followed it in the wake of Dott. Minervino’s own car at nightfall, we had no chance whatever of enjoying the landscape. An impression lingers that we have missed much, in particular the village of San Fili, which our French guide book describes as “*accroché à la montagne*.” Getting to the Royal Hotel in Cosenza and parking the two cars near it was extremely difficult, but the hotel itself, like the others where we had put up was very good.

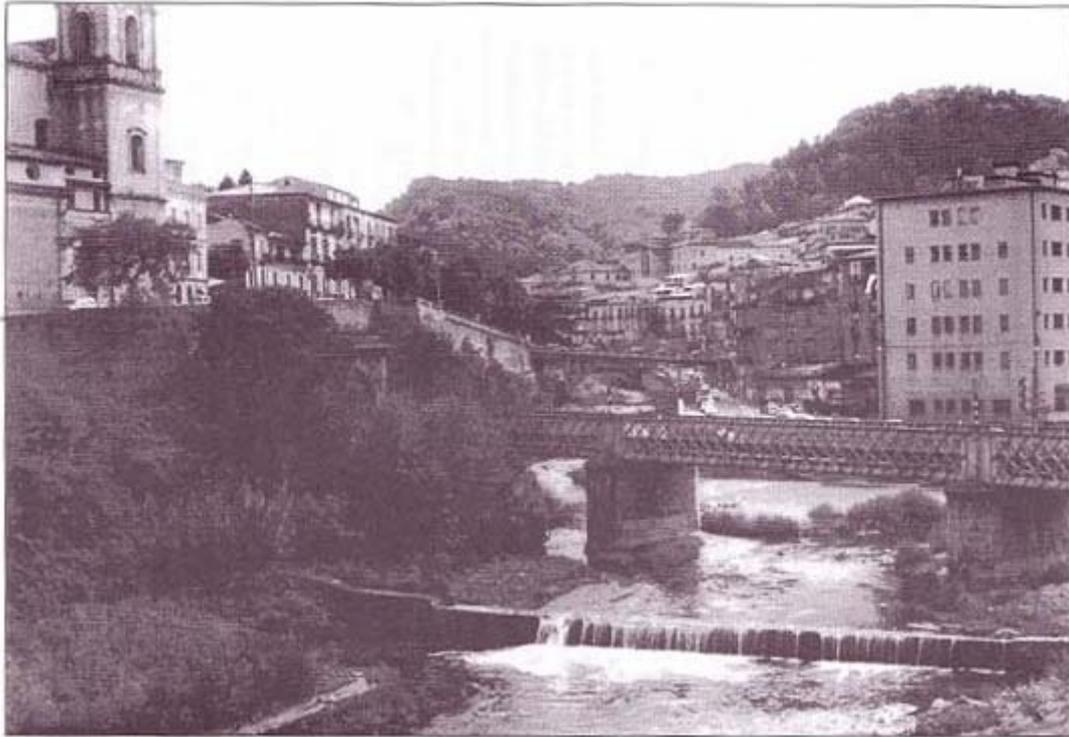
Gissing, who was sceptical of progress in general, would have been cheered up by the progress achieved by the Italian hotel trade. We were on our own again and on familiar ground, since we had visited Cosenza on 31 August 1965, taken photographs of the main sites mentioned in *By the Ionian Sea* and the diary, notably the old town along the Crati, the confluence of the latter with the Busento, and the entrance to the notorious “Due Lionetti,” references to which have

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become common in books that describe Cosenza. It is true, as he says, that Murray recommended it in the 1890s (“with a good Trattoria”) and mentioned no other hotel. The Albergo Vetere, “at the top of the town, overlooking the public garden, and with full view of Sila,” which he discovered too late, must have been of recent foundation. By 1912 the Baedeker had given it pride of place (“near the gardens, by the theatre, with view, room with one bed 2½-3 francs”), and the “Due Lionetti” had been ousted.

The old town has not changed much in recent years, and the Corso Telesio, where the former wretched hotel will not easily be discovered by the traveller, is just as it used to be, with paving stones that look ante-Victorian. A young lady of the grandly named Centro comunale di promozione turistica who was, we thought, delighted to have an opportunity to leave her office and have a walk with foreigners, showed us a number of sites of interest. At the Biblioteca Civica, founded in 1871, the author index supplied us with a reference that was new to us. *Memoria del Sud: Pagine de scrittori europei del sette e ottocento* (Napoli: Benvenuto, 1985) apparently contains on pp. 119-21 an extract from *By the Ionian Sea* entitled “La Colonna dorica.” The beautifully illustrated leaflet on the town we were given at the Tourist Office has a message from the local authorities headed with “A Cosenza si possono trascorrere magnifici giorni N. Douglas,” that is, the opening words of chapter XXI of *Old Calabria*: “You may spend pleasant days in this city of Cosenza.” The leaflet offers panoramic views of the main buildings and places we visited: the terraced houses on the left bank of the Crati, the Liceo Bernardino Telesio, named after the main historical figure of Cosenza, a courageous philosopher who looked forward, the Gothic cathedral, the Statue of Telesio on the Piazza XV Marzo, and the *castello* we were to visit the next day. The new Teatro Garibaldi that Gissing mentions, only completed in 1905 and damaged on several occasions, is a stately pile in excellent condition, and when we opened a door to catch a glimpse of the inside, a member of the staff immediately volunteered to show us round. The theatre has been renamed Teatro Rendano, in memory of the pianist Alfonso Rendano. The public garden next to it, with its many trees of varied species, is even more than a hundred years ago a haven of peace, high above the traffic along the Crati and at some distance from the Ponte Alarico and the railway bridge on which we did not see a single train pass. At first sight, the two marble inscriptions that Gissing found so striking on the front of the new theatre have been nicely preserved and set on walls on each side of it. The one dated 1870 can be read in both the diary and *By the Ionian Sea*, but the

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The confluence of the Busento and the Crati at Cosenza

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other, longer, one is no more that seen by Gissing. It is a plaque put up to commemorate the first centenary of the sacrifice of the martyrs of 15 March and 11 and 25 July 1844. So only research conducted in the Biblioteca Civica di Cosenza could possibly bring up to light the old inscription.

The much older mystery concerning the grave of Alaric, the King of the Goths who, dying at Consentia in 410, is traditionally believed to have been buried at the junction of the two rivers, remains as dark as it was. We can, as Gissing did, reread Gibbon on the subject or read his own comments in *By the Ionian Sea* and in the extraordinary letter to Walter Raleigh written from Cosenza on 19 November 1897. The historic episode makes dreadful reading; together with the vision of Hannibal walking through Consentia on his way to Croton, it helps one to try and visualize that barbaric age when Rome was no longer the Rome that travellers in Gissing's footsteps have attempted to imagine. H. V. Morton, in his book previously mentioned, was somehow engaged in a dialogue with Gissing in the 1960s when he settled in a hotel room equipped with television and air-conditioning, commanding a view of the two rivers mingling their waters. The old dream simply will not die. In a town like Cosenza, the traveller with a historical consciousness can hardly banish his obsession with the past. And if he looks up after pondering on that site where a king and his treasure are thought to have been buried – “perhaps the most dramatic funeral in history,” says Morton – he will see the ruins of an old castle, occupied in 1194-97 by Henry VI, the son of Federico Barbarossa, as the Italians call that shadowy figure. With Mauro Francesco Minervino we visited these ruins in our third and last evening in Cosenza. The castle was unable to resist the succession of earthquakes which occurred in 1783, 1854, 1870 and 1905, but, as in Squillace, the ruins have been repaired. The view from this height over the valley of the Crati and the Sila is superb.

Our journey was drawing to an end. The 21st of October saw us driving north-west to Naples. In the old days the slowness of motoring on the picturesque provincial roads had taught

us that it was wise to give oneself plenty of time. So we rose early, but there was no obstacle in the way of a prompt journey to Naples. Northern Calabria and the interior of Campania are not the Sorrentine peninsula; besides we followed the *autostrada*. Shortridge had given us more trouble than Gissing in his geographical quest of ancient and medieval history. We arrived at Naples airport two hours before checking-in time. The smell of hot tarmac was distinctly less

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pleasant than that of the Mediterranean vegetation that could have been enjoyed only a few miles away from Capodichino. But personal research had made a sizeable step forward in a congenial and semi-exotic atmosphere. Further projects were afoot, corresponding to gaps that remained unfilled. On our return we should turn again to all those travellers whose books were on our shelves. Not only had our comprehension of Gissing's cultural tastes and experiences become a little deeper. We now felt better equipped to put *By the Ionian Sea* in a pluri-dimensional context.

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Book Reviews

With Gissing in Italy: The Memoirs of Brian Ború Dunne, edited by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999.

Students of George Gissing might well have thought, following the publication of the diary, the notebooks, and the nine volumes of letters, that we knew the novelist's personality as well as it was possible, a century later, to know it. Now, however, with the appearance of Brian Ború Dunne's memoirs, we have a whole new perspective on Gissing, and what an affable, funny, companionable human being he was, indeed.

Brian Ború Dunne (1878-1962) and George Gissing (1857-1903) were fellow lodgers in Siena, where they met on 29 September 1897. Dunne was a 19-year-old American on an extended tour of Europe – well-educated, friendly, and perceptive. Gissing, aged 40, at the height of his literary career, was escaping the domestic horrors of his second marriage by indulging in his third trip to Italy. After three weeks in Siena, Dunne went on to Rome, where Gissing also settled, following his five-week tour of the Calabrian coast. The two saw each other often in Rome during the winter. Gissing introduced his young friend (now 20) to H. G. Wells and other literary friends. Afterwards, Dunne kept up a correspondence with both Wells and Gissing, though not much of it has come to light. More than thirty years later, Dunne began writing down his memories of the meetings and conversations with Gissing and began shaping some of this material for publication (but it was never actually published). After his death, the MSS were found by his son, B. B. Dunne II, who made them available to the present editors.

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With Gissing in Italy is a compendium of ten writings: six previously unpublished Dunne manuscripts and four somewhat related writings included as appendices. The MSS contain B. B.'s memoirs and recollections of Gissing in various stages of completion.

MS-A is the main memoir, 45 pages long, richly detailed and spontaneous but unpolished. Entitled "Personal Recollections of George Gissing," it covers Dunne and Gissing's first meeting in the rooming house, their adventures and conversations in Siena and in Rome, and many details of Gissing's habits and idiosyncrasies. MS-B is a much shorter, revised version of part of A, eight pages long.

MS-C is an "Article" prepared for publication, again entitled "Personal Recollections of George Gissing." Nine pages long, it covers the Siena period and the beginning of Rome, repeating much of the material in the first half of MS-A. MS-D is "the Second Article," a ten-page sequel to the "First Article," covering the days in Rome with Gissing. It is not nearly so well polished as the "First Article."

MS-E is a four-page set of extracts from a memoir entitled "Personal Recollections of a Friend," the friend having been Bronson Cutting (U.S. Senator from Arizona), who was a great admirer of Gissing. These particular extracts have to do with Cutting's reactions to B. B.'s stories of Gissing in Italy. For instance, Cutting was "amused to violent laughter at the terrific dislike Gissing took to Luigi Ferrer, European typewriter representative for the Underwood Typewriter Company." Gissing "denounced" Ferrer as an "incredible ass." Dunne amused Cutting by pointing out that Ferrer was earning ten dollars a day in his line of work, whereas Gissing had some years ago earned only seven cents a day writing for Chicago newspapers.

MS-F is a six-page "List of Topics" which B. B. wanted to cover in his memoirs, for example, "[Gissing's] appearance. (A, B, C); "Got red in face discussing Ireland." (A, B, C); "Weather – weather." (A); "Financial matters. \$ a week." (C). The list becomes an index to all the MSS, A-E, thanks to the editors' having added initials in parentheses to indicate where each topic is in fact treated.

The value of these memoirs is that "B. B.," as he became known, was innocent of Gissing's past. In fact, before meeting him in Siena he had never even heard of Gissing and thus he had absolutely no preconceptions. Intelligent, good-natured, something of a linguist, he was a very pleasant companion for Gissing during his free time. The Gissing whom Dunne saw and came to know well through their walks, meetings, and conversations, was "one of the most cheerful, luxury-loving, witty people [he] had ever met."

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The portrait that emerges of Gissing through B. B.'s memoirs is indeed that of a cheerful and witty person, and B. B. had some reason for adding "luxury-loving," though his examples of Gissing's love of luxury are limited to his possession of one excellent dress suit and of a superior piece of leather luggage, and his appreciation of fine food. Dunne was particularly impressed by Gissing's taste for Italian cakes, which he considered the best in Europe: "And he ate a cake, a whole cake, whenever he could afford it and he bragged of his extravagance."

I say "the portrait that emerges" because we do not get it all in one neat memoir. We have in this volume four versions of more or less the same reminiscences of conversations, episodes, and details, in various stages of being shaped by B. B. We learn that Gissing blushed "like a school girl" when he was contradicted, that he traveled with his own folding rubber bathtub, and that he traveled without an English dictionary, even while working on his critical study of Charles Dickens. It is amusing to read of young Dunne's discovery that Gissing "was in reality a literary slave. He endured with bitter stoicism a servitude as terrible as that of any Roman galley-rower." And, moreover, he learned that the novelist "did his daily stint on a single sheet of paper – one thousand words each day – with never a correction, never a strike-out or erasure, or even a change of punctuation." Dunne tells us that he "never heard Gissing use: A damn. A hell. An immodest word. His vocabulary was so large, so magnificent, he found no need of [such language]."

What we most come away with after reading Dunne's memoirs is an appreciation of Gissing's sense of humor. This is, of course, nothing new to any reader who has savored the Dickensian qualities in the novels and short stories, or who has read the letters. But through Dunne's eyes we can appreciate Gissing's sense of humor in everyday life. Gissing "was convulsed by the Italian custom of travellers getting off trains, dashing into depots, and emerging with various items of clothing unbuttoned." "The conversations at the boarding

house... with all Italians as the guests – except Gissing and me – bowled the English writer over – and over.” In fact, Gissing found Italy “one grand, rollicking circus ... full details of which he narrated to me at meals, during our promenades and at night when we conversed about the day’s happenings.” “The signs in the streets amused Gissing.” One over a restaurant announced that it was “Aperto fino alle ore inoltrate.” Gissing: “Fools – no restaurant could be open to unheard of hours.” He was amused by King Umberto’s bloodshot eyes. Gissing: “The old boy was out late last night. A grand drinking party, eh?”

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Though Gissing generally believed in the superiority of the English, he found some of his funniest material in the English travelers in Italy. “An ugly, fat Englishwoman, who tried to talk Italian,” made a big scene in a restaurant, insisting upon ordering breast of pig. The waiter could not convince her that there was no such thing, and slapped his shoulder and then his butt to indicate the parts of a pig which were on the menu. Gissing “went into a fit of laughter and could not be prevailed upon to finish his meal.” Gissing was also amused by the refusal of English gentlemen to practice their Italian in public lest they make “asses” of themselves by speaking it incorrectly. Hence, Americans were better off because an American did not care if he made a “fool of himself.”

Following Dunne’s MSS about Gissing come four appendices of considerable interest because of the light they cast upon Dunne. Appendix 1 is a three-page Radio Talk about B. B. Dunne by Alfred Morang, a well-known Santa Fe artist and writer. This 1941 talk sums up Dunne’s life, including his education, his newspaper career, his connections with Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, his refusal of Hitler’s offer of a job writing Nazi publicity, and his connections with H. G. Wells and George Gissing. The talk adds to our knowledge of B. B.’s career and his importance in Santa Fe.

Appendix 2 is a three-page obituary article by Dunne on Cardinal Gibbons entitled “Cardinal Gibbons and Longevity” (1921). Appendix 3 is William Jennings Bryan’s “Ten Rules of Oratory,” as dictated to Brian Ború Dunne. In this twelve-page piece, Bryan’s commonsense rules are followed by Dunne’s recollections of Bryan on several occasions, including the orator’s visits to Santa Fe. Dunne remembers that Bryan bought 22 Indian blankets at one time. “Bryan undoubtedly had a feeling for color, design and Indian art.”

Appendix 4 is the once-famous 1905 “Interview with Mark Twain” which was “dictated” to B. B. by Twain himself. It is a satiric three-page Thanksgiving editorial in which Twain suggests that the Deity had nothing to be thankful for on Thanksgiving Day, what with the killing and wounding of 50,000 Jews in Russia, “by unusual and unpleasant methods,” the life insurance industry in New York being “tolerably rotten,” and “the political smell ascending from New York, Philadelphia and sixty or seventy other municipalities.”

All of these various MSS and appendices might not necessarily speak for themselves to every reader. However, as is by now to be expected from Professors Mattheisen, Young, and Coustillas, we have been provided with excellent introductions to each item and with thorough,

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scholarly notes supplying every answer to every question the reader might have about the people, places, and events mentioned. Furthermore, the indices are very complete: one index to the names, titles, colleges, periodicals, and so on, and a second index to subjects covered; such as “customs,” “religions,” “physicians,” “English ‘superiority,’” “divorce,” “the Vatican,” “America and Americans,” and “cafés chantants.”

Finally, there is a very appealing collection of 18 photographs, including several from the Dunne family apparently not published before, and several of places in Siena and Rome

associated with the Gissing-Dunne friendship.

Anyone interested in Gissing will want to own this book, not just for the tremendous amount of new information assembled in it, but possibly even more for the unexpected fringe benefits. First and foremost, Dunne's memoirs really bring George Gissing to life. Secondly, the book introduces an important new character in the Gissing drama. The existence of B. B. Dunne had been known about before these MSS were found, but not his importance as a source of information about Gissing, and certainly not his significance as a well-known journalist in his own right. Another bonus is B. B.'s connections with Bryan and Twain. I am personally delighted to find the accidental link between Gissing and Twain, via B. B. – another reminder that Gissing was himself a humorist and wit. A writer so appreciative of and influenced by Charles Dickens would have greatly relished Twain's sardonic view of Thanksgiving. Had Gissing lived a few more years, I can well imagine that Brian Ború Dunne might have engineered a meeting between him and Mark Twain. Just think what a memoir would have come out of that!

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Luisa Villa, *Figure del Risentimento: Aspetti della Costruzione del Soggetto nella Narrativa Inglese ai margini della "Decadenza"* (Forms of *Ressentiment*: Aspects of the Construction of the Subject in English Narrative at the Margins of the "Decadence"), Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1997.

Luisa Villa is a researcher in English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Genoa. Her *Figure del Risentimento* examines works by Olive

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Schreiner, George Gissing and Joseph Conrad with a view to approaching the problem of the representation of *l'homme de ressentiment* in the context of late nineteenth century "decadence." The second chapter is devoted to Gissing and is entitled "*Born in Exile*" e altre storie di *risentimento: Luoghi, trame e affetti nella narrativa di George Gissing* ("Born in Exile" and other stories of *ressentiment*. Places, plots and sentiment in the narrative of George Gissing). In this serious, scholarly and meticulously researched work, with its stimulating and thought-provoking contribution to Gissing studies, Villa focuses on three writers who are engaged in finding forms of expression which could no longer be based on the methodologies and approaches of their forerunners and who are therefore protagonists of what she terms the "impact with the modern." She draws attention to what she defines as a split in the "decadent" imagination which "does not only offer a spectrum of new possibilities, but brings to light a central aporia, a tension of opposing and mutually excluding forces," one of which works to draw us towards the material universe inhabited by solitary individualities, while the other draws the gaze towards a mystical and more authentic "beyond." The term "decadence," therefore, can serve not only to cover many different aspects of literary production in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but also "as a conceptual instrument suitable for recuperating something of that rich contradictoriness which constitutes the specific historical content of the experimentalism of the period." Villa states that "Part of the hypothesis advanced by this book is the conviction that the solution to the 'dilemma' which vexes the decadent aesthetic coincides, for better or worse, with its 'overcoming,' that is, with the normative consolidation of a different aesthetic." Therefore, she interestingly takes as one of her starting points the consideration that the decadent movement (seen for the purposes of this study largely in the terms described by Arthur Symons) "is something which already prefigures the solutions of the modernist aesthetic, but which strenuously resists these." For Villa, it is this resistance which makes the decadent movement historically *differente*, that is of central interest in this study.

Villa is interested in relating the aforementioned aporia to the problems of

self-representation which afflict writers in the latter part of the nineteenth century, specifically with regard to the changing role of the artist/writer in a new and developing context of professionalism and the literary market, which, while apparently conferring new forms of freedom which permit and even encourage criticism and discussion of the reigning structures of

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privilege and authority, paradoxically appears both to “encourage and to de-legitimate certain forms of self-representation and images of the self.”

For Villa, this emerges more clearly not where the aesthetic containment appears more achieved, but rather in those places which are more manifestly fractured, which she calls “marginal.” In this context the concept of “*ressentiment*” is fundamental to an understanding of the strategies adopted by the writers in question.

Taking her definitions of the characteristics of the phenomenon from Nietzsche and Max Scheler, Villa draws attention on the one hand to its being the manifestation in the individual of the lack of that vital energy necessary for self-affirmation in the world, resulting in rancour and dreams of revenge which for Nietzsche can be expressed through the transformation of forms of weakness into apparent values such as asceticism, renunciation and benevolence, whereas in Scheler “*ressentiment*” is the necessary correlative of a society apparently democratic but in which exist infinite distinctions of power and the resultant sentiments in the individual are envy, jealousy and mania for success. If one thinks of the numerous “unclassed” characters who populate the novels of George Gissing, the relevance of the syndrome of *ressentiment* becomes immediately clear.

In her analysis of the writers under study, Villa places in the foreground the phenomenon of self-reflection on the part of the writer engaged in representing *l’homme de ressentiment* in fiction, indicating that these representations would appear to operate “rather openly, as a mirror, sending back to the author the image of his own state of being resentful.” Furthermore, she indicates that *ressentiment* can be symptomatic of a sensation of secondarity, both in the larger social context of apparent democracy and in the context of interpersonal relations. She finds this particularly interesting in the context of an “inter-generational rivalry” which, in terms of plot, manifests itself as the “re-proposition, or placing under discussion, of oedipal plots” and that this occurs specifically because the individual charged with *ressentiment* tends to be constructed as a disobedient son or daughter in relation to the father or the mother. In her note on method, Villa further adds that with regard to the individual analyses of these three writers, *ressentiment*, though being a markedly social sentiment, tends always to bring the representation back to the “logic of psychic conflict.” In this sense the narrative *mise-en-scène* of *ressentiment* has encouraged the critic to pursue to consequences which can be extreme and which can also involve the “biography of the author,” the question of the literary representation through the

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discursive construction of an “image of self.”

This leads her to range in her approach from the more abstract idea of self-representation in terms of identification with an “aesthetic father” to more concrete concepts such as what she defines as coordinates which are social (sex and social class) and geographic (the fringes of Empire, the English provinces). Villa is anxious to specify, however, that in her application of the tools of biography and psychoanalysis, she is not interested in confirming the idea of inter-transcendental ancient psychic conflicts, but rather that a more precise definition of the subject as an individual located in the manner mentioned above allows for the recuperation, with regard to possibilities excluded from the text, of the plurality of other stories that could have originated in that particular time and place. She is therefore interested, in her approach to

Conrad, in exploring the bond between guilt and *ressentiment* within an “oedipal horizon,” while with Schreiner and Gissing, she is concerned with the extent to which this horizon imposes limits upon the imagination and the forced nature of the representations of the world that are the result of this.

In her chapter on Gissing, Villa immediately draws attention to the centrality in his novels of the condition of “unclassedness,” or the sense of social superfluity of the lower middle-class intellectual. She adds that if his novels do not engage in proto-modernist subversion, they do engage in a calm erosion from within of hegemonic narrative forms, exploring story-telling possibilities “beyond the ending” through an innovative use of the Victorian multi-plot structure in the novel, decentralising the protagonist and transforming his experience into a course characterised by exile.

Yet Villa is not concerned here simply to re-underline the presence of such single aspects in Gissing’s narrative. She is more interested in pursuing the “interconnection” of experimentalism, marginality and *ressentiment* in late Victorian narrative with a view to subjecting the texts to the form of questioning already applied in her opening chapter on Olive Schreiner: How is the subject constructed and what places superintend such construction? What configuration of the self lies behind the plot? What constricting play of identifications or impersonations (male or female) sustains them? What re-codification of childhood orchestrates them and what trauma (if one exists) has rendered such a childhood “eternal”?

Therefore, in the first section of her study of Gissing, entitled “America,” she begins with the question of geographical location with a view to exploring an “interior topography” of

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conflicts which are psychic because historical. Intriguingly, she opens with the voyage not taken by Godwin Peak to America in *Born in Exile*, which, while being a marginal detail in the novel, is of interest because a man like Peak should be attracted by the New World, and this underlines the contradictions which afflict his divided identity. This is especially so if we consider the biographical reality of Gissing’s American experience. Villa suggests that Gissing must have gleaned a “euphoric vision of the possible” from the impact with democratic modernity, triggering a whole series of ambitious projects, greatest of which would have been that of becoming a great writer. Yet, she notes, on the other hand, that the experience did not produce even the “draft version of a new style capable of rendering the rich and formless complexity of America.” She states: “In Gissing, the territories beyond the sea remained – as in *Born in Exile* – at the margins of his narratives, signifying, for the most part, those far off places in which the bourgeois passion for self-realisation could still manifest itself in an uninhibited manner.” Gissing’s principal protagonists do not measure themselves against this realm of possibility or at least we never see them doing so except at second hand (e.g. Egremont’s letters from America). The only major exception to this is Arthur Golding’s voyage to America and his suicide at Niagara Falls. Villa describes this suicide as sealing a “vision of American modernity which is dysphoric and entropic” and leads her to offer the hypothesis that the vision offered by America of the acceleration of progress awoke in Gissing the “demon” of narrative, but was at the same time, impervious to narration. For Gissing, as for Olive Schreiner in the South African diamond fields, the euphoric and expansive moment of that experience was accompanied by an “enigmatic and defensive freezing-up.” Villa describes Schreiner as being obliged to seek out story material in the poor and eccentric scenario of “childhood” because of an “epochal lack” of stories through which to recount her experiences. With Gissing the problem would appear to be that the possibilities of the American experience were already destined to freeze up or were compromised by a preceding traumatic perception of the contradictions of the modern. We turn back, therefore, to the provincial scene of Gissing’s adolescence. Villa does allow that Gissing managed, exceptionally, to transform into writing something of the emancipating intoxication of

the modern in *In the Year of Jubilee*, but points out that the action of the novel is located not in America, but in London, and that the experience is brought to life through a female character, Nancy Lord.

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In the second section, "Owens College: Adolescent Traumas," Villa looks in detail at the "province" of Gissing's adolescence as represented fictionally in the Kingsmill and Whitelaw College of *Born in Exile*, indicating how this environment cancels any space for genuine symbolic independence for bourgeois culture and that this is typical of Gissingian narrative. It is impossible to create a milieu capable of opposing the establishment and able to uphold the anti-conformist aspirations of the "radical" intellectuals of the period. Villa aligns Peak's fictional experiences at Whitelaw with Gissing's real experiences at Owens College to indicate how an intense and contradictory experience consumed in the space of a few months – the expansive and euphoric moment of the passion of self-realisation and that which is dysphoric and entropic (being caught red-handed, the exemplary punishment) – brings to the foreground the aporia inherent in the very idea of the subject vis-à-vis the developments of the economic system of the late nineteenth century. Villa identifies in Gissing a double condition of marginality, not just that of the literary individual who is rich in culture but poor in economic terms, but furthermore that of the literary field itself in which there is a marked hiatus between the cultural and the economic, so that the individual finds himself perpetually incapable of liberating himself from the pressures of the market and therefore not free to pursue without compromise the "Arnoldian quest for perfection."

The result is imprisonment in a "dialectic of frustration, simulation and rancorous *ressentiment*" not dissimilar to that which we see in the case of Peak. Villa interestingly relates what she calls Gissing's "painful classicist obsession" to this form of unclassedness and sees it as being symptomatic of both the euphoric and dysphoric aspects of his personal experience. She also comments on Gissing's presentation of the trauma of male sexual guilt as being somewhat anachronistic and a little *passé* in a period when radical intellectuals were engaged in experimenting with alternative forms of sexual relations. She goes on, in the third section, "Rewritings of the Trauma," to examine two of the early melodramatic stories, "The Sins of the Fathers" and "The Quarry on the Heath," with a view to examining how Gissing transformed his personal experience into stories which, instead of drawing on the whole spectrum of possible stories, limited themselves perforce to the "master plots of Victorian bourgeois childhood." The result is what she calls a "rather crude attempt to readjust the psychic materials of childhood" in order to transform into story the adolescent trauma. She goes on to develop the hypothesis that

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in such works there operates an oedipal "double bind," the consequence of a relationship with a paternal authority which is incapable either of fully prohibiting or permitting and which reflects the inherent contradictions and compromises of the Victorian ethos. In Gissing the result is paradoxical, because the punishment which strikes the lawbreaker does not simply feed the spirit of revolt but also creates an opposing desire for discipline, increasing his nostalgia for a more rigid paternal prohibition. Villa suggests that this goes some way towards explaining several of the apparent contradictions in Gissing's work in which we can identify the juxtaposition of rebellion and reaction, anticonformism and conventionality which characterises Gissing's ideological formation. Villa relates this to Gissing's oscillation between the totally divergent aspirations to beauty and reform characteristic of his work in the 1880's.

In her comments on "The Quarry on the Heath" Villa identifies a more complex re-elaboration of the materials that made up "The Sins of the Fathers" by transferring the

perspective from the son to the daughter. Whereas the son was in a position, in the previous story, to “remove the crown” of paternal authority, however ineffectually, the position of the daughter serves to maintain its idealisation and therefore to propitiate the arrival on the Gissingian scene of the disciplinary father figure. Villa relates this strategy to Gissing’s use in later works, among which *Workers in the Dawn*, of the use of doubling along the lines of gender, citing the parallel quests of Helen Norman and Arthur Golding. In the fourth section of the chapter, entitled “The Son as Daughter,” she develops this idea in relation to Emily Hood in *A Life’s Morning*, noting that one of the “most characteristic signs of the Gissingian imagination is represented by the tendency to make his female characters play the oedipal game of guilt, the conflict through which the son seeks to free himself from the father.” Rather amusingly, she comments that, in order to recuperate something of the traumatic experience of his transgression, Gissing is induced to represent it by dressing up as a young Victorian lady. Yet in her fifth section, “To Saturnalia,” she is anxious to indicate that this use of narrative “cross dressing” which shifts to female characters the weight of the confrontation with the father figure, is not to be considered solely as a compromise strategy of a conservative nature, but is also relevant in the context of that late Victorian England in which the female figure was in many respects the protagonist of emancipation where politics, work and sex are concerned, and it is this figure which draws upon the values of radical individualism. Villa comments that this writer who was

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marginal, misogynist and resentful, finds himself in collusion with the passion for self-realisation of his heroines and she cites numerous examples.

In section six, “Twin Rivalries,” she returns to the figure of the male, specifically the brother figures Bob Hewett and Horace Lord, respectively in *The Nether World* and *In the Year of Jubilee*, both of whom are “insubordinate” towards their fathers. Villa notes that in the shadow of the main plot there emerges in their challenge something of the male oedipal contest, but also notes that, at plot level, both are punished by death, indicating that while space is given to such conflicts, this happens in a larger context of the more accessible principal stories in the novels which privilege the father-daughter relationships and they are also oriented towards the relationship with the mother.

Yet in this section Villa is more interested in examining the theme of twin rivalries which she finds evidence of in early stories such as “A Terrible Mistake,” “Gretchen,” “R.I.P.” and “Cain and Abel,” and in what she considers minor novels such as *Denzil Quarrier* and *Veranilda*. She suggests that the doubling of the paternal figure in “Cain and Abel” and the contention between the two sons for one woman could lead to an interesting rereading of *Workers in the Dawn* in which the elder Golding and Edward Norman are rivals in love. She also notes the similarity of this scenario with that of the twin rivalry in *Denzil Quarrier* which is taken up again in *Veranilda*. Villa relates this type of twin conflict to the events in the two novels which share the characteristics of disorder and possible chaos, permitting the free play of egotism and possible destructive forces, seeing in the conjunction a narrative strategy on Gissing’s part which is different from or which at least constitutes a shift in emphasis with regard to the strategies already described. She further adds that the “twin” structure in the novels permitted Gissing to bring the conflict of identity into play in his novels with more freedom than structures based more rigidly on the family. He succeeds in this most notably in *New Grub Street* and in *Born in Exile*, in which the natural law of Darwinism and evolution replaces the cultural law of which the father is traditionally the guarantor.

In her concluding section, “Beyond *Ressentiment*,” Villa observes that Gissing’s late work tends to explore for preference possibilities which are situated beyond *ressentiment* and she cites as examples works such as *The Town Traveller* and *Will Warburton*. This is possibly because the extremity of the case of Alma Frothingham in *The Whirlpool* who, freed from father, husband

and son, pursues notoriety in the whirlpool of London society and eventually dies, could only represent for Gissing an unbearable chaos from which he could only remove his frightened gaze. Yet Villa is convinced that the adoption of a new narrative strategy in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is evidence that the avoidance of the conflict of identity did not liberate Gissing from the sentimental snares of adolescent trauma. She sees the work as annulling the techniques typical of the plotted novel in favour of an approach based on meditation and fragmentary biography, orchestrated by the “natural” plot of the seasonal cycles. A rural limbo replaces the urban scenario of the conflict of identity. For Villa, rather than being an alternative to *ressentiment*, this is silence.

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Tailpiece
Gissing at Cosenza

[The following is an extract from his essay “At the Grave of Alaric,” written at Taranto on 23 November 1897 and published in the *Daily Chronicle* for 31 May 1898, p. 6. The passage on the same subject in *By the Ionian Sea* reveals a few differences.]

Cosenza has suffered much from earthquakes, and in its lower parts malaria is perpetual. But – if one can disregard the prevalence of foul odours – it is a delightful place. To call it picturesque is to use an inadequate word; at every step, from the opening of the main street at the hill-foot up to the mediæval castle which crowns its height, a traveller finds something to wonder at or to admire. So narrow are the ways that a vehicle drives pedestrians into refuge in shop or alley; two (but perhaps the thing never happened) would with difficulty pass each other. As in all towns of Southern Italy the number of hairdressers is astonishing, and here they hang out as sign a barber’s basin – the very basin (of shining brass and with a semi-circle cut out of the rim) which Don Quixote took as a substitute for his damaged helmet. In Spain this usage is perhaps common; in Italy I cannot remember to have seen it before. Through the gloom of the high-balconied houses one ascends to a sunny piazza, where there are several fine buildings; beyond it is the little public garden, a lovely spot, set with alleys of acacia, and groups of palm, and flower beds and fountains; marble busts of Garibaldi, Mazzini and Cavour gleaming among

the trees. Here one looks down upon the yellow gorge of the Crati, and sees it widen northward into the great green plain. In front rises many-folded Sila, a noble sight at any hour of the day, but especially when the mists of morning melt about its summits, or when the sunset clothes its broad flanks with purple. Turning westward, you have before you the mountain range along the Mediterranean; so high and wild that I could scarcely believe that I had crossed it in a carriage.

In the gardens I met a group of peasants, evidently visitors to Cosenza, and wondering at all they saw. The women wore a very striking costume; a short petticoat of scarlet, much embroidered, and above it a blue skirt, half rolled up in front and gathered together in a fold, or knot, behind the waist; a bodice adorned with needlework and metal; elaborate glistening head-gear, and bare feet. The townsfolk have no peculiarity of dress. I observed among them a grave, intelligent type of countenance, handsome and full of character, which may be that of the gallant mountaineers once called Bruttii. With pleasure I saw that they behaved gently to their

beasts, the mules in common use being very sleek and contented-looking. There is much difference between these people of Calabria and the Neapolitans; they make little noise, talk with a certain repose, and allow a stranger to go about among them unmolested, unimportuned. Ladies are not to be seen in the streets; there prevails an Oriental system of seclusion. For all that, civilisation has demanded the building of an enormous theatre, which, though yet unfinished, has upon its façade a marble tablet, with an inscription which I will translate: - 'Sept. 20, 1870. This political date marks the end of theocracy in civil life. The day which terminates its moral rule will be the epoch of humanity,' - *'sarà la data umana.'* 'Progress' with a vengeance, you see, even here. And to read those words within hearing of the mountain stream which flows over the grave of Alaric!

I am inclined to think that the people have a vein of humour. There was the instance of my friend who, with a twinkle in his eye, discussed the merits of that hotel. Another that of the shopkeeper, at whose door hangs a glass-case full of pistols, very murderous weapons; while attached to this case, and depending one inch below it, is exhibited a placard with the brief announcement: - *'Variato assortimento in corone mortuarie'* ('A varied assortment of wreaths for funerals') - a kind of jest, one fancies, which might have appealed to the Visigothic King.