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

Gissing Commemorated again by the Ionian Sea

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It would be difficult to play down the importance of Italy in Gissing's life from the days of ancient Rome to the end of the nineteenth century. Shortly before he died in the Basque country he said significantly that there were only two countries in the future of which he was genuinely interested—England, now an object of nostalgia with which his enforced exile reconciled him, and Italy of which he could not think without that intellectual emotion which the Victorian élite often experienced when they reviewed their classical reminiscences in adult life. Gissing's sadness as the end of his life loomed forth sprang partly from his consciousness that he would never see again that land which had been for him such a major source of inspiration.

It was not until the 1950s that the Italian intelligentsia began to realize that Gissing, known to the average cultivated man as a realist who placed truth with obvious courage in the forefront of his vision of life, had been a brilliant classicist and remained one to his dying day when he struggled with admirable persistence to complete the historical novel set in 6th century Italy which had been his cherished lodestar for years. Homage must be paid to the two Cambridge-based Italians, Decio and Antonietta Pettoello, who in 1955 published under the imprint of U.T.E.T, the Turin publishers, a translation of *Born in Exile* which, despite its commercial success, has not been given its due in the English-speaking world. Decio Egberto Pettoello (to call him by his full name) was a native of Turin who taught Italian at Cambridge and published many books in English and Italian as well as articles in English journals. No less remarkable was the role played by Margherita Guidacci when she published for Cappelli, the Bologna publisher, a translation of *By the Ionian Sea* of which 30,000 copies were to be printed after the original edition, astutely calculated to coincide with the centenary of Gissing's birth. With *Born in Exile* and *By the Ionian Sea*, two of the author's most valuable books, new, apparently barren ground had

been broken and it was left to Francesco Badolato to conquer a territory which, as he proved for decades, was after all astonishingly receptive. He multiplied editions in English and Italian for schools, generally concentrating on short works like *The Paying Guest*, the short stories and the Italian entries in the diary, not to speak of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. His death in 2009 marked the end of an era which in its late phase had been characterized by his initiatives in putting up commemorative Gissing plaques in Catanzaro and Crotona. His company during the several visits made to his country by his foreign friends will not be forgotten, but his vanishing from the Gissing scene was followed by a lull which they found frustrating, though it had been preceded in 2005 and 2008 by the publication in Italian of *New Grub Street* by Chiara Vatteroni, *Eve's Ransom* in a bilingual edition by Maria Teresa Chialant, and in translation a collection of short stories by Vincenzo Pepe.

However, Francesco somehow ensured his own descent as a Gissing enthusiast. Thanks to Markus Neacey, who has a knack of exhuming allusions to Gissing on the internet, our attention has recently been drawn to mentions of the author of *By the Ionian Sea* in *Il Crotonese*, the weekly newspaper published in Crotona, where for a day or two Gissing was within an inch of death, a victim of malaria at the hotel Concordia. As we know, in 2002 a plaque was unveiled outside the hotel, commemorating Gissing and two other guests, François Lenormant and Norman Douglas, and the doctor who attended Gissing, Dr. Sculco. Among the participants in the ceremony was, besides the great-grandson of the gardener whom Gissing sympathized with, Signora Teresa Liguori, an influential member of the national association Italia Nostra who, when we enquired about the recent appearance of Gissing in the *Crotonese*, has sent us articles and photographs taken on the occasion of the unveiling of two new plaques (1) again in Crotona, on the front of the Railway Station, on 6 March 2011, and (2), on 22 April 2012 on the wall of Sibari Railway Station. This in connection with a campaign of defence of the line running along the Ionian Sea. On the first of these plaques visitors are reminded that Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1882, then the archaeologist François Lenormant in 1879, George Gissing in 1897 and Norman Douglas in 1911, travelling on the Taranto-Reggio line, stopped at this station, while on the second only Garibaldi and Gissing are commemorated. It was on 19 November 1897, on his way from Cosenza to Taranto, that Gissing “had lunch at Sibari, where there is a station-hotel” (diary). This was sacred ground to Gissing the classicist, whose mind while there must have compellingly rambled to the remote days when Sybaris

was destroyed by Crotonians, famous among other reasons for having greatly advanced mathematical, geometrical and astronomical science.

It was assuredly a praiseworthy initiative of Signora Teresa Liguori to have kept alive the names of Lenormant, Gissing and Douglas, and to have associated them with that of the national hero among heroes, Garibaldi, who should doubtless have been distressed to know in what disgrace his country fell, as Gissing had presciently predicted in *By the Ionian Sea*, in the interwar period. It is sad to read of the *linea ionica* in the past tense and to behold images of it, along with the familiar one of the *tavola dei paladini* (as Gissing called the ruins of the Greek temple at Metaponto). Sadder still perhaps to catch a fresh peep of the solitary column standing at Capo Colonna, which only illness prevented Gissing from seeing at close quarters. Interesting views of some relics can be seen nostalgically in *Il Crotonese*, to which newspaper, we are glad to say, Gissing's name remains a living one. The references are "La Giornata delle ferrovie dimenticate—Binario morto. Targa a viaggiatori illustri," 10 March 2011 [The day of forgotten railways—Sidetrack. Plaque to famous travellers] and "Alla giornata delle ferrovie noi ci andiamo in Pullman," 21 April 2012 [To attend Railways Day we go by coach].

Is there any hope that the *linea ionica* will in the near future be resuscitated? Teresa Liguori does not give up hope. The train from Taranto to Reggio, she suggests, might be named after Gissing's book, "Sulle rive dello Ionio." It might be given a much needed touristic and cultural purpose. To foreigners who care for the deep South and can only be observers, it is a "consummation devoutly to be wished."

Ellen Sophia Whittington's Generosity: the Sources of the Whittington Fortune

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Jacob Whittington was buried by the Rev. Henry William Rous Birch, in the churchyard of St Peter's, at Yoxford, Suffolk, on 9th January 1827, in accordance with the wish he had expressed eight years before in the sixth codicil to his will: "As to my burial. My wish is for little Expense. So where I may die, there let me be buried."¹ He had reached the age of 73 and died a sad and lonely death – he had been separated from his wife for twenty years and it is unlikely that even his sole surviving child, Ellen

Sophia Whittington, attended his funeral – in an obscurity that stood in stark contrast to the national notoriety he achieved during the years of his prime. It could be argued that by the end of his remarkable life he returned to a style of life more comparable to the relatively modest circumstances that marked his earliest years. Born in 1753, the son of the Rev. John Whittington, and Ann Price, it was through his mother’s sister and her husband that his life took a turn that at first was to bring him unimaginable material wealth, but later, incalculable disillusionment with and severe alienation from that life of privilege.

The Whittingtons originally hailed from the West Country. They must have taken their surname from the village of Whittington, about three miles south of Worcester city centre. Jacob Whittington’s grandparents, Bartholomew and Joan Whittington, were burgesses of the city of Worcester, where their son John was born and baptised in the church of St. Michael Bedwardine, on 15th December 1723. John Whittington had a younger sister, Mary, born in Worcester too, and baptised at St. Michael Bedwardine, on 12th September 1726. The grandfather must have been a sufficiently prosperous member of the shopkeeping class to have enabled him to send his son to an Oxford college to complete his education. On 18 October 1745, at the age of 21, John Whittington matriculated as a plebeian at Merton College, where he prepared himself for a career in the Church of England. With apparent success, for a good four years later, on 18th February 1750, the “Rev. John Whittington of the Parish of St. Nicholas, in the County of Warwick, Batchelor & Ann Price of the Parish of St. Mary Le Bone in the County of Middlesex,”² were married by licence at St. Andrew’s, Holborn.

Ann Price was the daughter of another Church of England priest. The Rev. John (Johannes) Price M.A. (1692-1737) was born in London, where his father John Price senior was employed in the Royal households of Queen Anne and George I as Clerk of the Poultry and later Clerk of the Acaterly at the not inconsiderable salary of £60 *per annum*. This enabled him to send his son for his further education to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he was admitted as a pensioner in 1710. After gaining his BA in 1713 and MA in 1717, he was ordained priest at the Bishop of Ely’s palace at Holborn on 15th February 1721, his first appointment being to the vicarage of All Saints in Barrington, Cambridgeshire, one of the richest livings in the diocese, held or desired by men eminent in the king’s service. He remained there from 1721 to 1733, when he was forced by debt to serve the Essex parish of Panfield,³ holding it in plurality with the

rectory of Papworth St. Agnes (Cambs.), until his death on 6th July 1737. John Price fathered two daughters by his wife Elizabeth Morgan,⁴ viz. Ann Price, mentioned above, and Margaret Price, baptised on 29th December 1722, at Barrington.

Rev. John and Ann Whittington had two daughters, Sarah and Mary, and a son, Jacob John. Sarah, born in 1751, married John Robbins, an apothecary, at St Mary le Bone, on 25th March 1778.⁵ Her sister Mary, born in 1756, married John Swiney, at the same church on 5th December 1777.⁶ Soon after the marriage Swiney took his bride to Savannah-la-Mer in Jamaica, where he was a collector of taxes. Mary Swiney died aged 74, on 22nd December 1825 at Lambeth. However, it was their brother's life that was most signally affected by their aunt Margaret's ambitious marriage.

Margaret Price had married Sir Jacob Garrard Downing (c. 1717-1764), Bt. on 17th May 1750, at St George's, Bloomsbury, London.⁷ He was a cousin of Sir George Downing (1685-1749), third baronet, who was born at East Hatley in Cambridgeshire, but his mother, a daughter of the Earl of Salisbury, died when he was only three years old and her sister, the wife of Sir William Forester of Dothill Park in Shropshire, took over his upbringing. She had a daughter Mary to whom her parents married George when she was 13 and her cousin 15. Because of their youth they were not allowed to live together at first and never did so because in 1703 Mary went to London to become a Maid of Honour to Queen Anne against her husband's wishes.

In 1717 George obtained an Act of Parliament which gave legal sanction to his living apart from his wife without being divorced and he then made the will which led ultimately to the foundation of Downing College. As he had no hope of a legitimate heir, he left the estates to the next heir to the baronetcy, his cousin Jacob Garrard Downing, and if he died without heir, to three cousins in succession. If they all died without issue, the estates were to be used to found a college at Cambridge called Downing.⁸

Sir George Downing died in 1749 and Sir Jacob in 1764. As the other named heirs had also died, the college should have come into existence then but Sir Jacob, in contradiction to the will of Sir George Downing, left all his property to his wife, though under Sir George's will Sir Jacob had only a life interest. It is highly probable that he did this on the suggestion of his wife⁹ and Lady Margaret Downing was certainly not prepared to release the estates,¹⁰ and the various relatives who were Sir George's legal heirs had to take costly and prolonged action in the Court of Chancery to compel her to do so. When she died in 1778 she passed on her claims to her second

husband, Captain George Bowyer, R. N. (1739-1800), and her nephew Jacob John Whittington, who continued to resist the heirs-at-law's action until 1800 when the Court decided in favour of Sir George's will and George III granted Downing a Royal Charter. Part of the final decision involved a "settlement between the petitioners for the erection of Downing College and Bowyer and Whittington, over the income which had been received from the estates since Sir Jacob Downing's death in 1764. Theoretically, with an annual value of £4,200, this amounted to over £100,000. A compromise was reached, by which Lady Downing's heirs agreed to pay the income from the estates over the previous six years only – approximately £24,000."¹¹

It is not hard to imagine the impact of the provisions of Sir Jacob Downing's will on young Jacob Whittington, a mere schoolboy of eleven. From the will we also learn that by 1763 John Whittington's wife Ann had died. Her death may have changed the status of Margaret's nephew into that of an adopted son and this may account for the extraordinary generosity bestowed upon him (and his sisters) by both his aunt and his uncle. When she died in September 1778,¹² Jacob Whittington was Margaret Downing's "chief beneficiary by her continuation of the charge on her personal estate of an annuity of £400 which Sir Jacob had left him and the bequest to him of the considerable residue of her own property."¹³ Nor were Jacob's sisters forgotten; they got £10,000 each, which turned them into highly desirable heiresses overnight.

However, the generous involvement of Sir Jacob Downing and his wife with their Whittington relatives had started almost from the time they got to know one another. John Whittington and Ann Price were married in February 1750, only three months before the marriage of Sir Jacob and Margaret Price. Whittington's first clerical appointment was to the living of East Ruston, Norfolk, in 1750, but there can be little doubt that John Whittington's presentations by his brother-in-law to the livings of East Hatley and Tadlow in 1752, and of Sudbourn with Orford (having been enabled to hold this parish in a personal union with the vicarage of East Ruston, Norfolk) in 1753, were the direct result of their family connection.

In the summer of 1756 Whittington, newly appointed M.A. (*per litteras Regis*),¹⁴ was instituted to the rectory of Theberton in Suffolk, the value of the benefice amounting to more than £200 per year. Once again a personal union was profitably established with the vicarage of Sudbourn cum Orford. At the beginning of the twentieth century a critical local historian wrote about him: "These were the halcyon days of clerical apathy and do-

nothingness, when, moreover, clergymen were either pluralists or very poor. This pluralist rector evidently lived elsewhere; and his curate at Theberton had to make both ends meet, on a pittance which could not enable him to appear like a gentleman, or to afford charity to the poor and needy.... Could it be right for that provision to be diverted into the pocket of ... some unsympathetic stranger whose only interest in the parish was the income he drew from it, which he would spend elsewhere.”¹⁵

So far I have failed to establish exactly where and when Whittington’s children were born. No records could be traced, either in Suffolk or in London. We know that John Whittington later had a house in Chapel street, in the parish of Marylebone, London, but it is more likely Sarah, John and Ann were born at Orford. Their mother must have died before 1758, as John Whittington remarried in May 1758;¹⁶ confusingly his second wife (who survived him) was also called Ann(a).

Returning now to Jacob Whittington, we find little documentary evidence of his education and schooling, apart from the following reference in his uncle’s will (dated August 1763): “I give to Jacob Whittington, Son of the Reverend Mr. Whittington by Ann his late wife Sister of my dearly beloved wife Dame Margaret Downing, the yearly Sum of one hundred Pounds to be paid or applied to or for his use during such time and so long only as he shall continue at School...”

However, from the time of his majority it becomes easier to trace him, especially after embarking upon a military career by buying himself (in accordance with his uncle’s quite specific testamentary direction)¹⁷ a commission as an officer in the First Regiment of Foot Guards, under the command of HRH William, Duke of Gloucester. This was one of the Household regiments and it consisted of a body of picked men, ordinarily stationed at London and Westminster, as a bodyguard to the king. He was promoted to Lieutenant in November 1775 and in January 1776 his name appeared in a list of officers of the First Guards, at the commencement of the War with the British North American colonies. The Household and Guards Regiments were considered an elite and were dominated by aristocratic officers. On entering the army, the new officer paid a sum of money for his commission directly to the officer whose retirement had created a vacancy. Commission in the Guards cost twice as much (£1200) as those in the line regiments, because those holding them were of a social standing acceptable to the monarch. Purchase made certain that only those who could afford it and enjoyed the approved social and political background became members of the army elite.

On 18th January 1780 the *London Gazette* published Jacob Whittington's appointment as Captain of the 87th Regiment of Foot. By that time he was a bachelor no longer, for on 31st October 1778 he had married at the church of St. Mary le Bone, Westminster, Harriot Smythies (Colchester, 25th November 1760 – Theberton, buried 26th January 1832) an under age daughter of the Rev. William Smythies (1722-1780), rector of St. Peter's, Colchester. The marriage was solemnized by the bride's father.

Jacob and Harriot Whittington had six children: three sons and three daughters. Their first child, George Downing Whittington was born at Westbrook-Hay, Herts. on 22 September 1780. His second forename was the result of a clause contained in the will of Sir George Downing (1685-1749) stipulating that anybody not bearing the name of Downing, coming into possession of his lands could only do so by changing his surname.¹⁸ Jacob's eldest son was sent to Eton and in 1799 admitted to St John's College, Cambridge, where he took the degree of LL.B. He was the winner of the Hulsean Prize in 1804 with *A Dissertation on the External Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, which won him great praise for its rational, temperate and judicious manner and matter. He opted for the clerical profession, and in March 1805 he was ordained priest in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace, Westminster. He travelled through France, Italy, Spain and Portugal in 1802 and 1803, in the company of George Hamilton-Gordon (1784-1860), 4th Earl of Aberdeen, the later Prime Minister. An account of this tour was published anonymously in *A Tour through the Principal Provinces of Spain and Portugal, Performed in the year 1803: with Cursory Observations on the Manners of the Inhabitants*.¹⁹ His special interest was in the church architecture of France and he produced a remarkable book on the subject, *An Historical Survey of the Ecclesiastical Antiquities of France, with a View to illustrating the Rise and Progress of Gothic Architecture in Europe*. It was completed and published in 1809 with the help of the Earl of Aberdeen two years after George Downing Whittington's death. His young and promising life was cut short by dysentery and he died on 24th July 1807, at the age of 26, at his lodgings in Trumpington Street, Cambridge, and was buried in St. Michael's church.

On 2nd December 1781, Jacob Whittington's eldest daughter, Augusta, was born at Westbrook-Hay, Herts. She married, in St George's, Hanover Square, on 16th March 1809, Henry Raikes (1782-1854), whose father was governor of the Bank of England. Educated at Eton (where in 1796 he was a classmate of George Downing Whittington in the Upper School), he

entered St John's College, Cambridge, in the same year as Augusta's brother. Raikes too travelled in Greece with the Earl of Aberdeen. Henry Raikes became chancellor of the diocese of Chester. Henry and Augusta Raikes had four children, Henry (1811-1863), George Whittington (1813-1870), Richard William (1816-1859) and Cecilia (1817-1902). A fifth child, Emily Augusta, who was baptised on 19th March 1820, died on 25th September 1820. A month later (21st October 1820) her mother Augusta Raikes died at the age of 38.²⁰ Henry Raikes's sister, Charlotte Finch Raikes (1779-1854) took charge of his children and "never failed through future years to discharge her self-imposed task with a mother's care and love."²¹

Cecilia Whittington was the third child of Jacob and Harriot Whittington. She was born in 1783 at Kilverstone Hall, Norfolk, a country seat owned by the Wright family, one of the oldest in Norfolk. Jacob must have taken the Hall on a twenty-year lease. She remained unmarried and lived with her mother at Theberton House²² until her death on 8th December 1816.²³ Theberton House, about a mile south of the village, belonged to Captain Thomas Whiting Wootton (1768-1844) of the West Suffolk Militia and it is likely that Harriot and her daughter had moved there after the separation agreed between Jacob and his wife was effected about 1808.

William Whittington, the second son of Jacob and Harriot, was also born at Kilverstone, Norfolk, on 11th November 1785. After his education at Eton, he was admitted at the age of 17 as a pensioner at Pembroke College, Cambridge, on 18th December 1802. During his short-lived academic career he developed his talents as a satirist by becoming the principal contributor and editor of a periodical called *The Galvanist*, conducted chiefly by small college men and published in Cambridge in the year 1804. He adopted the pseudonym "Hydra Polycephalus, Esq.," and justified the title of *The Galvanist* by stating that its purpose was "by forming the basis of conversation, at length, by a Promethean touch, to shoot life through the university at large."²⁴ Only eleven numbers appeared, and the greater part of these was employed in ridiculing and correcting the follies and vices of academic life. He may have been disappointed in the efficacy of his satirical interventions for in the same year (1804) he went to India where he became a Writer²⁵ in the Madras Civil Service. He died at Fort St. George, Madras, "of a dysentery"²⁶ on 15th September 1806, at the age of 20.

The third Whittington son, Henry Downing Whittington, was born at Kilverstone, Norfolk, on 25th November 1791.²⁷ He first went to Eton, like his elder brothers before him, and then was admitted as a fellow-commoner

to St John's College, Cambridge, on 19th June 1809. Like his brother George, he was one of the Cambridge Graecophils, "scholars of various disciplines, united by their common interest in Greek classical culture."²⁸ From 1816 to 1818 he travelled extensively on the Continent, touring South Russia, Turkey and Armenia in 1816, keeping a journal and recording his impressions in his "Account of a Journey through Part of Little Tartary: And Some of the Armenian, Greek, and Tartar Settlements in that Portion of the Russian Empire."²⁹ Continuing his Grand Tour he travelled to Constantinople and from there by way of Patmos on to Athens where he fell in love with Mariana Macri, a sister of Byron's "Maid of Athens."³⁰ In spite of his firm resolve to make Mariana Macri his wife, his plans for marriage were effectively thwarted by the determined opposition of his stubborn father.³¹ On 29th November 1818 he was appointed stipendiary curate of Yoxford, Suffolk (stipend eighty pounds and the surplice fees) and ordained priest in Norwich Cathedral on 27th June 1819.³² He died at Argyll House,³³ the home of his brother's friend, George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen, who had engaged him as a tutor, just before his 33rd birthday and was buried at St. James, Piccadilly, on 26th November 1824.

The sixth and last child of Jacob and Harriot Whittington was their third daughter, Ellen Sophia Whittington, who was born at Kilverstone Lodge, Norfolk, too, on 19th October 1795. She was still in her teens when her parents separated and she continued to live with her mother until her mother's death on 26th January 1832. After her father's death they moved into "Sans Souci," his house at Yoxford. She stayed there until the autumn of 1834 when her father's estate was finally sold.³⁴

Ellen Sophia Whittington remained unmarried and with what remained of the Whittington fortune she could comfortably afford to lead a travelling existence with her companion, Emily Waller (1810-1867), the sister-in-law of Robert Foulsham Gissing (1805-1892). Miss Whittington later made the generous offer to pay for the education of Thomas Waller Gissing (1829-1870), the novelist's father. In the 1840s the Misses Whittington and Waller settled at Exeter, often spending their summers at nearby Teignmouth. They remained inseparable until 8th June 1854, when Miss Emily Waller and Trevor Addams-Williams were married by the Rev. John L. Galton, at St. Sidwell's, Exeter.³⁵

This short summary of the major events in the lives of Jacob John and Harriot Whittington's children leads to the obvious conclusion that the acquisition of great wealth is no guarantee for a happy life. The early years of their marriage, especially after the couple moved to Kilverstone Hall

(also known as Kilverstone Lodge) in Norfolk, with hindsight must have been blissfully happy despite the nagging fear that the source of their great wealth might one day be taken away from them, and there were no doubt frequent journeys to London for consultation with their legal advisers. Yet for the time being the growing family and the various pastimes of a Norfolk country squire made for an unclouded existence.

A popular feature of late eighteenth-century culture was the publication of books through subscription. Consequently, it has been possible to have an inkling of the Whittingtons' tastes in reading from some of the titles that graced their shelves.³⁶

Jacob's steadily growing accumulation of objects of value and beauty can further be illustrated by the fact that he had his wife's portrait painted in accordance with the fashion and taste of the late eighteenth century by the up-and-coming Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830).³⁷

By this time Jacob had retired from the army and sold his commission and gradually he began to establish a certain sporting celebrity, judging by the reports in *The Sporting Magazine: or Monthly Calendar of the Transactions of the Turf, the Chace and every other Diversion Interesting to the Man of Pleasure and Enterprize*.³⁸

Whittington became a member of the very exclusive Swaffham Coursing Society, the number of whose members was confined to the number of letters in the alphabet. The club was composed of the most opulent and respectable local magnates who derived great pleasure from coursing, i.e. chasing hares with greyhounds. Each member's dogs were named with the initial letter the member bore in the club. Whittington's club colour was initially lilac and his letter was an O and his greyhounds were therefore variously called *Otranto*, *Optima*, *Orlando*, and *Oborea*. The Swaffham Coursing Society was established in 1776 by George Walpole, 3rd Earl of Orford (1730-1791), of Houghton Hall, Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk from 1757 until his death. He suffered from bouts of insanity, which did not stop him from indulging his extravagant love of coursing. Among the other members of the Society during the period of Whittington's membership were: George Nelthorpe (1772-1854), High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1795, George Townshend, 1st Marquis Townshend (1724-1807), Field Marshal and Colonel of the second regiment of dragoon guards, John Richard Dashwood (1743-1818), High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1794, Anthony Hamond II (1742-1822), of West Acre High House, High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1792. Hamond's grandfather had married Susan Walpole, a sister of Robert Walpole (1676-1745), 1st Earl of Orford, the first Prime

Minister of Great Britain. Other members were: Sir John Sebright (1767-1846), 7th Bt., Stephen Payne-Gallwey (1750-1803), of West Tofts Hall, a judge, and Samuel Tyssen (1756-1800), of Narborough Hall, Norfolk, the great collector of coins, books and medals.

When the alarms of an invasion by Napoleon were at their highest Whittington was infected by his former military enthusiasm to the extent that in 1798 he became a volunteer in the Norfolk Yeomanry Cavalry when the fear of an invasion reached its climax. On 19th July 1798 he was appointed Lieutenant of the Shropham and Guiltcross Troop which he commanded until the Peace Treaty of Amiens was signed in the spring of 1802.

Whittington's obdurate, persistent and combative opposition to the foundation of Downing College, which he had ironically "carried on by means of the funds of the estate given in support of it,"³⁹ after a legal struggle lasting 22 years, finally came to nothing when in September 1800, Lord Loughborough, the Lord Chancellor, passed the Charter for "founding and establishing a college conformable to the trusts and direction in Sir George [Downing]'s will."⁴⁰ The final verdict in the Chancery suit that divested him of the estate with which Downing College was founded marked Whittington's reduction from very great affluence to a significant alteration in his circumstances and a profound change in footing. One example should suffice:

A more serious concern during the years in Norfolk had been Whittington's active involvement in and promotion of the enclosure movement. In 1796 he petitioned Parliament "on behalf of himself and others, interested in Open and Common Fields, and Waste Grounds in the Parish of Guilden Marden, in the County of Cambridge, ... praying that leave may be given for bringing in a Bill for" enclosure.⁴¹ In 1801 at the enclosure in Swaffham, Norfolk, where he owned a substantial acreage, he was allotted 788 acres. However, to his chagrin these lands passed at once to the new Downing College.⁴²

Painful and radical as the loss of all his landed (Downing) estates in the counties of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire undoubtedly must have been to him and his family, Whittington would soon have to face the much more tragic loss of five of his children in the remaining years of his life. William, George, Cecilia, Augusta and Henry died between 1806 and 1824, leaving Ellen Sophia Whittington as sole surviving child.

About 1802 the Whittingtons moved from Kilverstone Lodge, Norfolk, to their new residence, Theberton Hall in Suffolk. The choice of this location was probably due to the fact that some fifty years before Jacob's father

had been presented to the living of Theberton where he remained until his death in 1770. Another important family associated with Theberton was that of Thomas Waller and his wife Lydia Hall. In 1815 the couple moved there from Wenhaston to take over “The (White) Lion,” the local pub in Church Street, which Thomas ran successfully for over 25 years.⁴³ One of his daughters, Emily Waller (1810-1867), was destined to play a major role in the life of Ellen Sophia Whittington, culminating in Emily’s becoming “the sole beneficiary of her will.”⁴⁴

Jacob Whittington’s move to Theberton coincided with the start of his serious personal difficulties, viz. the breakdown of his marriage, which cannot be dated exactly, but must have occurred some time between 1805



Sans Souci, Yoxford, 2012

and 1807. In a passage from his will he refers to “having ... in the year one thousand eight hundred and seven or thereabouts made a settlement of sixteen thousand pounds on my wife Harriot Whittington and her six children.” The phrase “six children” would seem to imply that the settlement was drawn up at a time when William Whittington was still alive, i.e. before September 1806. It is odd and barely credible that Jacob should not have remembered the exact year in which the settlement was made, as it

was obviously intended to provide for his wife and children after the separation of Jacob and Harriot Whittington. From a detail of the latter's will ("given me on my separation from my natural home by my late husband Jacob John Whittington") we may conclude that Jacob Whittington at the time of the separation remained at Theberton Hall and that Harriot had to look for alternative accommodation. Whether or not she and her daughters Cecilia and Ellen Sophia moved directly into Theberton House cannot be ascertained, but they certainly were in occupation there in December 1816 when Cecilia died. About 1810 Jacob Whittington was to move house for the last time: he left Theberton Hall for the freehold property "Sans Souci" he bought at Yoxford, three miles up the road from Theberton.

It is from the wills of Jacob John and Harriot Whittington respectively that the likely cause of the marital breakdown may be inferred. While in the first draft of his will Jacob Whittington referred in guarded terms to his "adopted child Henry fforrester," Harriot threw such discretion to the winds by plainly stating in her will: "To Mr. Whittington's illegitimate son called by the name of Henry fforrester the sum of one hundred pounds in the coin of the realm and free from the legacy duty in testimony of my respect for his good character and conduct." So we may safely conclude that Jacob John Whittington was the father of the child born on 3rd June 1793 and baptised in the City of London, in the parish of St. Gregory by St. Paul on 19th January 1794. The child was named Henry Forrester and the names of its parents were given as: Henry and Ann Forrester.⁴⁵

In his will Jacob proudly and somewhat ruefully summed him up: "A better character no young man bears. I wish I could have done more for him." Yet Henry fforrester was educated for a naval career at his expense by a Mr Laurence Gwynne, then Mathematical Master of Christ's Hospital. He first went to sea on board the 38-gun frigate "Apollo" captained by Bridges Watkinson Taylor (1777-1814). Through the good offices of his father's friend James Curtis⁴⁶ he was later placed as a clerk in the Custom House, where he spent his entire working life as a clerk – without ever getting promotion – until his death of apoplexy (in his office) on 19th January 1857. His burial on 27th January, 1857, at Highgate, one of London's most fashionable cemeteries, may be seen as a final expression of his pseudo-aristocratic aspirations. After Jacob John Whittington's death Henry Forrester acted as one of the executors of his will. Ironically, he had taken the place of James Curtis, who quarrelled with Jacob Whittington.⁴⁷

In 1841 Henry fforrester married Selina Margaret Miller (11th January 1816-last quarter 1893). They had six children: Ellen (1841-1926), whose occupation was domestic servant/nurse, Selina Elizabeth (1843-1846), Henry Whittington (1845-1917), who earned his living as a packer of perfumes for export, Frederick William (1847-1923), a railway engine driver, Albert Charles (1849-1891), a wine cellar man, and Emily (1852-1901). All of Henry's children remained unmarried. One is tempted to speculate that his eldest daughter Ellen Forrester was named after her father's half-sister Ellen Sophia Whittington and, more tentative still, that his youngest daughter Emily Forrester was called after Ellen Whittington's long-standing and faithful companion, Emily Waller. That a friendly, more than superficial, contact developed between Ellen Sophia Whittington and her half-brother may be concluded from the fact that she appointed him as one of the two executors of her will.⁴⁸ Finally, it must have been a source of quiet satisfaction for Henry fforrester to name his eldest son Henry **Whittington** Forrester, by way of a late compensation for the surname he never got. However, once his children were all dead, this illegitimate branch of the Whittington family would never flower again.

There is some special pathos in the fact that there is no trace whatsoever in Jacob's will of the death of Henry Downing Whittington, which occurred in November 1824. As late as 8th June 1824, in the last codicil to his will, Jacob Whittington left everything to him as his last surviving son. Henry Downing Whittington's death must have come as a final, shattering blow, the impact of which on his father, the former "man of pleasure and enterprise," was such that he no longer had the power nor the interest to make the required alterations to his will. He died, watched over and cared for until the end by his faithful old servant Hannah Whitby, two years after Henry Downing Whittington's death, at "Sans Souci," Yoxford. Surely, no more inappropriate name could be imagined for the home of a man who suffered a seemingly endless series of disappointments, disillusionments and tragedies.

The executors – Henry fforrester and John Barmby – to whom administration was granted on the 22nd May 1827 must have performed their duties satisfactorily, in view of Harriot Whittington's surprising bequest to her husband's illegitimate son in a codicil dated 13th April 1829.

We further learn from Harriot Whittington's will that she left her entire estate to her "dear child Ellen Sophia Whittington whose virtues and merits no Epithet can either reach or adorn ... I can only say that my dear daughter's submission to the severity of her privations as an innocent

sufferer from the injustice the cruelty and the sins of others and her good and meritorious conduct under them with the willing sacrifices which her devotion and devoted love and duty towards me drew from her were fully appreciated and with my latest breath I acknowledge the sense I have of them and bless her with all the energies of my feelings and of my reason.” The pathetic love for her dead daughter Cecilia is revealed in the following passage:

It is my desire to be buried by the side of my dear daughter Cecilia Whittington in Theberton Churchyard and if it does not endanger the ruin of her grave I should wish to have one side of it opened and the space increased sufficiently so as to receive my remains as it were into the same Grave making it one. I likewise desire that my funeral may be conducted in all plainness and decency and in consistency with my earliest and latest station in life. And I leave it as my particular request that my dear Ellen will neither look at me after I am dead or follow me to the Grave for it would weaken the most favourable impression which I wish to leave to do the first and I should be insensible to her dutiful and affectionate kindness in doing the latter. I request that the remains of my dear Cecilia’s hair may be buried in my coffin. It will be found I should think in my top drawer.⁴⁹

Finally, it must be noted that the separation of Jacob and Harriot Whittington caused an irreparable breach between their eldest daughter Augusta (together with her husband the Rev. Henry Raikes and their children) and her parents. The estrangement was apparently so radical that Harriot Whittington never set eyes upon any of her Raikes grandchildren (“I leave to each of my Grandchildren my affectionate love and my deep regret that I never knew them”).

The sole surviving daughter of Jacob and Harriot Whittington after the sale of her father’s house embarked on a nomadic existence with Emily Waller, the daughter of the Theberton publican, as her faithful companion. To the best of our knowledge the pair of travellers never ventured out of England, but in 1841 they stayed in an Edinburgh lodging-house, and later they moved into a Norwich hotel. From the mid-forties they adopted more sedentary habits by settling in Exeter, where Emily Waller in 1854 decided to get married after all.

When Ellen Sophia Whittington on 4th July 1862 died at Ynystawe House, in the parish of Llangyfelach, in the County of Glamorgan, the (legitimate and illegitimate alike) Whittington line became extinct. She left an estate of under £9,000 and named her old companion Emily Waller the sole beneficiary of her will. Through her marriage at Exeter in 1854, Emily had become Mrs Trevor Addams-Williams. Curiously, she married a man 17 years her junior. He was a scion of one of the most prominent and

ancient Welsh families, baptised at Monmouth on 18th May 1827, the son of Thomas Addams-Williams (1790-1851), the Town Clerk of Monmouth, a solicitor, who formed a partnership (“T. and W. A. Williams”) of solicitors with his younger brother William Addams-Williams (1793-1865) in Monmouth. Trevor’s mother’s name was Eliza Price, the daughter of Joseph Price, another Town Clerk of Monmouth.

In the 1841 Census of England, we find Trevor, a scholar, 13 years old, in the College or Cathedral (Grammar) School at Gloucester, one of the oldest grammar schools, established by Henry VIII in 1541. Assuming that Trevor stayed at Gloucester until he was 18 (in 1845), he used the next five years to prepare himself for a lucrative and attractive position in life. In the 1851 Census for Wales, we find Trevor A. Williams in the boarding-house of Ann Jones, in Beaufort Square, at Chepstow, as a visitor. His profession/occupation is given as “Clerk, South Wales Railway.” Now here’s a piece of information that may serve to solve a puzzling reference in Thomas Waller Gissing’s letter of August 3, 1865 (*Collected Letters*, vol. IX, p. 247) to his son George, who at the time was spending his holidays with his mother, brothers and sister, with Trevor and Emily Williams at Ynystawe. Gissing’s father at the end of the letter leaves an instruction for his son: “There are many things here in Wakefield that you will see altered when you come back. The new station is getting on & it will cost £120,000 at least. Tell Mr. Williams this.” It is obvious that the reason why Thomas Waller Gissing assumed that Trevor Williams would like to know about the new station at Wakefield was his earlier involvement in the building and expanding of the South Wales Railway. That Trevor’s interest in stations and railway lines was more than purely nominal, is further proved by the existence of the following document, held by the West Glamorgan Archive Service in Swansea: “Lease for 60 years from 24 June 1867 for £17 annual rent dated 6 July 1867; Charles Fitzroy Duke of Beaufort, KG., to Trevor Adams [sic] Williams of Ynystawe, esq.: Land, part of Graig y Bwldan Farm, in the parish of Swansea, **for a railway branch line; Includes plan.**”

After their marriage Trevor and Emily moved to Clyncollen (Glyncollen), where by 1857 Ellen Sophia Whittington has joined them. From the 1861 Census for Wales we learn that the Addams-Williamses moved to Ynystawe. Apart from his professional interests as a colliery proprietor, Trevor took on other duties. In 1859 he was appointed Justice of the Peace (together with his friend and business partner Silvanus Padley, Jr.), for the Borough of Swansea. In 1861 Ensign Trevor Addams-Williams was com-

missioned Captain in the 3rd Glamorganshire Rifle Volunteers, and he became a Land Tax commissioner for Glamorgan in 1863.

On the death of Ellen Sophia Whittington Mrs Trevor Addams-Williams (the former Miss Emily Waller) inherited what was left of the Whittington money (a not inconsiderable sum) and the entire personal estate. Among the more valuable items was the portrait of Ellen's mother painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Eight years later, on 13th May 1870 – three years after the death of his wife – it was sold for 200 guineas at auction by Christie's in London, as lot 52., by T. Williams, owner, as a picture by Joshua Reynolds, though when it was catalogued again in 1894 it was correctly attributed to Lawrence. The portrait was acquired by Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson (1840-1929), who made his fortune in mining in South Africa. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1958, as number 33 in the Robinson Collection.

Trevor Williams' shady dealings as his wife's executor over the legacies she left to Thomas Waller Gissing (£1,000) and his three sons (£1,500) have been fully described and documented by Pierre Coustillas.⁵⁰ Suffice it to record here that Trevor Addams-Williams remarried a year after the death of his first wife and died in the last quarter of 1882, at Parkyrhun, Llandebie, where he moved with his second wife and two children.

It is a fitting conclusion to the unhappy story of the Whittingtons to remind ourselves that in 1880 George Gissing used his share of the Whittington legacy to pay the firm of Remington & Co. for the publication of his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*. His father's aunt and Ellen Sophia Whittington would have rejoiced with him.

¹ Will of Jacob John Whittington, Public Record Office, National Archives, catalogue reference: PROB 11/1726, image reference: 671.

² Ancestry, London, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812, St Andrew, Holborn, 1735-1754, p. 69.

³ Cp. Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, Volume 2 (1768), p. 409: "Thomas M. Cox-Laws ... dying soon after, his father disposed of the Advowson to John Price, Esq. one of the Clerks of the Acaterly, whose son the Rev. John Price was thereupon presented to the Rectory of Panfield, and enjoyed it till his decease in 1737."

⁴ John Price's first wife must have died before 5th June 1733 (date of his Will). In it he refers to his second wife by the name of Jane.

⁵ W. Bruce Bannerman, F.S.A., Capt. R. R. Bruce Bannerman, M.C. (eds.), *The Registers of Marriages of St. Mary le Bone, Middlesex, 1775-1783*, Part III (London: 1921), p. 37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷ Ancestry, London, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812, St George,

Bloomsbury, 1731-1767, p. 13.

⁸ http://www.dow.cam.ac.uk/dow_server/info/College_history.html

⁹ Stanley French, *The History of Downing College* (Cambridge: Downing College Association, 1978), p. 49.

¹⁰ Cp. The Will of Sir Jacob Garrard Downing is given in: Horace William Pettit Stevens, *Downing College* (London: F. E. Robinson, 1899), pp. 271-74.

¹¹ Cinzia Maria Sicca, *Committed to Classicism: the Building of Downing College Cambridge* (Cambridge: Downing College, 1987), p. 18.

¹² Cp. The Will of Margaret Bowyer, formerly Dame Margaret Downing in: Horace William Pettit Stevens, *Downing College* (London: F. E. Robinson, 1899), pp. 38-41.

¹³ Stanley French, *The History of Downing College* (Cambridge: Downing College Association, 1978), p. 66.

¹⁴ A degree could be conferred by Royal Letters Patent (*per litteras Regis*) from the Sovereign, directing a University to confer the degree.

¹⁵ Henry Montagu Doughty, *Chronicles of Theberton* (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 181-82.

¹⁶ See: *London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, from Thursday, May 18, to Saturday 20, 1758: "A few days since the Rev. Mr. John Whittington, rector of Orford in Suffolk, was married to Mrs. Brett of Westminster."

¹⁷ Cp. "The Will of Sir Jacob Garrard Downing,": "I also direct that the sum of One Thousand Pounds be paid and laid out for the benefit of the said Jacob Whittington in the purchase of an Insigns Commission in one of His Majestys regiments of ffoot Guards."

¹⁸ The relevant passage is from the Will of Sir George Downing, 3rd Bt. It is found in: Horace William Pettit Stevens, *Downing College* (London: F. E. Robinson, 1899), p. 266: "... and it is my Will and I do hereby appoint that if it shall so happen any of the said Lands and premisses shall by virtue of this my Will come to or be vested in any Male person or persons whose Sirname shall not be Downing that then and in such case such person or persons shall Henceforth alter and Change his or their Sirname or Sirmames and shall take on himself or themselves the sirname of Downing only and in all Deeds and Writings shall be called stiled and written and write and subscribe their Names by the Sirname of Downing only." [Dated 20th December 1717.]

¹⁹ *A Tour through the Principal Provinces of Spain and Portugal, Performed in the year 1803: with Cursory Observations on the Manners of the Inhabitants* (London: Richard Phillips, 1806).

²⁰ Augusta Raikes was buried at Burnham, Bucks. Her grave monument is inscribed as follows: "Beneath this stone is interred Augusta, wife of the Rev. Henry Raikes, late Curate of this Parish, who died Oct. 21st, 1820, aged 39 [sic]. Likewise Emily Augusta, their daughter, who died Sept. 25, 1820. This perishable memorial must decay. The remembrance of Virtue, Piety of the loveliest form, united to the truest humility, must pass away with the genius that beheld them, but the Lord knoweth those that are his. The Grave shall give up its dead; and that which was sown in weakness, shall be raised in glory; through the merits and mediation of a Crucified Redeemer."

²¹ "Obituary: Rev. Chancellor Raikes," *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 43, New Series, 1855, p. 200.

²² Not to be mixed up with Theberton Hall to which the Whittington family moved about 1802.

²³ Cecilia Whittington was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's, Theberton. On a table monument at the east end of the chancel is inscribed:

To the Memory of
Cecilia Whittington
who died December 8th 1816,
in the thirty fourth year of her age.

When Dust to Dust and Earth to Earth,
Has told the end of mortal Care;
Love hovers o'er departed Worth,
And sheds its fancied Tribute there.
If Youth and Pleasure feel the wound,
And Joy suspended pours the Tear;
Then bring the Rose, then scatter round
The Treasures of the Summer year.
But ah! Dear Maid, no wreath of thine
Such gladsome Homage ere should know;
For thee the humble Flower I twine,
That blooms amid the Virgin Snow
For that fair form and snowy hue
Best fits the lovely form below;
And the cold in which it grew,
Was kindred to the Life of Woe.
But rest fair Maid, rest here in Peace,
To thee another Spring is given:
The Storm is past, thy Sorrows cease,
And thou shalt bloom again in Heaven.

²⁴ See: Charles Whibley, *In Cap and Gown: Three Centuries of Cambridge Wit* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1889), p. 99. Whibley identifies the editor of *The Galvanist* as “William Downing Whittington, of Pembroke College.” It would therefore seem that Sir George Downing’s insistence on the use of that particular surname was effective in the case of each of Jacob Whittington’s three sons.

²⁵ This was the most junior rank in the East India Service. The business of a writer, as the term implies, was that of clerking with the inferior details of commerce.

²⁶ Cp. Rev. Henry Pepys, *The Remains of the late Lord Viscount Royston: with a Memoir of his Life* (London: John Murray, 1838), p. 174.

²⁷ See: *Gentleman’s Magazine*, December 1791, “*Birth and Marriages of Considerable Persons*,” 1157: “Nov. 25. At Kilverstone-lodge, Norfolk, the Lady of Jacob Whittington, esq. a son.”

²⁸ Cinzia Maria Sicca, *Committed to Classicism: the Building of Downing College Cambridge* (Cambridge: Downing College, 1987), p. 30.

²⁹ Published posthumously in the Rev. Robert Walpole’s *Travels in Various Countries of the East: Being a Continuation of Memoirs relating to European and Asiatic Turkey* (London: Longman, 1820), pp. 457-72.

³⁰ Hugh Tregaskis, *Beyond the Grand Tour: the Levant Lunatics* (London: Ascent Books, 1979), pp. 140-44. Incomplete and unreliable account.

³¹ Cp. Henry Downing Whittington, “To Mariana Macri,” 3rd July 1819: “In truth, Mariana mine, I find great difficulty – which I did not expect – in speaking to my father, who does not wish to let me go to Athens, and does not give me the money even to make the

journey, nor – if I should take you – to keep you in that good state which befits my wife. As you know, I do not have anything that does not belong to him, and up to now I have been unable to change his mind... Truly, this difficulty ... has ruined me. I knew that my father loved me much, since he did not have another son, and I presumed that in such a matter which concerns so much both my happiness and my honour, he would listen to me..." In: Tregaskis, p. 142. Henry Whittington's (three) letters to Mariana Macri were first published in 1951 by George C. Brouzas.

³² See: Clergy of the Church of England Database,

<http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp>

³³ Cp. H. E. C. Stapylton, *The Eton School Lists, from 1791 to 1850, (every third year after 1793,) with Short Notes* (London: E. P. Williams, 1863), P. 56.

³⁴ Cp. *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday, 4 Oct. 1834: "On the Eastern coast, universally admitted to be one of the most beautiful villages between London & Yarmouth ... valuable freehold estate, LATE THE PROPERTY OF JACOB JOHN WHITTINGTON, Esq., deceased, to be sold by auction."

³⁵ Cp. *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, Thursday, June 8, 1854.

³⁶ These are some of the books to which the Whittingtons subscribed:

A New Translation of the Heautontimorumenos, and Adelphi of Terence: in Prose, by a Member of the University of Oxford (Oxford: printed for the Author, 1777). [subscriber: Capt. Whittington]

George Parker, *A View of Society and Manners in high and low life; being the adventures in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, etc of G Parker*, 2 vols. (London: 1781). [subscriber: Mr. Whittington]

Samuel Ashby, *Miscellaneous Poems. The Illustrious Friends; Address to Music and Poesy &c.* (London: W. Miller, 1794). [subscriber: Mrs Whittington, Kilverston (*sic*)]

Rev. George Haggitt, A.M., Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk, *Sermons to Country Congregations* (Bury St. Edmunds: J. Rackham, 1796). [subscribers: Mrs. Whittington, J. Whittington, Esq.]

Rev. John Black, Minister of Butley, Suffolk, *Poems* (Ipswich, 1799). [subscriber: Miss Whittington]

William Cole, of Starston, Norfolk, *Rural Months: a descriptive poem founded on a review of the year 1799 Also, Boyland-Hall, and other miscellaneous poems* (Norwich: Printed for the Author, and sold by Matchett and Stevenson, and J. Stacy, Norwich, [1824.]. [subscriber: J. J. Whittington, Esq. Yoxford]

William Otter, *The Life and Remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke, LL.D., Professor of Mineralogy in the University of Cambridge* (London: printed by J. F. Dove, Clerkenwell, 1824). [subscribers: the Rev. H. D. Whittington, and J. Whittington, Esq.]

Arthur Collins, *The Peerage of England*, 3 vols. In 4 (London: 1735). [With bookplate of Jacob John Whittington]

³⁷ Cp. Kenneth Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence: a complete catalogue of the oil paintings* (London, Phaidon, 1989), p. 282: "814. Mrs Jacob Whittington, wife of Jacob Downing Whittington of Trebarton [*sic*] Hall, Suffolk. c.1790. Canvas, 83 x 53 (210.8 x 134.6). The Robinson Collection."

³⁸ The first volume was published by John Wheble, London, in 1792. It continued until 1870.

³⁹ Stanley French, *The History of Downing College* (Cambridge: Downing College Association, 1978), p. 80.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴¹ See: *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 52, (1796).

⁴² 'Swaffham Bulbeck: Manors,' *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 10: Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds (north-eastern Cambridgeshire)* (2002), 252-58. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=18871>
Date accessed: 28 February 2012.

⁴³ See: Henry Montagu Doughty, *Chronicles of Theberton: a Suffolk Village* (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 226-27: "A certain Tom Waller was then mine host of The Lion. Of his name I retain a childish remembrance ; for our four church bells chimed, so we were told, 'Come Tom Wal-ler, come Tom Wal-ler.' Whether they brought him to church 'regular' I cannot say. ...Tom Waller must have been a jolly soul, with great power of social attraction. While he was innkeeper, our parish meetings were more thirsty than of old."

⁴⁴ See: Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857-1888* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 16.

⁴⁵ search.ancestry.com/iexec?htx=View&r=an&dbid=1624&iid=31281_A101648-00108&fn=Henry&ln=Forrester&st=r&ssrc=&pid=70683

The details of Henry's birth are confirmed by the 1851 Census: http://search.ancestry.com/iexec?htx=view&r=an&dbid=8860&iid=SRYHO107_1581_1582-0047&fn=Selina+M&ln=Forrester&st=r&ssrc=&pid=1019943

⁴⁶ James Curtis (1750-1835) was a London merchant and Distributor of Sea-Policy Stamps. His office was in Lombard street where blank policies were kept for sea insurances to any amount. He was a bachelor who for many years resided in the Old South Sea House in Broad street. His brother William Curtis (1752-1820), ("Billy Biscuit"), was mayor of London in 1795. His portrait in the National Portrait Gallery "James Curtis ('A view from the Old South Sea House') was drawn and published by Richard Dighton, and reissued by Thomas McLean hand-coloured etching, published April 1823.

⁴⁷ Cp. Will of Jacob John Whittington: "I do also by this Codicil cancel the legacy of two hundred pounds left in the body of my Will to the before mentioned James Curtis of the Old South Sea house who will account for all this to himself when he recollects the serious conversation we had together upon his Nephew's upstart and ungentlemanlike indelicate Manual Wit towards me at Mr Howlett's where I had introduced him to get him some capital shooting and which James Curtis unlike a Gentleman defended. I also do conceive that the advanced age of the said James Curtis is a sufficient reason for this alteration." Mr Robert Howlett (1764-1833), a famous and practical agriculturist, of "The Rookery," Yoxford, was Jacob's next-door neighbour.

⁴⁸ Ellen Sophia Whittington must have been in regular touch with "my friend Henry Forrester, at present a Clerk in her Majesty's Customs in the City of London" before she chose him as one of her two executors. When he died in 1857 Ellen Sophia replaced him by Silvanus Padley, Jr. (1809-1880), of Swansea, a colliery-owner, friend and former partner of Trevor Addams-Williams, who had married her companion Emily Waller. The other executor was her physician during the years she lived at Exeter, William Henry Elliott M.D. (1805-1874).

⁴⁹ Will of Harriot Whittington, Public Record Office, National Archives, catalogue reference: PROB 11/1799, image reference: 101.

⁵⁰ See: Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857-1888* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 142.

Morley Roberts's Literary Career in the 1880s and 1890s

(concluded)

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

IV

In many ways 1896 was a major turning point in Roberts' life and in his literary career. On entering the new year he would have known that Snowden Hamlyn was ailing at Brighton. Soon after, on 21 February, Hamlyn died of heart disease. Suddenly, against all hope, the way was open for Roberts and Alice to be together. A few months were allowed to pass. Then in early May some intimates at the Authors' Club broadcast the news: Morley Roberts lies dangerously ill at Ambleside. There may have been an illness of sorts – he had complained to Colles of feeling seedy in early March, while the *Daily Mail* reporter, who published the report of Roberts' illness on 8 May,¹²⁶ speaks of shingles – but he most definitely was not in the Lake District. It was a smokescreen. Befittingly, early that same month a short story by Roberts entitled "The Wedding Eve" appeared in *The Idler*.¹²⁷ Shortly thereafter, unbeknown to all but a few family members (not even Gissing knew),¹²⁸ on 16 May 1896 Roberts and Alice Hamlyn were married at the registry office in Hanover Square. They immediately left England for Switzerland, honeymooning a good part of the summer at Montreux from where they informed the world of their union. A letter dated Easter Monday from Champion reveals that before the marriage Roberts had again written to him seriously contemplating a move with Alice and her children to Australia.¹²⁹ Champion's ambivalent reply may well have dissuaded him from undertaking the move – the various viewpoints regarding a move to Australia would be dramatised in a scene between the failed socialist, Urquhart (Champion), and Quain (Roberts) in *Maurice Quain*.¹³⁰ On their return to England in August, Roberts found himself a married man responsible for the welfare of three stepchildren. He enjoyed a close relationship with the two girls, Vere (12) and Naomi (9), but to his regret, as he later admitted, he could never get on with Royston (14).¹³¹ Roberts also formed a strong bond with Alice's mother, Emily Selous, who had come to live with them. In retrospect his marriage had been hasty and daring from the financial perspective. After all his annual income up to now was modest and scarcely guaranteed. More to the point, Alice was no heiress. In 1883, when her father Angiolo Robson Selous had died, she had been bequeathed a seventh-part share in £7000, and after her husband's death a fifth-part share in

what remained of the \$10,000 Hamlyn had inherited from his actor-father as long ago as 1860, namely £540.19s.8d.¹³²

In August, emboldened by necessity no doubt, Roberts abruptly broke with William Morris Colles. Only recently some bad feeling had entered into their relationship after Colles discovered that Roberts had sold some stories to Shorter and a Manchester newspaper without his knowledge and cut him out of his share of the spoils. Colles had written a sharp letter as a result to which Roberts replied angrily,

I don't quite appreciate your letter with all its innuendo. If you had got me half enough to live on I should have been quite content for you to go on with the work, but as you didn't I had to do some work for myself. I've done nothing with anyone you introduced me to but Downey. And you yourself have continually sent me direct to your publishing clients, such as Beccles Wilson & even Lloyd's man, Catling. And as to Downey you have had the stuff before. You refused to try & serialise the Ship's Doctor & I had to do it myself with Tillotson – to whom you did not introduce me. And I have done nothing particular save with Shorter who's outside your beat as you acknowledge. You make a great fuss about the M'chester Chronicle affair which was nothing, & only serves as an excuse.

I suppose I shall have to go over to Watt much as I dislike the idea.¹³³

It is evident from the sales of the books he published in 1896 that Roberts had good reason to be dissatisfied with Colles. *The Great Jester*¹³⁴ (the copyright was leased for seven years) and *The Earth Mother*,¹³⁵ each published in March, had brought him £35 and £25 respectively. This last, an Edgar Allan Poe-like story about a sculptor who kills the man who cheated him out of the woman he loved, was well received but failed to sell. Intriguingly, Roberts persuaded W. H. Hudson to pose as the murderer for the book illustrations by A. D. McCormick. In May, *The Courage of Pauline*¹³⁶ appeared, having earned him £50, and in October another £50 was divided between himself and Max Montesole¹³⁷ for *The Circassian*,¹³⁸ an exotic tale which they had co-authored. His combined earnings for these four works amount to £135 – hardly what he might have hoped for at such a critical stage in his life and career. Some fellow writers he knew at the Authors' Club were receiving twice as much or more for a single novel. Again Roberts had asked Colles to try to get £200 for his forthcoming Australian romance, *The Adventure of the Broad Arrow*,¹³⁹ but a year had passed without him finding a buyer. Another book to appear in October was a new sumptuous edition of *The Western Avernus*¹⁴⁰ issued by Archibald Constable with a fine frontispiece pencil drawing of Roberts by A. D. McCormick and various photographs of American scenery. As in the first edition there is a map marking his route in red ink. In 1894 Roberts

had bought back the copyright and 833 unsold copies of the 1887 edition from Smith, Elder for £35. The book had gone into two editions by December. As in previous years his stories and articles helped to boost his income – this time eleven stories (including “The Wedding Eve”) and four articles were sold for a total of £154.¹⁴¹ Discounting royalties his earnings come to £289 for the year.

In September, upon parting with Colles (the contracts he brokered account for works published up to December 1896), Roberts signed up with A. P. Watt & Son. This is an important moment in his career not least because it conveniently marks the end of what had been a long literary apprenticeship. Whereas before, though highly inventive and experimental, his work had been fairly unremarkable, from now on one discerns in Roberts a concerted effort to notch up a new level in his writing. Champion had been complaining for several years that his work was too depressing, *ergo* unpopular and unrewarding financially. At long last he was listening and determined to write in a popular vein and reap the success he craved. There is a group photograph from this time of the Authors’ Club cricket team, taken on 25 September 1896 at Lord’s Cricket Ground, in which he appears with, among others, John Davidson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and J. M. Barrie.¹⁴² Every man there is looking at the camera with that recognisably complacent air of Victorian masculine superiority, all except Roberts that is, who is gazing wistfully into the distance. Was he thinking: “Three guineas a thousand words! Damn the nature of things! I’ll have my slice of the literary pie yet”? Whatever he was thinking, little could he know then that with A. P. Watt at the helm, he was about to embark on the most successful period of his literary career. Certainly, his decision to join up with A. P. Watt – a connection that would endure for 46 years – was the best business decision he ever made from a literary standpoint. And Roberts was to feel the benefit from the start. For, as soon as Watt took over his literary affairs, he at once introduced a new selling fee of £3.10s per thousand words (and sometimes got £4), chased up the copyrights of his old books in order to bring about their reissue in new editions, and demanded and consistently got higher fees for his novels. He also obtained improved serialisation fees by using the W. C. Leng syndicate at Shef-field,¹⁴³ was extremely successful at selling American, continental, and colonial rights in Roberts’ books, but, above all, was remarkably efficient in disposing of his short stories and arranging their simultaneous publication in Britain and America. As their abundant correspondence (comprising well over a thousand pages in the A. P. Watt collection) reveals, although their

relationship appears to have been formal – very rarely does either stray from purely business matters –, there was obvious mutual regard and respect. Indeed, it is highly interesting to observe the dynamics of their working relationship. One notices, for example, that Watt kept Roberts constantly informed about matters in hand whether Roberts happened to be in Camden Town, Cape Town, or Spanish Town. And, unlike Colles, he always dealt directly with Roberts, as did his sons after his death. Furthermore, he was ever willing to pull out all the stops to arrange the best terms possible for Roberts, whether it involved persuading an editor to reconsider his offer over the phone or personally visiting him in his office. Aside from this it is also immensely interesting to note that Watt and the various publishers of his books often determined between them the kind of book Roberts was to deliver, such as a comedy, sea story, or social drama, even going so far as to tell him where to locate the action of the narrative.

Among the most important transactions Watt realised in these early days was a prospective four-book deal with Hutchinson & Co. The contract for the first book, *Maurice Quain*, signed on 3 January 1897 and earning him £75, stated that Roberts was to agree to offer Hutchinson *The Adventure of the Broad Arrow* and to give them first refusal of his next two novels. *Maurice Quain*, a novel about a poor journalist and the girl he fishes out of the Thames, was published on 14 April, the same day as Gissing's *The Whirlpool*. Surprisingly, in spite of Roberts' high expectations and the praise of critics – the *Librarian*, for example, reviewed it under the rubric “The Novel of the Week,”¹⁴⁴ – it didn't go beyond a first edition and a colonial issue. The gloom was alleviated somewhat by the fact that Roberts' name was much in vogue in the press, occasioned both by the appearance of new editions of four of his works, *The Reputation of George Saxon*, *A Question of Instinct*, *The Adventures of a Ship's Doctor*, and *The Great Jester*,¹⁴⁵ and the summer serialisation of “The Great Republic”¹⁴⁶ (later renamed *A Sea Comedy*) in *To-Day* for which last Watt had got £60.

In May Roberts travelled to North Devon to stay with Charles Garvice at his country house in Bradworthy. Garvice, the amiable author of popular romances which sold in the millions across the world, taught him to ride a bicycle, took him on day outings to Havilland Quay and Clovelly, and no doubt gave him tips on writing a bestseller – Roberts was, as it happens, a quick learner in all respects. Then, on 25th May Roberts made a flying visit to Budleigh Salterton to see Gissing, who was staying there for his health, before redirecting himself towards Cornwall.¹⁴⁷ By the end of June he was

with his wife in the Lake District. In October *The Adventure of the Broad Arrow* finally appeared and sold well, going into two English and two colonial editions. Roberts only received £31.10s from Hutchinson in advance of royalties for the book. A new volume of short stories, *Strong Men and True*,¹⁴⁸ was published by Downey & Co in December gaining him the usual £25. The serialisation of stories and articles proved as lucrative as ever, seventeen of the former and two of the latter bringing in a respectable £244.¹⁴⁹ His first full year with A. P. Watt, therefore, was the best so far of his literary career, earning him around £435 or twice Gissing's literary income that year – admittedly he only published two books and two short stories.¹⁵⁰ Ironically, Roberts' best year's income was not sufficient to support his family (now based in Fulham)¹⁵¹ and by Christmas he was so hard up that he wrote to his good friend, Edmund Downey,¹⁵² asking for an extra £15 in advance of royalties for *Strong Men and True*.¹⁵³ A few months before this he had written to Champion bemoaning his lack of success and the poor prices he was getting for his books. And there was still talk of moving abroad. It couldn't have done him any good when Champion – ever the straight talker – wrote back telling him “People here like ‘Maurice Quain’ immensely but you’ve got a terrible reputation for gloom.”¹⁵⁴

Matters scarcely improved in January 1898. Roberts had asked Watt to get £200 from W. C. Leng for the English serialisation rights in his new novel, *A Son of Empire*. This was an exuberant imperialist adventure story in the manner of Rider Haggard, which draws on his personal knowledge of the machinations of the War Office from his own time working there. From Sheffield, Christopher Leng, W. C. Leng's son, wrote back regarding Watt's demand for £200,

We would only be inclined to purchase Morley Roberts' story at a low price. He may have a reputation as a writer of short stories for magazines but he would be very little known by readers of penny weekly papers. He would therefore sell badly, if at all. I add the words “if at all” because the market is simply flooded with serial fiction for the whole year, and we find it most difficult to obtain buyers, at any price, of stories by well-known authors. The best offer we could make you would be one hundred pounds (£100) for the entire serial rights. The price Mr. Roberts obtains for his short stories is of course no criterion of the value of a long story. Short stories are always paid on a higher scale.¹⁵⁵

If Roberts had wanted to know the present market value of his novels, Leng had put it in no uncertain terms. In the end he settled for Leng's offer, which also meant, frustratingly, postponing book publication until October or November 1898. In time it would rankle with him that he hadn't held out

for a better offer (in future years Leng would be obliged to increase his offers). *A Son of Empire* was serialised in the *Daily Mail* from June to July and in the *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph* from August to October, by which time the story and its dashing hero, “Black Blundell,” had become the talk of the English press.¹⁵⁶ In fact, advanced orders of the book were of such a magnitude that publication of the first edition was put back until early 1899 to allow for a much larger print run.

Roberts had begun the year with an attempt at a play with a theatrical setting called “The Leading Lady.”¹⁵⁷ It would be twelve years before he saw it performed – during which time he made several further attempts at play-writing, and sent a play to Bram Stoker for his advice.¹⁵⁸ In February, Skeffington & Son published one of his finest collections of stories, *The Keeper of the Waters and Other Stories*,¹⁵⁹ which includes such minor classics as “The Anticipator,” “All Spain and Captain Spink,”¹⁶⁰ and “The Crowd.” Roberts received the customary £25 for the volume. In addition, in what proved to be a relatively quiet year, he sold four stories and five articles to magazines, receiving about £83 for them.¹⁶¹ In 1898 his income comes to a relatively disappointing £208. He was nevertheless looking to the future with some purpose as he prepared himself with his new blood and thunder style for an outright assault on the minds and hearts of the general reading public. Feeling in prime health, despite having turned forty, he had spent the summer months in Switzerland taking up mountaineering. By this time he had committed himself to writing a novel set in South Africa. To do the necessary research for the book, he travelled there in August – on the eve of the Second Boer War – for three months. Lack of money had meant his wife staying behind in England. Soon after arriving a bad bout of malarial fever forced him to cut his stay short so that he was unable to arrange meetings with Cecil Rhodes and Leander Jameson as originally intended.¹⁶² His journey was not without its rewards as he did manage to obtain an interview with Paul Kruger, the Boer leader.¹⁶³ And his youngest brother, Leslie, who was then a corporal in the British South Africa Police, he tracked down in Rhodesia.¹⁶⁴ On his return to England he was ill for some weeks with recurrent malaria. When he was well again he wrote down the planned adventure story based on the life of Rhodes.

If 1898 had been a disappointment in almost every respect, 1899 would turn out to be one of the high points of Roberts’ career, and the start of four or five years of mainstream success in which he produced five or six of his best and most popular books. Having often been referred to as “the Australian Kipling,” from now on he would be mentioned frequently in the

same breath as Guy Boothby,¹⁶⁵ the prolific author of bestselling romances. The long-awaited publication of *A Son of Empire*,¹⁶⁶ the first of four imperialist adventures by Roberts to appear within a few years, took place in February.¹⁶⁷ The story concerns an English maiden, Madge Gretton, who meets the soldier hero, Captain Blundell, whilst on holiday in Switzerland. When she learns from him that his career has been blocked by an enemy at the War Office, she decides to intervene. It just happens that her brother works at the War Office and she is personally acquainted with the Adjutant-General, Sir Daniel Fielding, who is partly based on Lord Wolseley¹⁶⁸ under whom Roberts worked in the early 1880s. Back in London, she visits the War Office, steals the Adjutant-General's cipher, and forges a signal which promotes her hero to active service in India. Black Blundell fulfils his destiny with some derring-do in a thrilling battle scene in the state of Chitral on the Indian Northwest Frontier (the present-day Chitral District in Pakistan).¹⁶⁹ Upon publication the *Literature* critic recognised at once that the novel "must be taken to mark a great turning point in the career of Mr. Morley Roberts."¹⁷⁰ Much admiring the audacious heroine, he goes on to write, "She is the freshest and most delightful girl that we have lately met in English fiction."¹⁷¹ Most critics were in agreement. Many had felt that it was a matter of time before Roberts came into his own.¹⁷² The novel sold well, and there were American and colonial editions. Conan Doyle wrote praising the book and saying that he was sending a copy to Sir Garnet Wolseley.¹⁷³ The Viscount later wrote to Roberts, "Its pages carried me away reminding me of when I was young & seeking reputation like your hero in enterprises of toil & danger."¹⁷⁴ He added tongue-in-cheek, "Many thanks for the plan of the fort which I have sent to our Intelligence Dept."¹⁷⁵ Roberts also received letters of tribute from Gissing, Champion, and his new wife, Elsie Belle Champion.¹⁷⁶

Exhausted after another heavy stint of writing, he spent June in Howtown walking on the fells and fishing. Then in September, feeling a little on edge, he travelled north again for a fortnight at Harrogate. The stress from years of writing for subsistence had begun to take its toll. This was the first of many visits to watering places over the next twenty-five years, during which at one time or another he suffered from bad nerves, gout, lung trouble, recurrent malaria, nasal problems, and various stomach complaints. That same month *A Sea Comedy*, which had been serialised in *To-Day* two years previously, was published by John Milne in his attractive "Express Series."¹⁷⁷ A cheap edition came out in 1900.¹⁷⁸ It is not known what Roberts got for the short book, but one suspects no more than £50. In

October his South African novel, *The Colossus*, was simultaneously published by Edward Arnold in Britain and Harper & Brothers¹⁷⁹ in America amidst great fanfare. Arnold may have given him £75 (what he received for his next book, *The Plunderers*), whilst Harper gave him £20 for the American serial rights – the book was serialised across the States in 1900¹⁸⁰ – and for the book 10% royalties on all copies sold at \$1.50. From the first critics were divided about the novel. Some thought it superior to *A Son of Empire*, others, whilst forecasting its inevitable popularity, censured Roberts for choosing a living subject as his hero and seeking *un succès de l'heure*. The critic at the *Saturday Review* put it most succinctly: “We have no doubt that it will be described as ‘brilliant’ and ‘daring’ ... In conception and execution the story is an outrage upon good manners. And it is not even amusing.”¹⁸¹ Still others, likewise begrudging Roberts his triumph, dismissed the book as pure journalese. The critics were proved right: it was another success, though less so than *A Son of Empire* to Roberts’ disappointment. They were also right about his having taken up journalism, except that it wasn’t to be found in the novel, but in the *Review of the Week*, a new weekly journal edited by Harold E. Gorst.¹⁸² The first number came out in November and apparently Roberts wrote half of it including a review, ironically, of Gissing’s anti-imperialist novel, *The Crown of Life*.¹⁸³ He was to job on the periodical for a year. Apart from this he published six stories and five further articles in periodicals receiving about £122 for them.¹⁸⁴ Assuming he got £50 for *A Sea Comedy* and £75 each for *A Son of Empire* and *The Colossus*, Roberts’ earnings in 1899 come to £342 (excluding royalties and whatever salary Gorst paid him).

V

By 1900 Roberts had come a long way as a writer. He was at the height of his powers and experiencing his most fruitful period. Over the next few years he would corner the market in fictional portrayals of public figures by writing a political novel, *Lord Linlithgow*,¹⁸⁵ based on Lord Rosebery’s career, and by describing Winston Churchill’s daring escape from Boer captivity in *Taken by Assault, or The Fugitives*. And over the next decade he would continue to produce a diversity of popular works including adventure novels, social comedies,¹⁸⁶ and his most successful book, *Rachel Marr*,¹⁸⁷ a Cornish romance from 1903 about doomed love, which sold 7,000 copies.¹⁸⁸ Yet commercial success, if “success is measured in pounds, shillings, and pence,”¹⁸⁹ as Nigel Cross puts it in his study of Grub Street writers, or as Haggard, Conan Doyle, or Marie Corelli¹⁹⁰ knew it, he would

never enjoy. It was doubtless flattering to be compared with Guy Boothby in 1899, except that the comparison is absurd because the Australian writer ten years his junior “was earning £15 per thousand words for the newspaper rights to stories and £900 for novels.”¹⁹¹ In 1899 Roberts was only getting £75 for his best-selling books so far, Gissing by contrast received almost five times as much for *The Crown of Life*.¹⁹² Harsh though it may have seemed to Roberts, the reality is that even his most successful novels failed to bring him financial security. If one does the maths for *Rachel Marr*, for instance, one sees that the 7,000 books sold at 6s brought in £2100. From this amount Roberts earned 17½% royalties on the first 2,000 copies sold, equalling £105, 20% royalties over and above 2,000 up to 5,000 sold, equalling £180, and 25% royalties thereafter, equalling £150, and altogether £435 in royalties (£200 of which he received in advance) that took several years to accumulate.¹⁹³ For Roberts this was as good as it got and even then it was nowhere near enough to buy a Bateman’s or to provide for a prosperous lifestyle. More tellingly, *Rachel Marr* was out of print within seven years and remained so until 1925 when it was briefly revived. Ultimately, unlike the perennially popular works of a Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling, Roberts’ best books were short-lived successes, having already outlived their popularity within four to five years of their first appearance. To gain a fairly comfortable living as a writer Roberts would have had to sell 50,000 copies of *Rachel Marr*. To emulate a Guy Boothby, a Rider Haggard, or a Charles Garvice, and to achieve enduring financial security, he would have needed to sell 200,000 copies. In neither respect did he ever come close.

And the die was cast even before he wrote *Rachel Marr*. In truth, by the end of the nineteenth century, despite his many shifts and turns, his self-publicising skills, his prodigious industry, his ability to write in a variety of literary forms and genres, and his general popularity, Morley Roberts was in financial terms, as he realised himself, already a literary failure. He admits as much in his fictional biography of Gissing, where he writes poignantly,

For a long time after discovering the almost impossibility of making more than a mere living out of fiction, I had in a sense given up writing for the public, as every man is more or less bound to do at last if he be not gratified with commercial success. Indeed for many years I wrote for some three people: for my wife; for Rawson [W. H. Hudson], the naturalist, my almost lifelong friend; and for Maitland [Gissing], the only man I had known longer than Rawson. Provided they approved, and were a little enthusiastic, I thought all was well, even though I could earn no more than a mere living.¹⁹⁴

When he wrote this Roberts was a physical and emotional wreck: the shadow of his former robust self. He had just come through some of the most pinched and harrowing years of his life. And he had lost most of those dear to him: Gissing, his beloved step-daughter, Vere, and most recently his wife. He had almost died himself after getting appendicitis in the weeks following Vere's death. Inevitably, like many of his contemporaries such as John Davidson¹⁹⁵ and Edwin Pugh,¹⁹⁶ whose stars had flickered but briefly, Roberts soon reached his lowest ebb and was compelled to seek assistance from the Royal Literary Fund – a difficult undertaking for such a proud and fiercely masculine man. That was in 1909. Following his wife's death in September 1911 he withdrew into the closed world of despair. For months he cut himself off from those still near to him and from his friends. He wandered the streets of London in inarticulate sorrow or passed his days staring vacantly at the silent screens of picture houses. It was in this mood of bitterness – close to madness, as he described it to Frank Swinnerton – that he came to the writing of his Gissing biography. He explains his mindset at the time of writing thus,

That book I had often meant to write but I always felt I should never do it, since it could only be done if done at all in a way that many would dislike. Thus it was that I put off the doing of it until the time came that I was in such a state of mind that I could not understand how anybody could be troubled by what I did. I was indifferent to all things and yet I had to write. I had no imagination and no invention, I was past, as it seemed to me, for ever, the possibility of writing fiction with that sense of conviction and reality that makes it worth doing. So in despair I turned to something I remembered before disaster came to me. It is true that even so I found it difficult. There was still the dumb consciousness in my mind of what some would say or think. But I had a strange and deadly intention within me to speak the truth for once as I saw it, careless of any result or even my own possible criticism later. It was a thing that had never been done. We speak with too much convention of the dead. We write panegyric rather than the real story of real life. Men must be what they are supposed to be and they are what the world sees or would like to see and the truth is not in us.¹⁹⁷

These are words and intentions that anticipate Lytton Strachey¹⁹⁸ by several years. When the biography was finally written some outraged critics, among them friends and foes, tore into him with shattering animosity, chief among them H. G. Wells.¹⁹⁹ For months after Roberts was on the edge of a mental collapse. But the writing of the book had closed a chapter in his life.

In the years that followed he eked out a precarious living, supported only by his devoted stepdaughter, Naomi (who had inherited a small living from her grandmother, Emily),²⁰⁰ and their faithful servant, Ellen Jackson.²⁰¹ In these years he dedicated himself, as to an *idée fixe*, to the study of medicine to the detriment of his income. He acquired a minor reputation at

best. In 1915, during the Great War, his health having measurably improved, he applied high up the military ladder for an army commission. After much deliberation by various senior officers his application was finally rejected.²⁰² Yet, startlingly, in December 1916, he was issued and undertook a temporary army service order with the British Expeditionary Force to lecture to the troops along the French and English front lines. By war's end he had assumed yet another guise, this time as a war poet. Recurring ill health and constant lack of money blighted these and the following years. Then, in 1923, he was granted a small civil list pension, which made it possible for him and Naomi to winter every year in the Caribbean. In 1931 he would reinvent himself one last time as a detective writer with the novel *The Scent of Death*, in which, ingeniously, a dog would play the principal role.²⁰³ Roberts would live on into the 1940s writing books on biology and politics with Naomi at his side. Following her premature death from cancer in November 1941 he wrote that the 45 fire-side years with her meant more to him than all his books together. His many stories and novels he had long since dismissed as so much paper to burn. He spent the last months of his life writing a 300-page memorial to Naomi, Vere, and his wife, which was never published. When he was finished he travelled to his beloved Howtown one last time, accompanied by his doctor, to bury Naomi's ashes alongside those of her sister and mother on Swarth Fell. Four weeks later, on 8 June 1942, he died alone in his flat at 5 Manor Mansions, Belsize Park Gardens, London. With the Second World War raging, his death was barely noticed. And having outlived most of his generation and his age, this last eminent Victorian was soon virtually forgotten.

Does he have anything to offer readers seventy years after his death? Certainly there are many fine stories in the collections including "The Miracle of the Black Cañon," "The Anticipator," "The Crowd," "The Overcrowded Iceberg," "The Fog," "The Blood Fetish," "A Thing of Wax," "The Young Man Who Stroked Cats," and "A Comedy in Capricorn."²⁰⁴ And among the novels, *A Son of Empire*, *The Idlers*, *The Prey of the Strongest*, and *Time and Thomas Waring* are still eminently readable.²⁰⁵ And, of course, there are those three books: the Gissing and Hudson biographies and *The Western Avernus* – all unique in their own way, if not minor classics in their different genres. Finally, one suspects that Roberts' experience of late-Victorian Grub Street, alongside that of Gissing's, will remain of especial value to the literary historian. For Morley Roberts stands alone among minor Victorian writers as one whose life is

well documented and whose career exemplifies the ultimately unrewarding and futile careers of the Edwin Reardons and Harold Biffens of his day.

[I wish to thank Nancy M. Shawcross, Curator of Manuscripts, for granting me permission to publish extracts from the unpublished “Autobiographical Manuscripts” and from a letter dated 13 November 1899 by Viscount Garnet Wolseley to Roberts in the Morley Roberts Papers, Ms. Col. 726, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. I would like to thank Amy S. Wong for allowing me permission to cite from Morley Roberts’ letters in Letters to William Morris Colles (Collection 2007), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. And I would like to thank Matthew Turi, Manuscripts Research and Instruction Librarian, for allowing me permission to quote from material in the A. P. Watt Records 1888-1892, #11036, Rare Book Literary and Historical Papers, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Lastly, I am grateful to Mary Ann Gillies for sending me photocopies of Morley Roberts’ early book contracts from her own research in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library.]

¹²⁶ Anon., “Chat about Books,” *Daily Mail* (London), 8 May 1896, p. 3.

¹²⁷ “The Wedding Eve,” *Idler*, VIII, May 1896, pp. 620-23.

¹²⁸ Since Roberts had failed to meet with Gissing on 19th May 1896 as planned (see *Diary*, p. 410), and the marriage took place in a London registry office, it seems likely that the decision to marry was made at short notice. What I suggest happened, according to the facts, is this: Roberts had tried to arrange a meeting with Gissing at the Authors’ Club in March, but Gissing called it off (see entry for 17 March in *Diary*, p. 405, and letter to Roberts of same date in *The Collected Letters, 1895-1897*, Volume Six, p. 110). On 2nd May Roberts wrote to him again proposing the 19th May as a date to meet and Gissing replied the next day confirming the date (see *Diary*, p. 409). Within days, for whatever reason, Roberts had then decided to marry as soon as possible. He then hastily set up a smokescreen by 8th May – when the *Daily Mail* news item appeared – to allow for a secret wedding and a quick escape to Switzerland. On 20th May Gissing wrote in his diary, “Roberts ill with his malaria” (*Diary*, p. 410). This suggests that Roberts had written, citing illness as his excuse (not his marriage) for not coming. This in turn backs up my supposition that he had put up a smokescreen around his wedding, especially as he did not tell Gissing of his marriage until he sent him a note from Montreux on 9 June (see *Diary*, p. 412). In any case, what is certain is that Roberts was well enough to make his appearance at the registry office and to travel to Switzerland (facts that strongly contradict the reports of him lying dangerously ill at Ambleside). The press only began to announce his recovery on 22 May by which time he was safely abroad with his wife.

¹²⁹ See Henry Hyde Champion to Morley Roberts, 6 April 1896, Morley Roberts Papers at University of Pennsylvania.

¹³⁰ *Maurice Quain*, pp. 170-71.

¹³¹ Vera Constance Hamlyn (1885-1909); Naomi Viola Hamlyn (1887-1941), Royston Bruce Hamlyn (1882-1968).

¹³² There is every reason to assume that Alice had used her own inheritance, and that her mother, Emily, had helped, to support the family during the last eight or nine years of her

marriage. For, in 1888, Snowden Thomas Hamlyn made a belated application to the United States Federal Military Pension Fund claiming years of illness since his discharge from the army in 1862. He gave a testimony at the American Embassy in London to the effect “that since that time he has been lame at intervals and the diseased state of his stomach and bowels caused by privations while a prisoner as aforesaid troubled him so much that since he has left the army he has been prevented from pursuing any steady occupation or business and has been obliged to devote himself entirely to an unsuccessful endeavour to reestablish his health.” Elsewhere he relates that he “has resided in Geneva, New York City, Berlin, Paris, and London” and formally worked as a newspaper writer and commission agent, and “that he is now a stock broker in the City of London ... and disabled from obtaining his subsistence by manual labor by reason of his wound above described and the diseased condition of his stomach and bowels ...” Curiously, there is no mention of his wife and children in the application or accompanying documents. See Snowden Thomas Hamlyn, Film Number M551 roll 58, U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, National Archives Trust Fund, Washington, DC. He was awarded a small pension for the remainder of his life – it was discontinued at his death so there was no widow’s pension for Alice.

¹³³ From Roberts to Colles, 12 August 1896, in *Letters to William Morris Colles* (Collection 2007), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

¹³⁴ *The Great Jester, Being Some Jestes of Fate, Told by Morley Roberts* (London: Mentz, Kenner & Co., 1896).

¹³⁵ *The Earth Mother* (London: Downey & Co., 1896).

¹³⁶ *The Courage of Pauline* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1896).

¹³⁷ Max Montesole (1859-1918), ex-Turkish army officer, editor of *The Speaker*, writer, freemason, and father of the Shakespearean actor, Max Montesole Jr (1892-1942). Roberts became acquainted with Montesole in the chess corner at Gatti’s and they remained lifelong friends.

¹³⁸ Morley Roberts, and Max Montesole, *The Circassian* (London: Downey & Co., 1896).

¹³⁹ *The Adventure of the Broad Arrow, An Australian Romance* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1897).

¹⁴⁰ *The Western Avernus, or, Toil and Travel in Further North America*, New Edition (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1896).

¹⁴¹ All published in 1896: “Trooper Baptiste,” *Graphic*, LIII, 18 January, p. 83; “An Edited Story,” *English Illustrated Magazine*, XIV, February, pp. 541-46; “A Good Turn Out” (collected as “The Boss of Myall Blocks” in *Strong Men and True*), *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 1 March, p. 8, reprinted in *Monroe Semi Weekly Times* (Wisconsin), 20 February 1899, p. 2; “The Anticipator,” *Sketch*, 13 May, pp. 123-24, and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May, p. 5; “Jules and Renée,” *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 25 July, p. 6; “The Galliegos, A Political Story,” *Westminster Budget*, 28 August, p. 21; “Two Men and a River,” *English Illustrated Magazine*, XV, September, pp. 449-56; “An Emotional Failure,” *Sketch*, 11 November, pp. 123-24, and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 November, p. 10; “The Gold Mine of Kerch Bar,” *English Illustrated Magazine*, XV, December, pp. 278-84; “King Billy of Ballarat,” *Stories by English Authors: The Orient, by Various Authors* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896), pp. 145-54; “Round the World in a Hurry,” *Idler*, VII, January, pp. 320-28; “Imperial Socialism,” *Humanitarian*, VIII, January, pp. 49-54; “The Monroe Doctrine,” *To-Morrow*, I, February, pp. 108-12; See note 49 for “The Transvaal Question IV. The Case for England and the Empire.”

¹⁴² H. R. Gibbs (photographer), "The Authors' and Press Clubs Cricket Match at Lord's," *Black and White*, 26 September 1896, p. 392.

¹⁴³ Sir William Christopher Leng (1825-1902) became co-proprietor with Frederick Clifford (1828-1904), and took over the managership, of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* in 1864. From about 1885 he started up the W. C. Leng syndicate in Sheffield assisted by his son, Christopher David Leng (1861-1921).

¹⁴⁴ Anon., "The Novel of the Week: Maurice Quain," *Librarian*, 24 April 1897, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴⁵ Morley Roberts, *A Question of Instinct, An Analytical Study* (London: H. Henry & Co., 1897); Morley Roberts, *The Reputation of George Saxon and Other Stories* (London: Cassell & Co., 1897); Morley Roberts, *The Adventures of a Ship's Doctor* (London: Downey & Co., 1897); Morley Roberts, *The Great Jester, Being Some Jest's of Fate, Told by Morley Roberts* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1897).

¹⁴⁶ "The Great Republic," *To-Day*, XV, 17 July 1897, pp. 357-60; 24 July 1897, pp. 397-99; 31 July 1897, pp. 429-31; 7 August 1897, pp. 9-11; 14 August 1897, pp. 41-3; and 21 August 1897, pp. 73-5.

¹⁴⁷ See Morley Roberts to Alice Roberts, Sunday [23] May 1897, in the Morley Roberts Papers at the University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁴⁸ *Strong Men and True* (London: Downey & Co., 1897).

¹⁴⁹ All published in 1897: "The Crowd," *Cassell's Family Magazine*, XXV, pp. 237-42; "The Passenger to Cudgellico," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVI, February, pp. 575-81; "Wash-Tub Davis," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVII, April, pp. 32-8; "The Mark on the Shack," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVII, May, pp. 115-20; "The Affair at Big Springs," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVII, June, pp. 283-88; "The 'Onderdonk,'" *Pearson's Magazine*, III, June, pp. 620-28; "The Man and His Work," *Illustrated London News*, CXI, 24 July, pp. 120-21; "The Doctor of Red Creek," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVII, August, pp. 597-605; "The Keeper of Waters," (collected as "The Keeper of the Waters"), *Pearson's Magazine*, September, pp. 233-40; "A Travel-Picture," *Lady's Realm*, II, September, pp. 409-15; "A Pawned Kingdom," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVIII, October, pp. 15-21, and *Duluth News Tribune*, 16, 18, 19 October 1897, pp. 6, 4, and 6; "The Gamblers of Gravel Mountain," *The Windsor Magazine*, VI, October, pp. 527-35; "The Story for Bulmer," *Illustrated London News*, CXI, 2 October, pp. 451-52; "The Pilot," *Pall Mall Magazine*, XIII, November, pp. 354-61; "The Lone Wolf in Flood," *Illustrated London News*, CXI, 27 November, pp. 761-62; "A Man's Death," *English Illustrated Magazine*, XVIII, December, pp. 241-48, reprinted as "Billy Gordon" in *St Louis Globe*, February 1898, p. 4; "The Dreamer," *Sketch*, Christmas Number, December, pp. 9-10, and *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 October, p. 18; "The Lap-Dogs," *Humanitarian*, X, June, pp. 446-49; "The Idlers' Club: Ought We to Give up Socialism?" *Idler*, XII, November, pp. 564-67.

¹⁵⁰ See Roger Milbrandt, p. 30.

¹⁵¹ From about 1894-5 to 1901 Roberts lived at 54 Stokenchurch Street, Fulham, S.W.

¹⁵² Edmund Downey (1856-1937), editor and novelist. Downey was a long-standing friend of Roberts and they kept in touch into the 1920s.

¹⁵³ See Morley Roberts to Edmund Downey, 10 December 1897, in Mss.EL.R.109 Special Collections, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

¹⁵⁴ See Henry Hyde Champion to Roberts, 10 October 1897, in the Morley Roberts Papers at the University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁵⁵ From C. D. Leng to A. P. Watt, 24 January 1898, Folder 38.19, in the A. P. Watt Records 1888-1982 #11036, General Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁵⁶ “A Son of Empire,” *Daily Mail* (London), 7 June to 25 July 1898, and *Weekly Telegraph* (Sheffield), 6 August to 22 October 1898.

¹⁵⁷ “The Leading Lady,” (three-act play), Grand Theatre, Clapham Junction, 30 August 1910.

¹⁵⁸ Roberts wrote to Bram Stoker several times in February–March 1907 regarding a play he was writing. Stoker replied advising him to make a comedy of it. See Morley Roberts to Bram Stoker, 17 March 1907, in Correspondence and Literary Manuscripts of Bram Stoker, BC MS 19c Stoker, Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

¹⁵⁹ *The Keeper of the Waters and Other Stories* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1898).

¹⁶⁰ Roberts wrote at least 14 Captain Spink stories between 1898 and 1926.

¹⁶¹ All published in 1898: “Mrs Tansley’s Trunk,” (collected as “The Trunk” in *The Keeper of The Waters and other Stories*), *Lady’s Realm*, III, February, pp. 472–79; “The Hatter of Howlong,” *Phil May’s Annual*, VIII, June, pp. 38–47; “The Suggester of Crime,” *Weekly Irish Times*, 9 July, p. 4; “Virginia,” *Westminster Budget*, 30 September, p. 8; “Mournful Corsica,” *Westminster Budget*, 28 January, p. 20; “Morality and the Many,” *Humanitarian*, XII, March, pp. 172–78; “Notes on Some Pictures by G. P. Jacomb-Hood,” *Artist*, April, pp. 193–202; “A Day in Cape Town,” *Westminster Budget*, 28 October, pp. 13–14; “A Watch Night Service in San Francisco,” *Christmas Tree*, December, [page ?].

¹⁶² Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), English businessman and politician in South Africa; Sir Leander Starr Jameson (1853–1917), doctor and statesman, who led the infamous and ultimately unsuccessful raid into Boer territory to overthrow Paul Kruger’s government.

¹⁶³ Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger (1825–1904), Boer leader and State President of the South African Republic of Transvaal.

¹⁶⁴ Leslie Wilmot Roberts (1869–1916). As a corporal with the British South Africa Police he had earlier taken part in the relief of Mafeking and been awarded the Queen’s South Africa (QSA) Medal Clasp. During the Boer War he was promoted to lieutenant, serving in the first battalion of the Wiltshire Imperial Yeomanry 63 Company, and was later seriously wounded at Diepfontein. For his service in the Transvaal and Rhodesia he was awarded the King’s South Africa (KSA) Medal Clasp. After being shipped back to England, he lived out his life as an invalid.

¹⁶⁵ Guy Boothby (1867–1905), bestselling Australian novelist who moved to London in 1894 and wrote fifty books in the remaining eleven years of his life. For Roberts being compared with Boothby see: Anon., “A Book to be Read,” *Black & White*, 1 April 1899, p. 410.

¹⁶⁶ *A Son of Empire* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1899).

¹⁶⁷ The other three imperialist works were: *The Colossus, A Story of To-Day* (London: Edward Arnold, 1899); *The Plunderers, A Romance* (London: Methuen & Co., 1900); *Taken by Assault, or The Fugitives* (London: Sands & Co., 1901).

¹⁶⁸ Viscount Sir Garnet Joseph Wolseley (1833–1913), Field-Marshal in the British Army who served in Burma, the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, China, Canada, and in Africa on the Nile Expedition against Mahdist Sudan in the 1884–1885 campaign.

¹⁶⁹ On 14 January 1897 Roberts chaired an Authors’ Club dinner in honour of Sir George Scott Robertson (1852–1916) in which he gave a passionate speech praising Robertson’s heroics in the Siege of Chitral and supporting British imperialism. The Chitral campaign in *A Son of Empire* is influenced to some extent by Robertson’s exploits.

¹⁷⁰ Anon., “A Son of Empire,” *Literature*, IV, 1899, p. 238.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² See Anon., “A Book to be Read,” *Black & White*, 1 April 1899, p. 410, and W. L.

Alden, "London Literary Letter," *New York Times*, 8 April 1899, RBA230.

¹⁷³ See Arthur Conan Doyle to Roberts, [April 1899], in Morley Roberts Papers at University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁷⁴ From Sir Garnet Wolseley to Roberts, 13 November 1899, in Morley Roberts Papers at University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Gissing wrote to Roberts from Dorking on 5 April 1899 praising *A Son of Empire*, see *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, 1897-1899*, Volume Seven, p. 337. See Champion to Roberts, 2 August 1899, in the Morley Roberts Papers at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1897, some time after Adelaide Hogg had returned to her husband, Champion had taken lodgings with the progressive Goldstein family and fallen in love with one of his landlady's three daughters, Elsie Belle (1870-1953). Champion married her on 8 December 1898. Elsie also communicated her admiration for *A Son of Empire* in the letter of 2 August 1899.

¹⁷⁷ *A Sea Comedy* (London: John Milne, 1899). The British Library has recently issued a facsimile edition of the novel.

¹⁷⁸ *A Sea Comedy* (London: John Milne, 1900).

¹⁷⁹ *The Colossus* (New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1899).

¹⁸⁰ Morley Roberts, "The Colossus," *Evening World* (New York), 5-14 March 1900, and in other American newspapers.

¹⁸¹ "'South African Stories': The Colossus," *Supplement to the Saturday Review*, 88:2, 4 November 1899, p. 3.

¹⁸² Harold E. Gorst (1869-1950), editor and writer.

¹⁸³ Morley Roberts, "The Crown of Life," *Review of the Week*, 4 November 1899, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸⁴ All published in 1899: "The Conquistador," *M.A.P.*, June, [p. ?]; "The Train Despatcher," *Daily News Weekly*, II, July, [p. ?]; "The Doctor of the Swamp," *Cassell's Family Magazine*, XXVIII, August, pp. 250-54; "A Magyar," *Westminster Budget*, 17 November, p. 14; "The Rehabilitation of the Vigia," *Graphic*, LX, 27 November 1899, 12-14; "The Policy of the *Potluck*," *Black and White*, Christmas Number, 23 December, pp. 6-11; "Our Only Hidalgo in Morocco," (book review of Cunninghame-Graham's *Mogreb-el-Aksa*), *Westminster Budget*, 13 January, pp. 2-3; "The War Game in South Africa," *Fortnightly Review*, LXXI, February, pp. 259-66; "Symposium: The Most Perfect Heroine of Fiction," *Lady*, 13 July, pp. 55-6; "Among My Books: Some Tried Companions," *Literature*, V, 20 October, pp. 340-41; "The South African 'Greek,'" *Review of the Week*, 4 November, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸⁵ *Lord Linlithgow* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900).

¹⁸⁶ *The Prey of the Strongest* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1906); *The Flying Cloud* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1907); *The Descent of the Duchess* (London: Sands & Co., 1900); *Lady Penelope, An Extravaganza* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1905).

¹⁸⁷ *Rachel Marr* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1903).

¹⁸⁸ See Eveleigh Nash, *I Liked the Life I Lived: Some Reminiscences* (London: John Murray, 1941), p. 66.

¹⁸⁹ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1988), p. 226.

¹⁹⁰ Marie Corelli (1855-1924), fantastically successful British novelist from the 1880s up to the First World War.

¹⁹¹ Debra Adelaide, "How did Authors Make a Living?" in Martyn Lyons, and John Arnold, eds., *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945: A National Culture in a*

Colonised Market (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2001), p. 86.

¹⁹² See Roger Milbrandt, p. 31.

¹⁹³ From the *Rachel Marr* contract, Folder 70.09, in the A. P. Watt Records 1888-1982 #11036, General Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁹⁴ *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, p. 265.

¹⁹⁵ In 1895 after the success of the first series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* and *Ballads and Songs* John Davidson was riding high. Three years later he was ill, overworked, and struggling to support his family and relatives. His friend, William Symington McCormick (1859-1930) wrote to Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) telling him of Davidson's financial situation. Then on 15 December 1898 Gosse personally supported a successful application to the Royal Literary Fund. Davidson committed suicide just over ten years later.

¹⁹⁶ Edwin William Pugh (1874-1930), novelist, short-story writer, and critic who enjoyed some success writing novels and stories describing Cockney life in London in the last years of the nineteenth century. When the fashion for realistic novels of working-class life had died out a few years later, Pugh struggled to make a living. He applied four times to the Royal Literary Fund. He died destitute in 1930.

¹⁹⁷ Unpublished "Autobiography," pp. 36-37.

¹⁹⁸ Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), author of the iconoclastically irreverent *Eminent Victorians*.

¹⁹⁹ For a lively chronicle of the furore surrounding the publication of Roberts' fictional biography of Gissing see Pierre Coustillas, "The Publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*: A Literary Event," in O. M. Brack, Jr. ed., *Twilight of Dawn: Studies in English Literature in Transition* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987), pp. 137-152.

²⁰⁰ Emily Selous had died of grief in Morley Roberts' arms on 13 November 1911 two months after her daughter, Alice, had died. She had lived with the Robertses from the time of their marriage in 1896. She left Naomi and Royston £3500 each in trust from which amount they were to draw an income.

²⁰¹ Ellen Jackson (1855-1922), served in Emily Selous' household from the 1880s and in the Robertses' household from 1896 to her death.

²⁰² See letters to Roberts concerning his war service application in Box 3, Folder 145, Morley Roberts Papers, University of Pennsylvania.

²⁰³ *The Scent of Death* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1931).

²⁰⁴ For "The Miracle of the Black Cañon" see *The Great Jester*, pp. 1-28; for "The Crowd" and "The Anticipator" see *The Keeper of the Waters and Other Stories*, pp. 20-36 and 320-30; for "The Overcrowded Iceberg" see *The Blue Peter, Sea Comedies* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1906), pp. 104-56; for "The Fog," "The Blood Fetish," and "A Thing of Wax" see *Midsummer Madness* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1909), pp. 49-84, 103-23, and 177-97; for "The Young Man Who Stroked Cats" see *The Man Who Stroked Cats and Other Stories* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912), pp. 75-110; and for "A Comedy in Capricorn" see *The Mirthful Nine, A Concourse of Comedies* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1921), pp. 7-44.

²⁰⁵ *The Idlers* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1905); *The Prey of the Strongest* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1906); *Time and Thomas Waring* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914).

Book Reviews

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part II: 1888–1897*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012.

In 1904, soon after Gissing's death, the editor of *The Academy* expressed his doubts about whether there would ever be an adequate biography of the novelist. The second volume of Coustillas's masterly biography has put paid to the man's doubts once and for all. It covers the period beginning with Gissing's travels to France and Italy soon after the death of his first wife and the separation from his second wife, marked by his departure to Italy in September 1897. The details of the author's professional and domestic life are presented with the same remarkable accuracy and fullness as in the first volume. The book is divided into two sections (continuing the numbering from volume one), "III. Respite" and "IV. Work and Torment," each subdivided into chapters. Four out of the nine chapter titles, "Masochism and Marriage," "Married Life in Exeter," "Epsom: Short Fiction and New Troubles," and "Epsom: Separation from Edith," leave the reader in no doubt about the inevitable collapse of Gissing's second experiment in marriage, that started on 24 September 1890, with his meeting "during his nocturnal wanderings" Edith Underwood, "a twenty-three-year-old girl of humble origin," at the Oxford Music Hall, which Gissing occasionally visited to escape from the growing sense of hopelessness and isolation he was suffering from.

He had persuaded himself "he would never do any good work [again] till he married" and the amazing results of the quickly developing relationship with this young woman who had neither good looks nor any education worthy of the name and whose "main contribution to their union would ... be to satisfy his physical yearnings," at first seemed to confirm the novelist's professional expectations. Very soon after their first meeting Gissing discovered that keeping company with Edith had as if by magic restored his aptitude for writing.

On 6 October he made a new start on the novel that would be called *New Grub Street* and whose composition he finished two months later, on 6 December 1890. The pattern that emerges here for the first time was to be repeated miraculously through the seven years of their married life: despite Gissing's growing disillusionment with his second wife, her hateful outbursts of groundless anger, and her evident failure as the mother of his two sons, his ability to write the novels that must be ranked among the very best he ever produced was unaffected. In fact, initially it rather looked as if that

ability was stimulated. After *New Grub Street*, followed *Born in Exile* (written at Exeter between early March and 17 July 1891), *Denzil Quarrier*, the first one-volume novel he wrote for his new publishers, Lawrence and Bullen. They made him an offer in September 1891, and again it was quickly written between 6 October and 12 November 1891. "I am writing quickly" (p. 130), "Am writing with astonishing ease," are some of Gissing's own comments on the progress of his writing during the early years of his second marriage.

After the birth of his son Walter, Gissing's writing was halted by a series of frenetic attempts to find a suitable subject, but when he finally embarked on what was to become *The Odd Women*, the book took him only about two and a half months to complete. Yet this time his own comment on it in his *Diary* sounded ominous: "I have written it very quickly, but the writing has been as severe a struggle as ever I knew. Not a day without wrangling and uproar down in the kitchen; not an hour when I was really at peace in mind" (p. 156). The next book, *In the Year of Jubilee*, took him so long to write that he referred to it as "my *interminable* novel." But it was not only the steadily deteriorating domestic atmosphere that may have been responsible for the slow progress, Gissing's decision to reinvent himself as a writer of short stories, despite his serious misgivings about the unduly commercial character of such efforts, may have interfered with his concentration on the novel in hand.

There is no doubt that Gissing's transformation into a popular and successful writer of short stories is one of the most significant features of Coustillas's biography. The editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*, Clement King Shorter, was instrumental in commissioning a short story "like the Bank Holiday scene in *The Nether World*," and Gissing was "genuinely anxious to publish short stories which ... would increase his literary income" (p. 171). He determined that, if he must in future go on writing novels, the mainstay of his reputation, he must also produce short stories for which there was now a ready market in the numerous magazines, daily and weekly newspapers. Before very long he showed "signs of an astonishing facility in the new medium," and in the month of August 1893 he wrote no fewer than seven stories for which he was paid 12 guineas each. Convinced that short stories were more lucrative than novels, Gissing engaged William Morris Colles as his literary agent to negotiate on his behalf with literary editors for a fee of ten per cent. Though there is no denying that relatively speaking Gissing's income from short stories was higher than what he was paid for his novels, we do well to remind

ourselves that the amount he was paid per thousand words increased only very slowly, starting at £3 and only reached £4 to £5 from 1900. Compared to the fee paid e.g. to his contemporary Maarten Maartens (who got £6/10 per 1,000 words) Gissing was fleeced once again. Coustillas's claim that Gissing was beginning "to exhibit a commercial acumen" (p. 189) with regard to his short stories strikes me as overly optimistic and, ironically, the claim is proved untenable on the very same page by Gissing's unsuccessful attempt to get Shorter to raise his fees. The latter, "astute," "sly," and "evasive," easily outmanoeuvres Gissing and sticks to his original fee. Another reason for the relatively limited income derived from the short stories may be his agent's failure to consistently sell them to editors of foreign (particularly, American) periodicals.

Though in this context one is hesitant about correcting Coustillas's facts and figures, his claim that "Fleet-footed Hester" amounts to 6,000 words (p. 189) must be corrected (always assuming that a computer's "word count" function can be trusted) to 4,934 words.

During the years covered by this volume Gissing – in the midst of his growing domestic discomfort – was fortunate in meeting a few people whom he soon came to think of as friends. On the professional front his contacts with Harry Walton Lawrence and Arthur Henry Bullen ("straight-forward, unpretentious," generous, and "altogether unlike a publisher") (p. 132), who became his publishers from 1891, proved most satisfactory and their relationship soon became friendly.

On the private front the meeting in July 1893 with Miss Clara E. Collet, who had lectured for the Ethical Society on "The Novels of George Gissing," proved the beginning of what Coustillas calls "their time-proof friendship" (p. 142). In the first section of chapter 6, "Brixton (June 1893-September 1894)," the biographer paints a portrait of Clara Collet, whose intelligence, tact, and culture appealed to Gissing from the start and the offer she made to him only two months after their first meeting was an extraordinary mark of her great generosity. She promised to defray all the expenses of Walter Gissing's education, if "he should ever find himself in financial straits as a result of failing health or loss of creative power" (p. 185).

Coustillas would not be Coustillas if he had not produced *a propos* of the relationship between Gissing and Clara Collet another of his "exclusive" documents, viz. a long letter written in the early 1930s by Clara Collet to Alfred, Gissing's younger son. In it she set out the events leading up to their becoming acquainted and in one of her paragraphs she revealed

that some eighteen months before they first met she had learned from a Mrs James Worthington, a “wealthy benefactress” at Manchester “that part of the terrible tragedy [Gissing’s] which was known to the young students at the time.” The measure of Clara Collet’s unconventionality and profound empathy is made clear by her comments in the next paragraph:

Of course then I understood that he had been cut off from intimate relations with honourable men. And at the same time I felt that, in spite of everything, he was greater than they were, and that the truth was in him more than in any other living writer (p. 184).

A third man very much after Gissing’s own heart was the banker, philosopher and freethinker Edward Clodd, who in May 1895 invited Gissing to attend his annual Whitsuntide party at Aldeburgh. Among the other guests were: the journalist L. F. Austin, the scientist and man of letters Grant Allen, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, an authority on matters of hygiene, a literary solicitor from Woolwich, George Whale, and C. K. Shorter, the editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*. The four days’ holiday spent at Aldeburgh in this congenial company must have been among the happiest of his life (pp. 244-45).

He experienced a similar sort of delight in the spring of 1896, travelling by himself in Wales in search of material for what became *The Whirlpool*. The unspoilt beauty of the Welsh mountains, the beaches and cliffs of Nefyn and Portinllaen, he drank in with an eagerness comparable to his loving response to Calabrian Italy in 1897. Was he perhaps created to remain single all his life?

That Gissing was a born reader should not come as a surprise to the readers of this biography, but that he should have found the time in the busy and uneasy circumstances of his life to indulge in spells of “eclectic and voracious” (p. 50), reading to the tune of between 300 and 400 works (at an educated guess), must be regarded as truly amazing. Turning to the Greek and Latin classical authors, as easily as he did to his contemporaries, ranging between poetry and travel literature, for Gissing books were there clearly not just to be written, but also to be read, either for entertainment or by way of preparation for his own work.

When in February 1897 things had come to such a pass in the Gissing household that Edith’s ferocious egotism drove him to flee to a boarding-house at Budleigh Salterton near Exeter, he felt the time had come to make a “full confession of his doleful past” to Clara Collet. In the final analysis “he blamed himself for the collapse of his marriage, admitting that he alone was to blame, he who had shown himself ‘the unteachable man’” (p. 302).

At Budley Salterton he at first lodged with Mr. and Mrs. Chown, at 4 West End Villas, but when the Easter holiday started it was arranged that he should move to the next-door neighbour, a Mrs. Elizabeth Jane Walters (1842-1918) (not Walter) and her husband George Walters (1838-1916), a retired grocer. This may be the place to ask why in the “Index” there is no reference either to “Mrs. Walter” nor to “the Chowns,” nor “Budleigh Salterton”? One understands that in a biography of such density not every reference can find its way into the “Index,” but surely the Budleigh Salterton episode is of greater significance than a mere passing mention?

It seems safe to predict that there is very little likelihood that this exhaustive biographical account of Gissing’s “middle” years will ever be superseded; all the more reason to savour and enjoy it now.—Bouwe Postmus, University of Amsterdam

George Gissing, *Collected Short Stories*, Volume One. Edited and introduced by Pierre Coustillas, with the assistance of Barbara Rawlinson and H el ene Coustillas. Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2011.

Throughout the twentieth century if a serious enthusiast wished to acquaint him/herself with the short stories written by George Gissing, he had no other option but to approach antiquarian booksellers in a frequently futile search for copies of *Human Odds and Ends* (1898), *The House of Cobwebs* (1906), *The Sins of the Fathers* (1924), *A Victim of Circumstances* (1927), *Brownie* (1931), *Stories and Sketches* (1938), to mention merely the more important early collections of Gissing’s stories. Late in the century (1992) appeared Robert Selig’s *George Gissing Lost Stories from America*, the fruit of his (together with Coustillas) efforts to retrieve Gissing’s “apprentice work” in America. Only if by dint of a persistent search the Gissing enthusiast finally succeeded in acquiring all of the titles mentioned above, he could give himself the pleasure of reading the total of 98 stories contained in them.

With the publication of the first volume of Gissing’s *Collected Short Stories* the long-cherished dream of a collected edition has begun to materialize. Among these dreamers the greatest without any doubt was the series editor, Pierre Coustillas (who else?), who—never content with being an idle dreamer—together with Barbara Rawlinson and H el ene Coustillas, may feel deservedly proud of adding this pearl to Gissing’s crown. In the “General Introduction” the editor puts the latest count of Gissing’s stories

at 115, so that once the series is complete the true enthusiast will have added another 17 stories to the collection he had so zealously built up.

That only one collection of stories was published in Gissing's lifetime may be due to the limited esteem he accorded to his short fiction. Written as his early stories were to keep the wolf from the door, they fell short of the high ideal of literature embraced by young Gissing.

Early reviewers were not slow in recognizing that the veracity of Gissing's stories was unequalled, because he knew the struggle for life in the saddest quarters of society only too well. His own hard fight to survive as a writer had started in Chicago and it continued for many a long year after his return to England in 1877. 23 of the 35 stories included in this volume were written in Chicago when the novice writer was only 19 years old. Unsurprisingly, the editor considers these early efforts to be "apprentice work" whose immaturity he finds excusable. However, what "The Sins of the Fathers," his earliest story, may be lacking in literary *finesse* is amply compensated by the unmistakable autobiographical interest of this half-English half-American narrative, which is clearly revelatory of the young writer's recent traumatic experiences. Which reader could ever forget the moment when he first read the opening paragraph of this story; struck at once by the voice of compassion speaking directly to him, the descriptive flair and the confident and arresting evocation of the first meeting between a young man and woman, destined to become lovers:

A BROAD archway, the gloom of its chill, murky shadow only deepened by the flicker of the shattered gas-lamp that hangs from the centre, its silence only broken by the agonized weeping of a poor girl who strives to still the throbbing of her temples by pressing them against the clammy stones; whilst, little as one would imagine it, but a few paces separate her from the crowd and glare of the wide streets— such a scene is but too common after nightfall in the heart of a great English manufacturing town. As such it did not at first produce a very startling effect upon Leonard Vincent, who, as he was hurrying home by short cuts from a social gathering of fellow-students, was stopped at the mouth of the archway by the sounds of distress that fell upon his ear; but his interest was more vividly awakened as he caught a glimpse of the upturned face faintly illumined by the light which just then a gust of wind blew into a flame. The dark, flashing eyes, the long, black hair all unkempt and streaming over the girl's shoulders, the face, lovely in its outlines, now weird with its look of agony and ghastly pale, made a picture such as he had never looked on, and held him for a moment as immovable as though he had been gazing upon the head of Medusa.

A world indifferent to the suffering of individuals, man's inhumanity to man, and the determination of characters like Leonard Vincent to rise to the challenges posed by such a world, these will become recurring features of

his later stories and novels. One is almost tempted to feel a little envious of those readers who come to Gissing for the first time by turning over the pages of this collection. Unsuspecting of the riches that awaits them, they are about to discover the world seen and created by one of the most sensitive writers the nineteenth century produced.

In the "Preface" the editor reminds us that the collection is intended not only for the common reader but also for the experienced critic of Gissing's work. Each story is accompanied by a paragraph specifying its publishing history, serially and in book form. In addition, information is provided concerning the identification of Gissing as the author by earlier scholars and critics and finally the location of the manuscript is given.

At the start of his very full "General Introduction" Pierre Coustillas makes the point that for long years after his death Gissing was "regarded solely as a novelist." Gissing himself never thought very highly of his short stories and perhaps the primary purpose of the collection has been to contribute to a re-appraisal of Gissing's short stories by making them available to the readers of today. The first volume contains the 35 stories written between December 1873 and June 1884. Who can say what would have become of Gissing had it not been for his seeking out Samuel J. Medill, the managing editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. When Gissing in dire straits asked him "for work of any kind on the paper," the generous editor (whose portrait is used for a frontispiece) agreed to consider a short story for publication. It was written in a shabby lodging house in two days (though Robert Selig has argued persuasively that it probably was a reworking of a project he had entertained at Boston), accepted by Medill and published on 10 March 1877. Gissing was paid \$18 for the story and henceforth supported himself by the stories he wrote. They are remarkable for their variety of subjects and tone. E.g. in "Too Dearly Bought" we find him presenting theft as a charitable action, re-enacting as it were his own situation at Owens College when he had committed petty thefts to save Nell Harrison from her life of prostitution. Gissing's "growing anger with the institutional agencies which had reduced him to exile and destitution" is reflected in such early stories as "The Warden's Daughter" and "Joseph Yates' Temptation."

After Gissing's return to England very few of the eleven stories he wrote between January 1878 and June 1884 found a publisher. Most of these were at long last published by Coustillas in *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction* in 1970.

Since it was established in 2000 by George Gorniak, the Grayswood Press has proved a force to be reckoned with, publishing no fewer than five Gissing titles in eight years (*Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens* in three volumes, *Isabel Clarendon*, and *Three Novellas*). This latest addition to what is beginning to look like a proper series is of the same high quality we have come to expect from Gorniak's titles.

An anonymous Australian reviewer of Gissing's short stories ended his review with this brief exhortation: "Do your duty, and buy it." This Dutch reviewer agrees wholeheartedly with that sentiment and looks forward with high expectations to the next two volumes.—Bouwe Postmus, University of Amsterdam

Notes and News

Wulfhard Stahl has been writing a long article on "Wanda von Sacher-Masoch – Foundations for a Bio-Bibliography," which appeared in *Frauenbiografieforschung, Theoretische Diskurse und methodologische Konzepte* (New Results of Researches in Women's Biographies), volume 9, Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2012, pp. 574-600. Wanda, who was known to Gissing through Gabrielle Fleury, is said to have died in Paris at no date that has so far been determined. Like so many foreigners who were in touch with Gissing about projected translations of his works, she failed to carry out her promise to produce a German version of *The Odd Women*. One cannot resist the temptation to believe that all those linguists or pseudo-linguists lacked both capacity and energy. Once they had succeeded in obtaining either from Gissing or from his literary agent a copy of the novel which apparently appealed to them, they realised that the task they had contemplated carrying out was a far more complex one than they had imagined. The list of defaulters, women for the most part, would be a fairly long one, and it is more than likely that Gissing, by the time he sought a refuge in the Basque country, had ceased hoping that moderately educated women could do creditable work. A history of translations of English literary works until the First World War would be essentially a "record of woes," a phrase used by Gissing himself in another context.

From the same source we hear that the second of Bertz's novels, *Das Sabinergut*, which, as Gissing's letters to Bertz inform us, is partly based on Bertz's American adventures in the early 1880s, is to be reprinted in Germany. Few readers will fail to welcome the prospect of being able to

read the novel in roman type. However, as German is not an easy language to assimilate, an English translation would in due course be greatly appreciated. A minor, yet genuine, attraction would be the appearance in the book of Don, the prize collie inseparable from Bertz.

Anthony Petyt has sent us a photocopy of a short article, “Gissings go on show,” which was published in the *Wakefield Express* on 27 April 2012, p. 27, cols. 1 and 2. In one of the paragraphs devoted to the exhibition held at the Gissing Centre we are told that “Algernon wrote 25 novels, including *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative from the Works of George Gissing*.” A strange misconception. The exhibition of works by the Gissing family organized by Mr. Petyt is a far more serious affair which put on show books and booklets by Thomas Waller, Algernon, Ellen and Alfred Gissing. Few people have ever seen the two booklets published by Ellen Gissing, *The Hidden Life of the Blessed Virgin* and *Angels and Men*. They must have had a very small circulation.

We have to thank Markus Neacey for prompting us to enquire from Teresa Liguori about the attention given recently to Gissing by her and her association, Italia Nostra, in Calabria. Mr. Neacey had discovered on 24 April 2012 an article dealing with the situation of the railway line running by the Ionian Sea on which Gissing had travelled in 1897 in an online Italian newspaper, *Paese 24*. On 8 May Gissing appeared, again online, in a most unexpected place: *SBNation*, a journal devoted to sports, in which Calum Mechie remarked, in a piece about the Scottish Premier League entitled “Rangers, Celtic and ‘Financial Fair Play,’” “Subsistence, as any reader of the novels of George Gissing can tell you, is fatal to creative thinking.” Then on 9 May, in the *Telegraph* online, Markus Neacey came across an article by the novelist Lee Langley about “Calabria: meeting my heroes, the superb Riace bronzes,” the full size warriors of 5th c. BC discovered in the sea off Riace in 1972, and now exhibited in the Reggio Museum. Lee Langley spoke of “40 kilometres of shoreline along Italy’s south-eastern coast—an area little-known to British tourists, though George Gissing made the trip and wrote eloquently about it in *By the Ionian Sea*.”

The three volumes of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* are now available. The author’s main aim, this must be repeated, has been to do Gissing full justice without in any sense running the risk of being accused by well-informed readers of playing down his weaknesses. Volume 3 stops at the celebration of the centenary of his death. Another “three-decker” will

be available shortly, when the third volume of the collected short stories is brought out by Grayswood Press from which the new edition of *Isabel Clarendon* and *Three Novellas*, that is *Eve's Ransom*, *Sleeping Fires* and *The Paying Guest* are still obtainable. Efforts are being made to convince Oxford University Press and Penguin to add new Gissing titles to their lists. Meanwhile it seems that the new series currently planned by Penguin will include a new edition of *New Grub Street* with a little known portrait of Gissing by Mrs. Clarence Rook which was first published in C. K. Shorter's weekly the *Sphere* just after Gissing's death. Because H. G. Wells jokingly decided to sign the portrait, it has several times been mistakenly attributed to him.

Recent Publications

Volumes

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, Volume III, 1897-1903, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012. Pp. 373. £60.

George Gissing, *Collected Short Stories*, Volume Two. Edited and introduced by P. Coustillas, with the assistance of Barbara Rawlinson and Hélène Coustillas. Grayswood, Surrey, England: Grayswood Press, 2012. Pp. xviii + 402. £30.

Eduard Bertz, *Philosophie des Fahrrads*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012. Edited by Wulfhard Stahl. Gissing appears on pp. 261, 270 f and 275 f.

Articles, reviews, etc

Noriko Asahata, "The Rise of the Mass Reading Public in *New Grub Street*," *The Annals of Hiroshima University of Economics*, Vol. 34.3 (December 2011), pp. 31-44.

Matthew K. McKean, "Rethinking late Victorian Slum Fiction: The Crowd and Imperialism at Home," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 54 (2011), no. 1, pp. 28-55.

Joshua Taft, "New *Grub Street* and the Survival of Realism," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 54 (2011), no. 3, pp. 362-81.

Anna Peak, "New Editions," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 54 (2011), no. 4, pp. 548-49. Contains short reviews of *New Grub Street*,

- ed. Paul Delany, ELS Editions, and *Workers in the Dawn*, ed. Debbie Harrison, Victorian Secrets edition.
- Tanimoto Yoshiko, "A Study of Italy and Its Emancipating Effects on English Women in the Novels of G. Gissing and E. M. Forster," *Eibungaku Shicho [Trends in English Literature]*, Vol. 84 (2011), pp. 117-34.
- Edward White, "Broader Brows," *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 April 2012, p. 32. Allusions to Gissing and his work in a review of *The Masculine Middlebrow 1880-1950*, edited by Kate Macdonald.
- Emelyn Godfrey, "In Brief: Literary Criticism," *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 May 2012, p. 26. Allusions to Gissing and the Classics in Simon J. James's book on H. G. Wells.
- J. C., "NB: Obscure pleasures," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 May 2012, p. 32. Four paragraphs on Gissing apropos of *In the Year of Jubilee*.
- J. C., "NB: Hard Life," *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 May 2012, p. 36. Paragraphs on the *Gissing Journal*, Markus Neacey's article on Morley Roberts, and writers' fees in the late nineteenth century.
- J. C., "NB: What remains," *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 May 2012, p. 32. Two paragraphs on the availability of Gissing's books.
- Markus Neacey, "Gissing" in "Letters to the Editor," *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 June 2012, p. 6.
- J. C., "NB: Colour bar," *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 June 2012, p. 32. Again a few lines on Gissing and Morley Roberts.
- Anon., "Gissing Centre," *Wakefield: History and Heritage*, 2012, a booklet with photograph of Gissing plaque, p. 11.
- Tom Ue, "Holmes's Return. An Interview with Anthony Horowitz," *Baker Street Journal*, Spring 2012, pp. 22-27. A few lines on Gissing and Dickens.
- Christine Huguet, "Book Reviews," *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens*, April 2012, pp. 235-41. A long, splendidly informed, review article on Part I of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, *Demos* in the Victorian Secrets series, edited by Debbie Harrison, and George Gissing, *Three Novellas*, edited by P. Coustillas.

Tailpiece

Was there any humour, we may ask, to light up this sombre character? Much has been said to the contrary; on the other hand, it has been pointed out that no one could have had Gissing's keen appreciation of Dickens unless he possessed some degree of humour. And if we ask whether a true sense of humour would not have touched and alleviated some of the circumstances of his life, it may perhaps be answered that his trials were of such a nature as to quench the fire of even the greatest humorist. There is no doubt that Gissing was born with a strong tendency to depression, and that this tendency was increased by too close study in his boyhood, and further deepened by the difficulties of his early manhood; but, none the less, there were times when he could be a gay companion—even an uproariously mirthful one—especially when among his favourite scenes or books. This was a side of his character practically unknown to those who knew little of him. His life, indeed, was not without its joys; his love of Nature, his keen appreciation of all that was best in literature, his enjoyment of much that was beautiful in art and in music, could not do otherwise than bring hours of far more solid satisfaction than come to many whose lives we call happy and successful. To see and to know Gissing at these times was to forget entirely those epithets which are continually attached to his name—"gloomy," "pessimistic," "tragic." To no other writer have such terms been so persistently applied, to the complete exclusion of the brighter side. Not all of Gissing's books were of a miserable type. *The Town Traveller* and *The Paying Guest* contain a good deal of amusement; and others ... are far from gloomy.

Many questions have been asked somewhat petulantly as to the cause of Gissing's melancholy outlook. Wounded vanity, a lack of the good things of life, dislike of his fellow-men—each has been suggested as a solution; but in reality the cause lay in none of these. The conduct of his life was marked by a series of rash steps which led to prolonged unhappiness, and produced a lasting impression upon his acutely sensitive temperament, depriving him of the many joys to which his heart and mind were peculiarly alive. In this we have the secret of Gissing's melancholy outlook.

Throughout all the contradictions of his character, paradoxical though it may sound, there runs a certain unmistakable consistency; and though, in one sense, we might be said never to know what such a man would do, yet on the other hand it would be true to say that we knew what he would *not* do. For, in this strange misshapen life, there was a central cord which held all the parts together; there was a principle deeply embedded in his nature which caused him to prefer that he himself should suffer rather than bring suffering upon others; and in this lay the secret of the life which to outsiders appeared only steeped in gloom, but out of which, for those who knew him, there shone a gleam of imperishable gold.

Extracts from "A Character Sketch," by Ellen Gissing, *Nineteenth Century and After*, September 1927, pp. 417-24

