Volume LII, Number 1
January 2018

Contents

ISSN 017-0615

The Gissing Journal

Volume LII, Number 1, January 2018
"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

Baron Corvo, the Socialist Politician, and the "Mysterious" Third Man: A Chronicle of 1893 and 1894

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

In February 1969 Henry Pelling, the eminent historian of the early Labour movement, published an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* with the eye-catching title "Corvo and Labour Politics."[1] The article describes the influence of Henry Hyde Champion's politics on Frederick Rolfe (1860-1913), the notorious Roman Catholic writer who liked to be known as Baron Corvo and became the subject of a cult following from the 1920s onwards and A. J. A. Symons's famous biography *The Quest for Corvo* in 1934.[2] Rolfe is remembered above all for *Hadrian the VII* (1904), and, among other works, the autobiographical *Nicholas Crabbe*, penned in 1903-1904, but first published in 1958.[3] Though less effective than the comparable *New Grub Street*, this highly readable, if somewhat obsessive, Rolfian novel, presents a bitter and scathing portrayal of the lower rungs of *fin-de-siècle* London literary life and reveals the exploitative practices of publishers which call to mind George Gissing's own experience with Smith, Elder & Co.

Pelling's article also discusses Champion's relationship with Rolfe during the six months from September 1893 up to 23 February 1894 when the Socialist politician emigrated to Australia. In addition Pelling refers to an unpublished letter dated 24 March 1894 from Rolfe to an unknown correspondent addressed by the letter "R" which shows that Champion had left some money in this other person's hands intended to help Rolfe keep afloat after his departure. Pelling reports that the letter "was preserved in Champion's papers." Indeed, as John Barnes, Champion's biographer, informed me, his widow, Mrs Elsie Belle Champion (1870-1953), found the letter among a collection of correspondence in her possession from Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham to her husband, which she gave to Pelling some time before 1953 when he was preparing to write an article on

Champion for the *Cambridge Journal* and doing research for his first important book, *The Origins of the Labour Party*.[4]

In November 1898, close to five years after Champion's departure for Australia, Rolfe published as "Baron Corvo" a short narrative in the *Wide World Magazine* with the sensational title "How I was Buried Alive."[5] In this Poesque tale the narrator describes a cataleptic attack he had one afternoon in a villa near Rome where he was recuperating after being thrown out of the priesthood, and how he was assumed to be dead, prepared for burial, then placed in a coffin from which, upon waking in a church the following morning, he eventually managed to escape by smashing his way through the planks above his head. As the magazine claimed to print true stories and the title of Rolfe's tale was embellished with the description "Baron Corvo's fearful experience described in minute detail by himself and illustrated with drawings done under his own supervision," many readers believed the writer had really undergone such a terrifying experience. In reality, as Rolfe reportedly told an acquaintance at a later date, he *had* had a cataleptic attack, had been assumed dead, and had "very nearly been buried alive."[6]

Alas, Rolfe's use of the aristocratic title "Baron Corvo" and the drawings showing him in the Franciscan habit in this *soi-disant* true account stirred up a hornet's nest of stinging denunciations. The most infamous was the anonymous Aberdeen attack in three issues of the *Daily Free Press* on 8, 12, and 26 November 1898.[7] The first of these malicious attacks began: "The new writer tells a story of his experience with great minuteness but there are many experiences of his much more striking than the statements in the 'Wide World Magazine,' which it would be as well for the world to know."[8] As Rolfe's most recent biographer, Miriam J. Benkovitz, explains in *Frederick Rolfe: Baron Corvo*, the first scholarly attempt at a conventional life, "This article and the two which followed proceeded gleefully and scathingly to ridicule the title of Baron Corvo and to expose every aspect of Rolfe's shabby, unfortunate life."[9] The writer's denunciation, in which s/he twisted the facts in order to portray Rolfe as an inveterate liar and worthless scoundrel, was a well-informed and immensely effective attempt at character assassination which not only hit its mark but also cut Rolfe to the quick.

Who then wrote the malicious articles? It is a question his biographers and many Corvines, have asked since the 1920s, without being able to name the actual culprit. For, as anyone familiar with the main details of Rolfe's life up to 1898 knows, there were many people with whom he had

quarrelled, who might have sought to expose him and thus revenge themselves in this public way. In a semi-autobiographical episode in *Hadrian the VII* Rolfe's *alter ego* Hadrian poses the question himself: "Who could have attacked Him with such malignant ingenuity" and then "[t]he names of half a dozen filthy hounds occurred to Him in as many seconds: but He was not able to recognize any particular paw."[10] For Rolfe, however, it was a case of *cherchez la femme* as he felt he could discern the "obscene touch of the female."[11] In his 1971 biography, *Corvo: Saint or Madman*?, Donald Weeks, the leading Rolfe expert at that time, asserts that the "female" he had in mind was most certainly Charlotte Georgiana Hay (1824-1903). Rolfe had been tutor to her two young nephews, who were in her charge after the death of both parents, for two months during the summer of 1892 at Seaton House on the outskirts of Aberdeen until she dismissed him. Weeks considers the culpability of Hay in collaboration with some other Aberdeen people over several pages. Yet he ultimately concludes that the author of the articles was

> a person who was forced to live with Rolfe. He lived in Aberdeen and, if he had to share quarters with Rolfe, it could only have been in Champion's apartments. [...] The Aberdeen attack was a bitter denunciation against Rolfe's use of the baronial title – which he used only from September 1893 until he followed Champion to London. When Champion and Rolfe were reunited in London, again the two lived with a third person, which may have been the same man from Aberdeen. [...] The third person at Champion's London house was entrusted with the task of introducing Rolfe to literary people after Champion's departure for Australia. A month later he himself set sail for New York. In a letter addressed to him only as 'Dear R,' Rolfe admonished him for not doing the things he was asked to do. [...]
>
> 'Dear R,' or a person very similar to him, was forced to keep company with Rolfe and despised him. For five years the resentment lingered dormant, waiting for an opportunity to be unleashed.[12]

Later, on 17 August 1976, Weeks wrote from London to Alan Anderson, the founder of the Tragara Press, who had sent him a transcript of the "Dear R" letter, that "R" *was*, to paraphrase him, his personal candidate for the true author of the Aberdeen attack.[13] The following year Miriam J. Benkovitz published her biography. She also discussed the Aberdeen attack, but, without specifying a perpetrator, named the usual suspects with "R" at the head of her list. She writes, "Who was responsible for the attack in the *Daily Free Press* [...]?" and continues:

> The author or authors are still unknown. Various people have been named, such as the mysterious R of Champion's London household or some other member of his Aberdeen staff; Father David Hunter Blair, whom Rolfe first met en route to Oban;

> Father Patrick Green, whom Rolfe had known at the Scots College and in Aberdeen. Both Nancy Gleeson White, owing to Rolfe's rejections of her advances, and Miss Georgina Hay [*sic*], aunt of Malcolm and Cuthbert Hay of Seaton, owing to her intense dislike of Rolfe, have been suggested. Rolfe referred as well to a 'letter-thief' who engaged in 'job-journalism' and to the 'fine Roman hand of a pseudonymous editor', one of his own contemporaries at the Scots College, on whom he had bestowed a 'harmless jibe simply composed of the man's own initial and surname joined together'. That description points to Patrick Green inasmuch as Rolfe had called him 'Peagreen' when they were both students in Rome.[14]

Since there has been no deathbed confession, the person or persons responsible for the Aberdeen attack have still to be unmasked. As for "the mysterious R" of Henry Hyde Champion's household, he remained a mystery for three more decades until John Barnes revealed the identity of Frederick Rolfe's suspected adversary in his 2006 biography of Champion, *Socialist Champion: Portrait of the Gentleman as Crusader*.[15] Barnes writes in a note to Chapter Ten: "Neither Pelling nor the two biographers was aware that 'R', about whom Rolfe complained, was Morley Roberts."[16]

II

The Corvo expert, Robert Scoble, declared recently that Symons's *The Quest for Corvo* is a flawed account presenting a sensational image of Rolfe as an incorrigible sponger, troublemaker, and paranoid eccentric whose whole life was made up of shabby, shady, and shocking episodes involving domestic quarrels, religious strife, and decadent pursuits.[17] If this view of him persists, it is nonetheless saddening to read about his frequently desperate dependence on the kindness of strangers, and his inability to sustain such friendships – friendships he himself so often sabotaged. For, on first acquaintance he could be the most charming of companions, at its close the most vitriolic, thus starting a letter "Quite cretinous creature" and ending it "Your faithful enemy."[18] For all that, V. S. Pritchett is nearer the mark in defining Rolfe as "a Gissing turned inside out."[19] For Rolfe was a schoolmaster who became a martyr to his misguided sense of vocation to the priesthood, whereas Gissing might have become an Oxford don instead of a casualty to his youthful idealism. Thankfully, despite early struggles Gissing was never destined to experience his worst nightmare of landing in a workhouse, in contrast to Rolfe who had that wretched distinction for a month in January 1899. Yet unlike Gissing's early career, Rolfe's had started quite promisingly.

Born in Cheapside on 22 July 1860, Frederick Rolfe spent his childhood in a puritanical family environment at Camden. He attended the North

London Collegiate School until he was fourteen when he decided to leave. He had a religious awakening about this time and became a devoted Christian. He then sought a teaching post and for ten years from 1876 was a respected and well-liked schoolmaster at various schools across England. Indeed, according to the fond accounts (unused by Symons) of several former boy pupils, Rolfe was a fascinating and memorable figure. In February 1886, having occupied the post of assistant master at Grantham Grammar School for sixteen months, Rolfe converted to Catholicism, and despite the efforts of the headmaster Ernest George Hardy (1852-1925), a former Oxford man, to persuade him to stay, he insisted on leaving the school to pursue a Catholic life. He next found work as a private tutor in Hampstead, and afterwards near Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Then, aspiring to the priesthood, on 29 October 1887 Rolfe enrolled at St Mary's College in Oscott near Birmingham, where he was sponsored as a student of divinity on condition that he also teach in the lay school. But in less than a year he was considered unsuited to the vocation of priest and dismissed. He learned of his dismissal whilst staying with Father George Angus (1842-1909) at St Andrews, an Anglican minister who had befriended him in Kensington the year before. He then passed most of 1889 in Christchurch near Bournemouth, where later that year he learned that through Father Angus's help he had been accepted as a seminarist at the Scots College in Rome. By late December he was living in the seminary at Rome as a probationary candidate for the priesthood. But in May 1890 he was thrown out of the college for accumulating debts, for spending too much time outside the college grounds, and for devoting his free time to literary activities instead of socialising with his fellow seminarists. It was a shattering end to his hopes of becoming a priest, but he soon found sympathy and support for the entire summer as a guest of the Duchess Caroline Shirley Sforza-Cesarini (1818-1897), at her summer residence in Genzano and later at her house in Rome.

By late 1890 he was back in Christchurch visiting some friends whose acquaintance he had made during his previous stay there. Soon taking lodgings, he remained in the Dorset town until early 1892 developing his colour photography technique. Once again he got into debt, and, feeling homeless and friendless, left for London in March where, through the aid of a rector at Saint Ethelreda's church in Holborn, he found temporary sanctuary. Within a fortnight he was lodging at West Hampstead, where he stayed for a few months surviving as best he could. In the summer he gave up on London partly because he had lost patience awaiting news concerning his hopes of

training for the priesthood. He travelled to Aberdeen to stay with a friend of Father Angus, John Ogilvie-Forbes (1850-1941), the 9th laird of Boyndlie. Forbes recommended Rolfe as tutor to the two nephews of Catherine Georgiana Hay, an elderly relation who had taken charge of the children at her Kilburn house after they became orphans. Rolfe acquired the position in spite of Miss Hay's reservations, and commenced the tutorship when she took up residence at Seaton House just outside Aberdeen in July 1892. But two months later she sent him packing due to some unknown fault – he may have been in debt. Three decades later one of the boys wrote to Symons that he and his brother had "nothing but the pleasantest memories of their tutor, who was as kind as possible to them both, and in every way a delightful companion" (another positive account Symons did not use).[20] As Miss Hay was a religious and moral woman from a different, more straitlaced era, it was inevitable that she would clash with Rolfe over his advanced views on educating children. After all she had made strong objections against Rolfe to her local bishop, as Benkovitz reports in her biography, on discovering he possessed books by Rousseau and Voltaire.[21]

September 1892 to September 1893 was an immense struggle. For a time Rolfe lodged with a priest in the small village of Strichen five miles south of Fraserburgh, devoting himself to his photographic experiments. But when the local bishop forbade the priest from keeping a lodger, he moved to a boarding house at 162 Skene Street in Aberdeen. He briefly found work in a photographic firm until he was sacked for neglecting his duties. Throughout this period he tried without success to gain sponsors for his colour and underwater photography. Around this time he was told to abandon his hopes of becoming a priest. Although he had not paid his rent for more than nine months, he remained at Skene Street and managed to scrape through until the summer when his funds ran dry. Finally, losing all patience,

> [o]ne evening, about six o'clock, the landlord besought the aid of a fellow-workman. They entered the Baron's bedroom, and the Baron was given ten minutes to dress and clear out. He refused to move, and when the ten minutes were up he seized hold of the iron bedstead and clung for dear life. He was dragged forth, wearing only his "pyjamas," out to the staircase, where he caught hold of the balustrade, and another struggle ensued; thence he was carried down the long staircase and was shot on to the pavement, as he stood to the wonderment of the passers-by. His clothing was thrown after him, which he ultimately donned – and that was the last of Baron Corvo in that particular locality.[22]

After that jarring and demeaning experience, Rolfe acquired temporary funds for sixteen weeks from the Association for Improving the Condition

of the Poor, which impractically he used for his photographic experiments. Then, in an act of desperation to avoid ending on the streets, he went to the Royal Infirmary and tried in vain to get entry to the local asylum as a voluntary patient. Unfortunately for Rolfe social security did not exist in those days. By 20 September 1893, when the Poor Association refused to have anything more to do with him, not only was he homeless and penniless but according to some reports living on a sand dune on the coast of Aberdeen.[23] It was then that Rolfe made his way to Henry Hyde Champion's Union Street address to solicit the politician's help.

III

There are various scenarios describing when Rolfe first met Champion. Weeks, for instance, states that Rolfe had already tried to see Champion when he was away in Belfast (30 August to 9 September 1893).[24] If so, one must assume their actual first meeting – as most scholars agree it was on a Saturday – occurred on the 23 or 30 September after the Poor Association had refused him anymore help. Once Rolfe gained admittance to Champion's rooms, being fortunate to find him dining with a colleague, he was invited to join them, and soon had won his sympathy to the extraordinary extent that he was invited to take up quarters in his apartment from that day onwards. He was also taken on as his personal secretary and added to the staff of the weekly Socialist newspaper, the *Aberdeen Standard*.

Henry Hyde Champion was, until John Barnes wrote his biography in 2006, the great unknown of Labour history. Up to then the only historian who had showed any interest in his relevance to the early history of the Labour movement was Henry Pelling. For Champion's opponents and rivals had more or less disowned him after 1893 and by the time of his death in 1928 he was largely forgotten. Even his friends, excepting Morley Roberts, and his colleagues had little or nothing to say about him. There is a forest of books and academic articles about the significance of Keir Hardie (1856-1915) and his confederates in the movement, but one could scarcely keep a fire going on what has been written about Champion since he died. As for Roberts he had this to say forty years after first meeting him:

> By birth Champion came of a good military family: he was brilliantly intelligent, and did not display that contempt of letters too common among soldiers. On sudden conviction of national injustice to Arabi Pasha he gave up a military career and took to the cause of the proletariat at the time of the great Dock Strike. In him this soon became intelligible. He was a soldier by the accident of his family, but his ambitions,

> combined with some of the queerest kinks of character, told him that looking after a thousand mules in the Bolan Pass was too easy for him. So he tried to improve the world. At the street corners of the East End in bitter weather he came into a sense of power, while in committees he proved persuasive where street rhetoric could not serve him. [... He] who could manage anyone's affairs brilliantly but his own, was always as busy as the devil in a gale of wind. [...] For he had the diplomatist's tongue. He could deal with the Viper when no one else could. He could persuade the unpersuadable, and rejoiced in doing the job. Men whom he had attacked politically visited him with the view of personal assault. They came in like March and went out like April, almost in tears. He could have managed a Coalition Ministry.[25]

Such was Champion's presence in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) from 1883 (in fact long before the 1889 Dock Strike) up to 1893. And even at this late stage in Champion's Socialist career when Rolfe crossed his path, he was still a luminous figure on the political platform and to the national press. But he was now coming under attack from all sides, above all from fellow party members and the Socialist media as a traitor to the party. Further to this, to the detriment of his political plans, in January 1893 he had damaged his knee in a fall which prevented him from attending the important Bradford Conference, for which he had been preparing himself all winter. He had also been suffering for months from seizures and nervous exhaustion as a result of an overladen calendar the year before whilst unsuccessfully contesting the South Aberdeen election.

At this time he was sharing an apartment at Victoria Street, London, with Roberts, who was enjoying his first literary successes. Champion had first met Roberts in January 1892 when he came to his flat to visit John Barlas, the decadent poet, then suffering from the early stages of mental illness and staying with the politician after firing off a gun outside the Houses of Parliament, being arrested, and then bailed by Oscar Wilde. Over the next year Champion and Roberts saw each other often at the Authors' Club in Whitehall and at the New Travellers' Club in Piccadilly, becoming close friends. What deepened their friendship more than anything was the fact they found themselves in a similar predicament: they were both in love with unattainable married women. Roberts had met Alice Hamlyn, the sister of the wild-game hunter Frederick Selous, in 1889 and fallen in love with her amid a crisis in her marriage with her invalid husband, Snowden Thomas Hamlyn, the son of the Shakespearean actor, Thomas Sowerby Hamblin (1800-1853). Yet Alice was bound to him, divorce being impossible, as they had three young children. In 1890 she separated from Hamlyn and moved into a flat at Chelsea with the children and her widowed mother, where Roberts was able to see her. Champion, meanwhile, had been in Australia on a visit to improve

his health in 1890 when he fell for Adelaide Hogg (1854-1930), a Scottish shipowner's daughter who was married to Henry Roughten Hogg (1846-1923), the head of a large merchant firm in Melbourne. After his return to England in April 1891, Champion's heartache was exacerbated not only by the distance now put between him and Adelaide, but also by her refusal for the present to leave her husband, although they carried on writing to each other. A similar decline in his health in the early months of 1893 led this time to Champion taking off with Roberts for a three-week trip across southern Europe to Sicily where he hoped to recuperate.

In May, following his arrival back in England, Champion spent several weeks in Aberdeen preparing a new campaign. Then he stayed quietly in London until mid-July before appearing at a conference in Newcastle, and going up to Aberdeen again. Here he was nominated as a delegate for the Zurich Socialist Congress which he attended together with Morley Roberts (who acquired a *Journalistenkarte* as a correspondent of the *Newcastle Chronicle*) and George Bernard Shaw (representing the Fabians) in early August – all three staying at the Grand Hotel. By this time, however, he was fighting on ever dwindling ground as several ILP party leaders, and, most significantly, Keir Hardie had gradually turned away from him. Pelling convincingly argues that this was because he was accused of having funded his campaign with so-called "tory gold," and also because his elitist approach to leadership, coming as he did from the gentlemanly class, did not suit the democratic ideal of the party or go down well with a new type of working-class delegate first seen at the Bradford Conference Champion was unable to attend, who, wishing to speak for themselves, had no desire to share the same political platform with well-to-do people from other classes.[26]

After returning to England in mid-August, Champion decided to settle his affairs in London. He then moved out of Victoria Street, rented a house at 37 Greville Road in Kilburn into which Roberts moved (although he was often away in Europe trying to see Alice Hamlyn), and on 22 August travelled up to Aberdeen to set up home in Union Street in order to concentrate on his campaign in earnest. From 29 August 1893, days before Frederick Rolfe may have tried to visit him, Champion went over to Ireland to participate at the Trade Union Congress in Belfast's Ulster Hall (4-9 September). It was his last appearance on the national political stage, after which he knew well enough that he was an outcast in his own party. But single-minded in his determination to pursue his own vision of Labour politics and to promote his fight for the eight-hour day, he took over the monthly *Aberdeen Labour*

Elector, changed its name to the *Aberdeen Standard*, and produced a weekly Socialist paper which, as John Barnes explains, "gave prominence to ILP affairs and contained political reports and editorials, [which] also covered local news, and devoted considerable space to sporting and theatrical news. It was, in short, a local newspaper that presented a Labour view."[27]

A politician and a man in retreat – such was the figure that Frederick Rolfe was resting his hopes on. But why would he, a confirmed anti-socialist, turn to one of the leading socialists of his day for help at this most desperate time in his life? Possibly, having resigned himself to a secular life, he was now keen to devote himself to his literary career and his photographic experiments, and thus approached Champion to ask for a position on his newspaper. The Labour politician was still a prominent figure in Aberdeen and no doubt Rolfe had heard about him taking over the *Aberdeen Standard*. This was how, towards the end of September, he came to share his apartment with him. Champion also took an interest in his colour photography which he tried to promote.

If Champion had little to gain for his kindness towards Rolfe, he at least won his lifelong appreciation. In their time together, as Weeks writes,

> Champion probably was the one man who moulded Rolfe into the literary personality he later became. [...] The one thing lacking in his literary efforts up to this point was the stamp of individuality. Association with Champion changed this. Just to study one of the Socialist's periodicals, the *Aberdeen Standard*, is to see the man himself. [...] The paper contained his thoughts, the thoughts of a political outcast, the most hated and distrusted man in the ranks of the advanced politics of the days [*sic*]. He had made political enemies, but he had lost no self-respect. Adversity only inflamed his powers. Working as closely as they did, Rolfe saw the way in which the other operated. Champion was one man against the world, as was Rolfe. Yet the baron's myopic eyes could see things only in one light. Champion worked for a universal cause, embracing all men. Rolfe's future work was to be solely the claiming of his own personal rights.[28]

For his part Champion seems to have admired Rolfe's intellect and been attracted by his eccentricity. But then he was capable of extraordinary acts of eccentricity himself. For, upon throwing in his army commission in 1882, he at once cut all ties with his own class, and desiring nothing more than to be accepted as one of the unclassed, married Juliet Bennett (1855-1886), a common woman, in 1883. This he did apparently after only six weeks' acquaintance, if Margaret Harkness (1854-1923), the realist novelist who may have been in love with him in the late 1880s, is to be believed in her fictional account of Champion's life, *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (1905).[29]

The Gissing-like marriage ended with Juliet's Nell-like early death from causes related to alcoholism in 1886. Hence, in spite of major differences in outlook and their manner of living, Champion and Rolfe had much in common. Both were outcasts, both highly educated, and extremely well-read individuals. Champion, an early admirer of Gissing's *The Unclassed* in 1884, had been the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* magazine for a time, and would later produce in Melbourne the highly cultured literary journal, *The Book Lover*. Rolfe, on the other hand, was a modern Renaissance man who had burrowed deep in esoteric learning and had even been elected a member of the Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society in 1889 and the Fellowship of the Royal Literary Society in 1890 – the former removed him from their membership list during his time in Aberdeen, on 21 December, for not paying the subscription fee. Evidently, over the short period they knew each other Champion became fond of Rolfe and enjoyed his company, while Rolfe would later say of Champion that he had never spoken to a more intelligent man.[30] Moreover, in *Hadrian the VII*, he would literally take his part in denigrating Keir Hardie, Champion's main rival in the ILP and the man most responsible for causing his political isolation within the party.[31]

John Barnes, Champion's biographer, pinpoints the 7 October 1893, the day he spoke at the Dundee Congress at Mather's Hotel attended by only thirty delegates, as the date when his political dreams were truly smashed, writing: "With the failure of the Dundee Conference Champion's hopes of playing a leadership role in an Independent Labour Party were at an end."[32] Shortly after this he asked Morley Roberts, who was visiting him in Aberdeen and had lately been converted to socialism, if he would consider either taking over his candidacy or trying to get elected in some other district of Aberdeen. As Gissing reports in a letter of 22 October 1893 to his brother, Algernon, "Roberts talks about standing for Parliament. It is not at all impossible, in these astonishing days, that he might find a constituency to elect him."[33] Roberts did not pursue the idea, but later, at the turn of the century, exploited his strong interest in politics to write several bestselling political novels.[34] Champion recommended John Lincoln Mahon (1865-1933) in his place for the next ILP vacancy which he acquired in North Aberdeen when William Alexander Hunter (1844-1898) stood down because of ill health. Meanwhile, as plentiful newspaper articles reveal, Champion remained throughout the autumn in Aberdeen carrying out his political commitments by attending numerous meetings in the Granite City, Dundee, and elsewhere, while still boldly declaring that he would stand as the ILP

representative for Aberdeen South in the next general election. There was as yet no hint or sign that he was planning to start a new life in Australia with Mrs Hogg in the new year. During this period Frederick Rolfe saw him constantly, and they often had long talks together.

On 24 November, soon after attending a meeting of the Aberdeen University Debating Society, Champion rushed off to London for a few days where Gissing made his acquaintance as he remarked in his *Diary*: "In afternoon telegram from Roberts, asking me to dine at the [Authors'] Club. Went, and found several men. McCormick, who recently went with exploring party to the Himalayas. H. H. Champion, who surprised me favourably. A man called Best – Greek scholar and medical student. Francis Gribble. And one Mackenzie, a young man from Aberdeen, writing for 'Funny Folks.'"[35] Whereas Mackenzie, who wrote the "Our London Letter" column under the pseudonym "Ubique" for the *Aberdeen Standard*, stayed on to describe the evening at the Authors' Club for the next issue, Champion quickly returned to Aberdeen.[36] That same day Frederick Rolfe published the first of two articles in the *Standard* on Aberdeen architecture which he signed "Corvo."[37] He also published an article on 9 December entitled "A New Local Industry" in which he proposed that the unemployed in Aberdeen should register as artist models to gain employment.[38] Likewise Morley Roberts had contributed two short stories to the newspaper in November and would add three more between December and February.[39]

For the present Champion continued to go to Labour meetings and give speeches, but there is a distinct valedictory tone to these, which lead one to assume he had already decided to emigrate to Australia before he went down to London. This explains why he left Aberdeen on 6 December, the morning after attending a women's suffrage meeting at the Young Men's Christian Institute in Union Street, and why his colleague, George Gerrie, who penned articles for the *Aberdeen Standard*, wrote in the 9 December issue that Champion "had accepted a pressing invitation to take a short trip across the Atlantic in connection with an enterprise of considerable magnitude."[40] As the message appeared in Champion's own newspaper it was obviously a smokescreen put up to free him of all his commitments in the city. At any rate it was read as such by one journalist who responded: "This does not seem to argue much for his success in Aberdeen, whether as a Parliamentary candidate or as a newspaper proprietor."[41] By then Champion had realised that his political career was over. From 6 December he was putting his affairs in order and preparing to depart for Australia. On his return to London just a

week after first meeting Gissing he took up residence at 37 Greville Road, Kilburn, where he was to share the house with his close friend, Morley Roberts, and later with Frederick Rolfe too.

But just days after Champion's return, Roberts, finally deciding to defy convention, had rushed off to Switzerland to join Alice Hamlyn and run off with her to Italy. Now alone and without a political platform apart from the letters pages of the national press, Champion devoted himself to his affairs. As Christmas drew nearer he laid low and there was scarcely any further mention of him in the newspapers apart from repeated references here and there to his sudden decision to leave for America. Hearing from Roberts in Livorno on 12 December, Champion replied:

> New Travellers Club
> Piccadilly. W.
> Wednesday 13 Dec 1893.
>
> My dear, dear old chap.
> I am ever so glad to hear from you. I got your wire yesterday afternoon and the letter this evening just now before post time so I send this to Giappone's [Hotel]. How well I remember our evening there on that Easter Sunday [in 1892]! [42]

Roberts had intended to cross to Corsica with Alice, but three days later received a telegram at the Livorno hotel from her brother-in-law, Rodney Fennessy, asking them to remain there until he arrived. On the 16 December Gissing wrote in his *Diary*: "An astonishing letter from Roberts, from Genoa, telling me that he has run away with Mrs Hamlyn,- a thing that might have happened any time these three years. I met Mrs Hamlyn once at the Fennessys', and then suspected what was going on. Now, I suppose, there'll be the devil to pay. [...] The sister and the mother, he says, both approve of what is done."[43] Then just days before Christmas Fennessy sent cable after cable to Genoa (where they had gone next) demanding they separate for the sake of her children. Roberts explains what followed:

> What could I do? I had for the time at least to give her up, or kill her and myself. So Emmie [Alice's sister] and her husband met us at Genoa. And I remember that we drove out and had lunch at a sunlit restaurant at San Pier d'Arena. That next night Glo [Alice] & I parted at Aix, for Emmie took Alice back to her mother and Vere and Naomi [her two daughters], while her husband, a man who feared scandal more than sacrilege or cruelty, and I went back to England.[44]

A few days later, on 29 December, Gissing wrote in his *Diary*: "Then telegram from Champion, to come to New Travellers' Club, Piccadilly, and there met Roberts back from Italy."

IV

For most of the first two months of 1894 Champion and Roberts were established at 37 Greville Road in Kilburn. Later Rolfe would join them, but for now Champion had persuaded him to stay on in the Union Street apartment until the *Aberdeen Standard* ceased publication in early February. In January Champion would make a few perfunctory appearances at meetings, and write a few letters to the press. Otherwise by day he was wrapping up his affairs, whilst by night he was occupied in an activity (not mentioned in Barnes's biography), which throws new light on his personality. Morley Roberts writes forty years later:

> We camped in this house for over three months, being attended to by a charwoman who came each day. All the time I do not suppose that I earned more than five pounds, but if my memory serves me I gave it to Hyde, who went to his club and gambled with it. His particular game was whist at guinea points and a fiver on the rubber. For the most part he had wonderful luck. He rarely came in before half past two or three in the morning, and though I had been in bed since twelve he used to wake me. I always called out to him, "What luck to-night?" Sometimes he said, "We are twenty pounds in," and sometimes it was thirty. These ill-gotten gains went apace. When his luck was in we lived in hansom cabs and lunched and dined at the best place and went to the theatre when we wanted to. But all the time I was in great mental trouble and as nearly mad as I could be and the life I led did not improve my state of mind. There were nights however when he came in sad and destitute. I could tell what had happened by his step upon the stair and I called out to him. Then the answer was, "I'm twenty or thirty pounds to the bad" and then I replied with a groan, "Good God, Hyde, I shall have to go to work." Among the furniture of that desolate house was a typewriter which I learnt to use and sometimes I tried to work on it. I even wrote poetry on it but my work was not the kind to bring in money. My five pounds more or less kept us going for he always retrieved his losses.[45]

As January drew to an end Roberts arranged to have Alice Hamlyn journey with Champion to Australia to stay with him and Adelaide Hogg in Melbourne. Fennessy agreed to the arrangement believing she would be out of reach so far away, but Roberts intended to join her in Australia in three months. Despite feeling depressed he had recently managed to write one of his finest stories, "The Miracle of the Black Cañon," which he sold to Oswald Crawfurd on 13 January for 16 guineas – it appeared in *Chapman's Magazine* in October.[46] In addition, his new novel, *The Earth Mother*, was being serialised throughout January in Jerome K. Jerome's *To-Day*.[47]

In Scotland Rolfe had also been busy writing over the Christmas period. Several anonymous articles likely from his pen appeared in the *Aberdeen Standard*. Two were letters headed "Catholic Criticism" and "A Roman

Catholic Replies," published on 13 January, and one other piece entitled "One Shilling to Kneel Here," published on 27 January.[48] Rolfe stayed in Aberdeen until the last issue came out on 3 February. He then travelled down to London that same weekend to join Champion and Roberts in Kilburn. Just a few days before this Champion had journeyed north to Manchester to attend the Labour Party Conference there. He must have been quids in from his gambling because he stayed at the Grand Hotel from where on the eve of the conference, not invited to take the platform himself, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Manchester Courier* advising the ILP ahead of the congress.[49] Unbeknown to the delegates present, including Keir Hardie, the next day he watched from the strangers' gallery as the minutes of the ILP Administrative Council were read and he was "accused of being a Tory agent, and of using large sums of money in order to capture the I. L. P. for the Tory party."[50] Following this public accusation, he was vocally disowned by the party to loud applause. Even if his decision to leave for Australia had already been made, that thundering box on the ears from his own party must have cemented his determination to quit England for good. On 8 February Champion took his leave of British politics with one last article in the *British Weekly* for which he was paid £3.3.0.[51] In his *Times* obituary in 1928, Champion was described as "an exceedingly able writer and the wielder of a caustic pen. He had, however, the temperament of an aristocrat and an inborn sympathy with Conservative traditions, both of which prevented him from really understanding and sympathizing with the minds of the masses whom he endeavoured to lead."[52] This is largely true and may explain why he did not defend himself against the charge of being a Tory sympathiser.

For the last fortnight of Champion's time in England, the three strange bedfellows were now together at 37 Greville Road in an area of Kilburn that Rolfe knew well from former days. According to his biographies, he was soon put in touch with Jerome K. Jerome by Champion, although it was actually Roberts who belonged to Jerome's *Idler* circle, being a regular contributor to the magazine. Rolfe subsequently sold a story to him called "An Unforgettable Experience," which appeared in the 21 April issue of *To-Day*.[53] Champion and Roberts mainly spent their days at the New Travellers' Club and the Authors' Club. But there was also time for them to introduce Rolfe to Dr Robert Lloyd Storr-Best (1863-1956) the Greek scholar and professional hypnotist.[54] Just the year before Storr-Best had written the last of two controversial articles on hypnosis published in *The New Review* in which he sharply criticised the British medical community for its continued

backwardness in still regarding hypnosis as a form of medical quackery, whilst in central Europe great advances were being made in its use as a means of therapy for illnesses and mental disorders.[55] Champion had probably got to know Storr-Best during the 1892 election, as his sister, Maud (1873-1969) was a governess in Aberdeen (from 1894 she assumed the post of librarian there at the university which she held for over fifty years). Roberts made Storr-Best's acquaintance after he and Champion returned from their European trip at Easter 1893, when he underwent some hypnotherapy treatment. Over the year Storr-Best became good friends with Roberts, and was invited to the 30 November dinner at the Authors' Club where he met Gissing. Whereas in his *Diary* Gissing wrongly refers to him as a "medical student," he is also wrongly identified there as Kershaw Thorpe Best, the author of *An Etymological Manual* (1887).[56] In fact Lloyd Storr-Best was a graduate of the University of London where he had obtained an MA. and D. Litt., hence his "Dr" title. He had written in his second article that it was sometimes impossible to hypnotise an educated person if he tried to resist and such was the case with Rolfe when he attempted to hypnotise him. Rolfe wrote of the experience two years later, "There was a hypnotizer once who could not hypnotize me and from whom I rose from the cataleptic trance solely on account of my strong selfishness."[57]

On the eve of his passage to Australia Champion, Roberts, and Rolfe met up at the Turkish Baths in Northumberland Road, just off Trafalgar Square, before going to a leaving party at the Clarendon Hotel. The next day he sailed on the *RMS Orient* in the company of Alice Hamlyn. Roberts remained with Rolfe in the Kilburn flat and it did not suit him at all. Champion had also given him some money which he was supposed to hand over to Rolfe at intervals to tide him over the next month and "to be used for clothes and things" until the quarterly lease at Greville Road ended.[58] It seems, moreover, that Rolfe expected to join Champion at a later date. Of the four weeks he spent at close quarters with "Baron Corvo," up to his own departure on a round-the-world journey, Roberts had this to say forty years later:

> He [Champion] went out to Australia and left me in the house with a companion whom he had picked up somehow or somewhere, a destitute person, an ab[ject] poet, a man who believed he had invented coloured photography. He had been educated for a priest, but was so mad that the Scotch College in Rome would not ordain him, stating that he had no vocation. He used to stink the house out with awful preparations of garlic. When I found I was left there alone with him I took some kind of a pull on myself and went away in to rooms, I think in Bloomsbury, and gradually got back to

habits of work. I left the priest manque in the house and do not quite know how long he stayed or what he did with it. I am quite certain he did not pay the three quarters rent which Champion had forgotten when he went abroad.[59]

Roberts's memory is either not completely reliable here or else he is dissembling as not only was he actually preparing to leave for America at the time, but he must surely have known by the early 1930s that the "priest manque" *was* Frederick Rolfe alias Baron Corvo.

On 19 March he handed Rolfe a payment of £1.5.0 at Greville Road and told him to sling his hook. Roberts then left the flat and stayed thereafter in rooms at the Authors' Club in Whitehall. On 21 or 22 March he sent Rolfe a cheque for £4 and asked him to come to the club probably in order to give him an endorsed cheque from Champion. Rolfe had been busy transferring himself to new lodgings in Chelsea, so did not receive the message until the next day, by which time Roberts had journeyed up to Liverpool. He stayed overnight at the Adelphi Hotel writing to Rolfe from there and apparently enclosed Champion's cheque. The following morning, on the 24 March he boarded *RMS Lucania* to take voyage to America. He arrived at New York a week later on 31 March, lodging at the Broadway Central Hotel. Here he received from Rolfe the following letter:

7 Beaufort Street, Chelsea.
March xxiv. 1894

Dear R,

Nor was it my fault that your letter didn't reach me in time to come to the club. I did not blame you and I cannot see why you should write so snappily about it. There are circumstances over which neither of us have any control, and this eagerness to emphasize your perfections and to scold other people, is neither admirable nor impressive.

I received the cheque for £4. You keep on saying it can be cashed on Monday, that day being a Bank-Holiday.

Your letter of the 23rd from Liverpool did not contain any cheque of H.H. "endorsed so that you can cash it", so there will be no need for me to dance backwards and forwards to and from the Bank as you obligingly suggest, (and I should not do so in any case.)

I fail to see on what authority you state that the £4 is mine to spend, in the same way that I fail to grasp why you shunt the repayment of the money of Champion's you had from me on to Best, who, to my thinking, has nothing whatever to do with it. As I have repeated again and again, Champion left me certain monies to be used for clothes and things when he sent for me to come out to him. These were according to the list in his own hand which you have seen

I. …….. £5…….. before he went away ….
II. …….... £2 ……. from "TODAY"
III. ……. £3.3.0 from the British Weekly..

IV. ……. £10 ……... cheque due March 4th
V. ……..£10 ……. " " April 15th..
VI. ……. £40-£50 …… proceeds of the book he left you to sell.

Items I, II, III, you have had, and verbally made yourself responsible for and if you do not pay them I shall be a defaulter. I do not suppose Champion will be very hard on me, but I would rather he did not know that I have played the goat with his money until I have repaid it to him or expended it as he directs.

What is the good of saying that if I come to grief because because [*sic*] I would not spend money that I imagined was Champion's (you know it is his and not mine as well as I do) I couldn't hurt him worse or help to make [*sic*: him] miserable in a worse way? I am not quite so fatuously conceited as to believe that any body cares more than two twos what happens to me. Champion knows perfectly what he is doing although he has been driven almost crazy by taking other people's troubles on his own shoulders and he was quite clear that the sums mentioned above were left in my hands for a definite purpose. The question of my maintenance as long as you remained in Greville Road and after that when you were able to go away he put on to the £40 odd which you owed him.

That was all plain enough, and I had no hesitation about accepting the position although you were kind enough to tell me that I was a drag upon your movements, and that had it not been for me you would have left 37 long before you did.

This is how the matter stands. You kept me at Greville Road from Champion's departure till Monday March xix, and then gave me £1.5.0 to start on my own hook. Of the £10.3.0 (which I am supposed to hold in trust for Champion) you have sent me a post-dated cheque for £4, and a statement that Best will pay the remainder. Also a notice that you have sent a cheque (amount unknown) which has not arrived, of HH's, which I am most unlikely to be able to cash, and with no instruction as to on which account (Champion's trust or my maintenance) it is to be placed (when it reaches me).

That's all.

And now you are free to think even more of your own affairs, nor will you be worried about the different promises vlountary [*sic*] made to me (e.g. The Bassi notes ordered by you; the round of the studios unmade; the visit to la Phenessey; the introductions, particular to Jerome anent my Catholic Stories, and general to Colles, etc, etc,) there is nothing to prevent your whole attention being devoted to the contemplation of your own navel and no doubt you will be henceforth perfectly happy. Well and why shouldn't you? Ad multos annos.

You concealed from me the name of the vessel which has the honour of carrying you, so I send this to New York direct.

Faithfully yours
Corvo.[60]

Of course Rolfe had every right to be reproachful. Roberts did not like him and no doubt treated him shabbily, barely tolerating his presence at Greville Road. He, the amalgam of the tall, ruggedly masculine ex-seaman in thought and physique, and Rolfe, the thin, bespectacled, hypersensitive eccentric, had little in common. This difference in temperament allied with Roberts's animosity towards him, despite having "verbally" promised to help Rolfe,

accounts for his reluctance to give him the Bassi notes he had ordered, to introduce him to Colles and Jerome so that he could sell his "Catholic Stories" (his stories about Toto later sold to the *Yellow Book*), and to take him on the round of the photographic studios, or to one of Emily Fennessy's "At Homes." As for the money: after Champion had left, Roberts banked it with Colles and duly sent Rolfe occasional small amounts. But Rolfe complains that Roberts had only given him £4 of the £10.3.0 he was meant to receive. Yet in the margin of Rolfe's letter Roberts wrote "I sent him [a] £5 cheque."[61] Rolfe also writes that he cannot understand what "Best" had to do with the money. One must assume that for practical reasons Roberts had passed on the remainder of Champion's money to Storr-Best to give to Rolfe during his absence across seas.

Roberts stayed the first fortnight of April 1894 in New York dealing with Appleton, the publishers, and on private business. He was also waiting for Colles to wire him some money. On 14 April he bought a cheap train ticket to San Francisco. Though low on funds, he spent a week in the city then revisited Los Guilucos where he had worked as a stableman in 1886 (described in *The Western Avernus*, 1887). On his return to San Francisco he stayed at the Bohemian Club in Post Street and tried to get more money from Colles to enable him to buy a ticket for a first class cabin to Sydney (to avoid travelling steerage). He was planning to join up with Alice and Champion at Melbourne in late May. But Colles failed to respond, so he wired a friend in Liverpool who wired back an introduction to Louis F. Cockcroft (1854-1936) the long-serving passenger agent for the Oceanic Steamship Company at San Francisco. Cockcroft proved to be extremely amenable when they met at the end of April, booking Roberts into first class accommodation at half price on the *RMS Monowai* and providing him with an introduction to the ship's pilot, Captain M. Carey.

The ship sailed on 3 May from Golden Gate at 5 p.m. It reached Honolulu on 10 May, and then travelling in fair winds and fine weather reached the island of Apia in Samoa on 17 May where it stopped for five hours to deliver the English mail. Here Roberts met Robert Louis Stevenson as told in his 1895 article "With Stevenson Last May."[62] He reached Sydney on 27 May and took train to Melbourne. On arrival at Adelaide Hogg's house in the Beaconsfield district, he was reunited with Alice and Champion. But within days Fennessy was sending telegrams demanding that Alice and Roberts return to Europe. Before he left Australia, Roberts gave Champion Rolfe's letter with his own comments in the margin. This is how the letter ended up

in the small collection of papers that Champion left to his second wife, Elsie Belle Goldstein, which she later passed on to Henry Pelling.

V

Roberts and Alice voyaged back to Europe almost at once, separating in Switzerland. Two years later following the sudden death of her husband, they were at last able to marry. This time there were no more telegrams from Fennessy. Rolfe survived another year of hardship in London before finding work painting banners in Holywell, north Wales. He continued writing to Champion until 1897 when the former politician informed Roberts that he was no longer opening Rolfe's letters. "Although Champion had declined to continue the association," as Barnes writes, "Rolfe continued to think of him with admiration."[63] Donald Weeks had summarised their relationship in 1971: "Rolfe and Champion met, worked and lived together as equals. The respect and debt owed to the Socialist was never forgotten."[64] Ten years after they last saw each other he gave Champion an honourable portrayal as Dymoke in *Hadrian the VII*.

Rolfe returned to London in 1899 and stayed until 1908. This was his most creative period in which, besides *Hadrian the VII*, he published, *In His Own Image* (1901), *A Chronicle of the House of Borgia* (1901), and *Don Tarquino* (1905), and wrote several other works which were published after his death.[65] Then in August 1908 another helpful acquaintance, Richard Dawkins (1870-1955), a Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek, whom he had met the year before, took him for six weeks to Venice where he decided to remain. Rolfe had five more years of struggle in between brief phases of happiness in the lagoon city during which he wrote two more novels featuring Nicholas Crabbe, *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* (brought out posthumously) and *The Weird of the Wanderer* published in 1912.[66] He died suddenly in 1913 from a stroke at fifty-three.

Donald Weeks had good cause to suspect Morley Roberts of being behind the Aberdeen attack on Rolfe. Roberts clearly disliked Rolfe. He regarded him as a nuisance at 37 Greville Road after Champion left, having told Rolfe he would have left the place sooner had it not been for him. He could not understand what the Socialist saw in him. He himself, as Rolfe knew, did not care "two twos" for him, and he did not like being responsible for his upkeep. But, above all, he did not like being rebuked for failing to honour his verbal promises, and resented the accusations and sarcasm in the last letter Rolfe sent him, as his marginal comments reveal.

That said, Roberts had nothing to do with the defamation of Rolfe's character in the *Daily Free Press*. As the attack was manifestly provoked by the appearance of Rolfe's "How I Was Buried Alive" article which was published in early November, the following facts will prove that Roberts had no part in it. Firstly, he had left London for South Africa on 19 August 1898 and only returned to Southampton on 29 October just 10 days before the *Daily Free Press* articles started to appear, having cut short his stay there, as reported in the English media, because of a severe bout of malaria.[67] Secondly, whilst recovering from this illness,– Gissing was still asking him if he was any better in December – he would scarcely have been capable of gathering all the data about Rolfe's life up to that point in time, or acquiring the letter from Rolfe to the Bishop of Aberdeen, and the latter's reply, all of which were referred to or quoted from in the first article, and actually writing it by 7 November, the day before it was printed.[68] Thirdly, as Roberts was thoroughly non-religious, he was hardly the type to have contact with or the necessary influence upon a bishop or any other religious people for that matter. And finally, for the same reason, he was the last person to be scandalised or angered by Rolfe's drawings of himself in religious vestments. One must, therefore, conclude that Roberts did not write the articles.

Epilogue

In 1922 A. J. A. Symons founded the First Edition Club, the aim of which was to publish limited editions in fine bindings and publicise rare books and manuscripts in loan exhibitions. Symons estimated that he would need six hundred subscribers to make the venture a success. Among the books the First Edition Club had privately printed was *Two Letters from George Gissing to Joseph Conrad* (London: Curwen Press, 1926).

Symons's personal quest for Corvo had begun in 1925. By the late 1920s it had become a monomania. He was still managing to keep the First Edition Club afloat, and had actually moved it into luxurious premises at 17 Bedford Square in May 1928 where he arranged to have the King of Portugal, an avid bibliophile, perform the opening ceremony. But of the hoped-for subscriptions only fifty had materialised. However, there were in addition a number of private purchasers. One of these wrote to Symons in November 1928 praising a recent publication of the First Edition Club and ordering another. Symons replied:

The First Edition Club
17 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1.
2nd November 1928

Dear Mr. Roberts,

Many thanks for your letter. I am glad you like Herbert. The Observer, in reviewing it, called it the most magnificent folio of recent times.

Three Gifts has been sent to you. It is no bother at all to obtain these books and send them to you; in fact, it benefits the Club slightly, so that you need not feel any compunction.

Yours very sincerely,
AJA Symons[69]

When Symons wrote this letter, he was trying to make contact with every last person who had known Frederick Rolfe. As the letter to "R" had not yet surfaced, he could not have known that his correspondent was a person who had actually shared a house with Rolfe for six weeks in 1894. And neither did Morley Roberts, the recipient of the above letter, know that Symons was preparing to write a biography of Frederick Rolfe. There was one last exchange of letters in the summer of 1929. In reply to Roberts's letter, which does not survive, Symons wrote:

The First Edition Club
17 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1.
1st August 1929

Dear Mr. Roberts,

I have not answered your letter of June 27th before, because I was waiting for opportunity to discuss it with other members of our Committee.

Actually the immediate effect of the circular was to strengthen patronage of the lunch and tea-room; and I am glad to say that we received more money on that account in the month of June, than during any previous month since the Club was opened.

After careful reflection we feel that it is quite impossible at the present moment to advertise. Perhaps you saw that in the Times of June 29th there was almost a whole column report of our Fifty Books of the Year exhibition, a catalogue of which I enclose. It seems to us unlikely that any advertisement would bring more attention than such notices do, and we fear too that if we did advertise, the free space which has hitherto been given us by the Press might be withdrawn.

I was disappointed not to see you here during the last Exhibition, which I think would have interested you very much, and which brought home to people the enormous improvement there is in modern book production. However you will be interested to see the catalogue.

Yours very sincerely,
AJA Symons
SECRETARY.[70]

From this last letter it seems that Symons and Roberts may have met at a previous exhibition at 17 Bedford Place. But there is no record of their meeting, and apparently the correspondence ends here. In the early 1930s Roberts would publish a number of nostalgic articles about writers he had known including John Barlas, John Davidson, John Galsworthy, Gissing, R. B. Cunninghame Graham, W. H. Hudson, Henry James, George Meredith, and Robert Louis Stevenson.[71] It is a shame he did not know about Symons's planned biography, otherwise he might have written at more length about his acquaintance with Frederick Rolfe. Symons eventually published *The Quest for Corvo* in 1934. Six years later, in a letter to the English novelist, [Margaret] Storm Jameson (1891-1986), from his Belsize Park flat, Roberts, now 82, ailing and depressed, refers to several bombs dropping close to his hotel on a recent visit to Cambridge and then writes:

> I suppose I am fairly well, though for an hour or so on waking I am in hell because neither my heart nor liver will work, or even think of it, till about 10 or 11. Until my first sip of early tea I think of nothing but suicide. I've just been reading again Symond's [*sic*] Quest for Corvo & I learn that Hugh Benson (I won't say my Benson thoughts) wasn't even remotely human till 2.30. Poor devil, if he felt as I do.[72]

Roberts had read Symons's book before, most likely when first published in 1934, and must have recognised a missed opportunity, for his old friend, Henry Hyde Champion, and the 1894 London episode are referred to, if just in passing, at the end of Chapter Three. Thus ends the chronicle of the Baron, the Socialist, and the third man.

[1] Henry Pelling, "Corvo and Labour Politics," *TLS*, 6 February 1969, p. 137.

[2] A. J. A. Symons, *The Quest for Corvo* (London: Quartet Books, 1993).

[3] Frederick Rolfe, *Hadrian the VII, A Romance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904); *Nicholas Crabbe, or, the One and the Many*, ed. Cecil Woolf. London: Chatto & Windus, 1958.

[4] Henry Pelling, "H. H. Champion: Pioneer of Labour Representation," *Cambridge Journal*, 6 (1953), pp. 222–239; *The Origins of the Labour Party* (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1954).

[5] Frederick Rolfe, "How I was Buried Alive," *Wide World Magazine*, Vol. 2 (November 1898), pp. 139-146.

[6] *The Quest for Corvo*, p. 91.

[7] Anon., "Baron Corvo: More 'Wide World Adventures,' A Nobleman from Aberdeen," *Daily Free Press* (Aberdeen), 8, 12, and 26 November 1898, p. 5, 5, and 4.

[8] *Daily Free Press*, 8 November 1898, p. 5.

[9] Miriam J. Benkovitz, *Frederick Rolfe: Baron Corvo, A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), p. 98.

[10] Donald Weeks, *Corvo, Saint or Madman?* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971), p. 161.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 164.

[12] *Ibid*., pp. 167-168.

[13] ALS from Donald Weeks to Alan Anderson, 17 August 1976, p. 1. Partly paraphrased with permission from Taco de Kort.

[14] Benkovitz, p. 99.

[15] John Barnes, *Socialist Champion: Portrait of the Gentleman as Crusader* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2006).

[16] *Ibid*., p. 330.

[17] See for example chapters ten and twelve on A. J. A. Symons and *The Quest for Corvo* in Robert Scoble, *The Corvo Cult* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2014), pp. 225-258, 292-329.

[18] *The Quest for Corvo*, p. 243.

[19] V. S. Pritchett, *Complete Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1991), p. 1073.

[20] Benkovitz, p. 60.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] *Daily Free Press*, 12 November 1898, p. 5.

[23] Benkovitz, p. 66.

[24] Weeks, pp. 105-106.

[25] Morley Roberts, "Farewell to Letters," pp. 58, 73. Unpublished Manuscript, Morley Roberts Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania.

[26] "Corvo and Labour Politics," p. 137.

[27] Barnes, p. 192.

[28] Weeks, p. 106.

[29] John Law [M. Harkness], *George Eastmont: Wanderer* (London: Burns & Oates, 1905).

[30] See Weeks, p. 109.

[31] *Ibid*., pp. 110-111.

[32] Barnes, p. 192.

[33] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five, 1892-1895* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 153.

[34] Morley Roberts, *The Colossus, A Story of To-Day* (London: Edward Arnold, 1899); *Lord Linlithgow* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900); *Taken by Assault, or The Fugitives* (London: Sands & Co., 1901). These novels present fictionalised versions of Cecil Rhodes, Lord Rosebery, and Winston Churchill.

[35] Diary entry for 30 November 1893. Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England. The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 322.

[36] Ubique [William Andrew Mackenzie], "Our London Letter," *Aberdeen Standard*, 9 December 1893, p. 1.

[37] Baron Corvo, "The Architecture of Aberdeen," *Aberdeen Standard*, 30 November 1893, p. 1.

[38] Anon., "A New Local Industry," *Aberdeen Standard*, 9 December 1893, p. 1.

[39] Morley Roberts, "A Quiet Man," 7 November 1893, p. 2; "Fishing at Flynn's Ford," 9 November 1893, p. 3; "King Billy of Ballarat," 23 December 1893, p. 3; "A Domestic Tragedy," 30 December 1893 to 20 January 1894, p. 3 (in each weekly issue); "Father and Son," 3 February 1894, p. 3. All published in the *Aberdeen Standard*.

[40] See Anon., "Women's Suffrage Meeting in Aberdeen," *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 6 December 1893, p. 8, for confirmation of Champion's attendance at the meeting. For notice of Champion's abrupt departure from Aberdeen see Thorough [George Gerrie], "The Talk of the Town," *Aberdeen Standard*, 9 December 1893, p. 2.

[41] Anon., "Politics and Society," *Leeds Mercury*, 22 December 1893, p. 5.

[42] Telegram from Henry Hyde Champion to Morley Roberts, 13 December 1893. Morley Roberts Papers, Ms. Coll. 726, RBML, University of Pennsylvania.

[43] *Diary*, p. 324.

[44] Morley Roberts, "The Mask and the Last Night," Unpublished Manuscript, p. 188. Morley Roberts Papers, Ms. Coll. 726, RBML, University of Pennsylvania.

[45] Morley Roberts, "Unpublished Autobiography," pp. 21-22. Morley Roberts Papers, Ms. Coll. 726, RBML, University of Pennsylvania.

[46] Morley Roberts, "The Miracle of the Black Cañon," *Chapman's Magazine*, 2, October 1894, pp. 185-200.

[47] Morley Roberts, "The Earth Mother," *To-Day*, serialised 13 January to 10 February 1894.

[48] Anon., "Catholic Criticism," 13 January 1894, p. 1; "A Roman Catholic Replies," 13 January 1894, p. 3; and "One Shilling to Kneel Here," 27 January 1894, p. 1. All published in the *Aberdeen Standard*.

[49] Henry Hyde Champion, "Letter to the Editor," *Manchester Courier*, 2 February 1894, p. 6.

[50] As reported by J. Mahony, "The Independent Labour Party: Manchester Conference," *Northern Echo*, 7 February 1894, p. 4.

[51] Henry Hyde Champion, "On Socialism," *British Weekly*, 8 February 1894, p. 1.

[52] Anon., "Obituary: Mr H. H. Champion," *Times*, 2 May 1928, p. 11.

[53] Frederick Rolfe, "An Unforgettable Experience," *To-Day*, 21 April 1894, pp. 324-326.

[54] Robert Lloyd Storr-Best was born in Goole, Yorkshire. He studied at Owens College and matriculated at the University of London in January 1884 as a private student. He also studied at Cambridge, Rome, Florence, briefly at the University of Moscow, and for three years at the Sorbonne. He married Lucy Johnstone (1878-1949) at Westminster in 1908.

An early pioneer of hypnotism, a man of wide education, a major Greek scholar, and a polyglot, he was fluent in Hebrew, Ancient and Modern Greek, Latin, French, German, Russian, and Serbo-Croat. He was also the author of a translation, with textual criticism, commentary, and notes of *Varro on Farming*, as well as the writer of a number of volumes prominent among which are *Science in the Roman Empire*, *Heraclitus and Modern Theories of the Kosmos*, *A Roman Farmstead*, and of many articles and reviews in the *Classical Quarterly* and other journals. He was formerly a Member of Council of the Classical Association and later the President of this society and President of the Institute of Linguists.

His main career was devoted to teaching. In his youth he had excelled at boxing and long-distance swimming. He worked as a private tutor in the 1890s in London and Goole up to 1909. He then became the first headmaster of King Edward VII County Grammar School at Coalville, Leicestershire, from 1909 to 1918, and from 1918 to 1932 the first headmaster of Firth Park School at Sheffield. According to the school history Storr-Best was a fine gymnast, on intimate terms with all the leading Sheffield industrialists, kept an excellent wine cellar, and disdained the Sheffield Education Office. The boys wore red caps and red blazers and the school song was in Latin – six verses! In 1924 as the leading authority on

school education he was sent to Moscow to study educational conditions in the Soviet schools and institutes of higher learning. He retired in 1932.

[55] Milne Bramwell and Lloyd Storr-Best, "Hypnotism," *New Review*, June 1890, pp. 534-545; Lloyd Storr-Best, "The Common Sense of Hypnotism," *New Review*, March 1893, pp. 363-373.

[56] *Diary*, pp. 322, 558.

[57] Weeks, p. 133.

[58] Letter from Frederick Rolfe to Morley Roberts, 24 March 1894, p. 1. Photocopy of letter provided by and permission to publish given by Taco de Kort.

[59] Morley Roberts, "Unpublished Autobiography," pp. 22-23.

[60] Letter from Frederick Rolfe to Morley Roberts, 24 March 1894, pp. 1-3.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[62] Morley Roberts, "With Stevenson Last May," *Saturday Review*, 12 January 1895, pp. 38-39.

[63] Barnes, p. 196.

[64] Weeks, p. 109.

[65] Frederick Rolfe, *In His Own Image* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1901); *A Chronicle of the House of Borgia* (London: Grant Richards, 1901); *Don Tarquino* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905).

[66] Frederick Rolfe, *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* (London: Cassell & Co., 1934); *The Weird of the Wanderer* (London: William Rider, 1912).

[67] See for example *Literature*, 19 November 1898, Vol. III, No 57, p. 478.

[68] See first sentence of letter from Gissing to Morley Roberts, 1 December 1898 in Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Seven, 1897-1899* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 237.

[69] Letter from A. J. A. Symons to Morley Roberts, 2 November 1928, BC. F. pr. 2., Morley Roberts Collection, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

[70] Letter of A. J. A. Symons to Morley Roberts, 1 August 1929, *ibid*.

[71] All by Morley Roberts, "George Gissing," *Queen's Quarterly*, 37 (October 1930), pp. 617-632; "The Letters of George Gissing," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 7 (Summer 1931), pp. 409-426. "W. H. Hudson," *Cornhill Magazine*, October 1930, pp. 406-418; "Meetings with Some Men of Letters," *Queen's Quarterly*, 39 (February 1932), pp. 62-80; "Authors I Have Met: George Meredith," *John O'London's Weekly*, 13 August 1932, pp. 685-686, 690-691; "More Literary Memories," *John O'London's Weekly*, 20 August 1932, pp. 717-718, and 722; "Galsworthy as I Knew Him," *John O'London's Weekly*, 27 August 1932, pp. 725-726, 730; "The Rhymers' Club," *John O'London's Weekly*, 30 September 1933, pp. 901-902, and 908; and "R. B. Cunninghame Graham: A Modern Don Quixote," *John O'London's Weekly*, 3 February 1934, pp. 669-671.

[72] Letter from Morley Roberts to Storm Jameson, 19 November 1940, Morley Roberts Papers, Ms. Coll. 726, Folder 74, RBML, University of Pennsylvania. The reference to Father Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914) in the letter recalls a passage concerning Rolfe in 1906 in which as Symons explains: "it was agreed that the two should collaborate in a book. Benson had already suggested that they should live together in adjacent cottages, not meeting till 2.30 p.m., the hour when he became tolerant and tolerable," *The Quest for Corvo*, p. 195.

George Gissing's *The Town Traveller*: A Comedy, By Jorrocks!

FLORA T. HIGGINS
Colts Neck, New Jersey

The essence of humour is sensibility; warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence.
Thomas Carlyle[1]

It is never easy to separate the person from the author in Gissing's novels.
Lloyd Fernando[2]

The most devoted man of letters is still a man, a wanderer and a wonderer both.
Morley Roberts[3]

The name George Gissing is synonymous with grim and unrelenting pessimism. The dreary details of urban poverty, social disharmony, and personal despair are reiterated in a series of well-crafted but depressing novels. *Workers in the Dawn, The Unclassed*, *Demos, The Nether World,* and the classic *New Grub Street* are examples of unrelieved realism and darkly negative views. Readers unfamiliar with Gissing's lighter works persist in the idea that George Gissing was a humorless pessimist. But in *The Town Traveller* "[t]he good humor and the loquacity of the commercial traveller, Mr. Gammon, are the things that matter, although those who do not know all of Gissing's work still refer to him as 'gloomy.'"[4]

Gissing was also a gifted humorist, and as his life brightened, his fiction brightened. *The Town Traveller,* one of his comic novels, is in a way as autobiographical as *New Grub Street,* for he was beginning a new life as he wrote it. He conceived the idea for the novel while still living with Edith, his argumentative and unstable wife (who was ultimately confined to a mental institution), but did not begin to write it until he and his wife had separated. The gloomy atmosphere of the Gissing household is documented at great length in his diary; the marriage was a disaster from the beginning. On 10 October 1894 Gissing writes, "But for my poor little boy, I would not, and could not, live with her for another day. I have no words for the misery I daily endure from her selfish and coarse nature."[5] Eventually, Gissing and his wife parted, and shortly after, the idea that became *The Town Traveller* began to germinate in his imagination. The diary entry for 11 January 1897 is probably a reference to it: "A good idea for a short novel; thinking all day."[6] On 26 January he was "[t]hinking about new story," and two days later he has a character in mind: "Made notes for 'Polly Brill.'"[7]

Gissing kept his diary quite regularly, but there is a long period during which he made no entries at all. The period was a traumatic one, "full of miseries," for he had left, or, as he put it, "was driven" from his home and

had taken up solitary residence.[8] The very last entries before the silent period concern the Polly Brill story. On 1 February he got to work on "Polly," but the day after he records, "the thing won't do," and by the third day he was "rescheming the story."[9] Although he made a "new beginning of 'Polly'" on 8 February, the next day he wrote the last entry before separating from his wife, "[s]tory again out of gear. New scheme."[10] Gissing's own life was badly out of gear by then, and the "new scheme" for himself involved freedom. When he resumes his diary, he reports a good period in the following months. His health was good, and for Gissing, as for most of us, good physical health is often an indication of emotional wellbeing. By 1 June he is "decidedly better," and to accommodate a burgeoning social life, he visits his tailor.[11] Gissing's finances were also improving. The 2 June 1897 diary entry reads: "Meanwhile *The Whirlpool* was published and sold better than any of my books hitherto. By the end of May the first edition of 2000 copies was finished."[12] Also he was reading Dickens in preparation for "the little book I am to write." The single life, the release from poverty, and the Dickens influence are all evident in *The Town Traveller.* By 8 June he is back at work on his story, now renaming it *The Town Traveller.* The actual writing of the novel progressed very smoothly. The diary records steady progress of two pages on 11 June (Gissing's handwriting was extremely minute: two pages was a good number of pages). On 12 June he wrote three pages, remarking, "[g]etting ahead very quickly."[13] He wrote often three pages a day, a thing almost unheard of for Gissing, and the "3pp. as usual" recorded on 22 June mark an unusual level of sustained progress for him, whose repeated fresh starts and agonized rewritings are recalled in the career of the tormented Edwin Reardon, hero of *New Grub Street.*[14] Gissing notes on 26 June: "Never got on so quickly with anything."[15] He wrote steadily throughout the summer, and finished *The Town Traveller* on a hot day in mid-July.

As Gissing re-established a bachelor existence for himself, two interesting things happened to his story. Gammon, the traveller of the title, replaced Polly as protagonist, and Polly Brill became Polly Sparkes, one of Gissing's most fascinating females. Gissing is noted for his subtle characterization, and Polly is no exception. She is bad-tempered, egocentric, argumentative, and ill bred – and yet we like her. Removed from the noisy habits of his wife, Edith, Gissing was able to write about a feisty person not only with sympathy, but with good humor. The very fact of Polly's name change indicates the shift of emphasis. The sound of "Brill" is hard, biting, cold, and shrill, but the sound of "Sparkes" connotes another aspect of an argumentative personality. The

brightly-colored, auburn-haired Polly is exciting, fiery, and given to igniting things. In the transition from Brill to Sparkes, she becomes less of a tiresome harridan and more of a spirited young woman.

We also like Polly for her *joie de vivre*. She is an expert in the art of quarreling, and Gissing writes of her pleasure in strife: "It turned out one of the finest frays Polly had ever enjoyed, and was still rich in possibilities [.]"[16] After another argument, Polly, "whose face was crimson with the joy of combat" was pleased.[17] Also, "[t]wo first rate quarrels in one day put Polly into high good humour."[18] Gissing's wife Edith was also argumentative. His friends were and biographers are at a loss to explain how a man who was the epitome of an intellectual and cultured man of letters could bring himself to marry Edith Underwood, who "turned into a shrew."[19] Gissing let it be believed that he had married her for the same reasons that Alfred Yule, a character in *New Grub Street,* gave for marrying far beneath him: loneliness, sexual frustration, domestic discomfort, and the conviction he would never be able financially to marry an intellectual equal. Perhaps. But as we all know, letters, diaries, and autobiographical fiction do not reveal one's total character; everyone has personality traits unknown not only to his friends, but to himself. Perhaps under the reasonable exterior that Gissing cultivated there lurked a streak of the perverse that loved a good donnybrook and respected a worthy antagonist. It is possible that he liked Edith at one point in their relationship, and as distance softened reality, recalled some of that affection in the amused and amusing characterization of Polly. Moreover, he describes Polly's joy of battle with such expertise and relish that one wonders if Edith caused all the turmoil in the strife-ridden Gissing home!

In any event, Polly somehow emerges as a sympathetic character, not only in spite of but because of her penchant for acrimony. And she makes us laugh. Another of her positive characteristics is the atmosphere of drama which surrounds her. Her introduction to the reader has a theatrical effect. She rushes forth from her room, "a startling vision of wild auburn hair about a warm complexion, and a small, brisk figure girded in a flowery dressing-gown."[20] We like the fact that she is capable of an "involuntary grin" and we like her because she is physically attractive with "her abundance of auburn hair, her high colour, her full lips and excellent teeth, her finely-developed bust."[21] We like her because she exudes health and energy, and we like her for her youth and her innocence, both conveyed in the single line: "She was but two-and-twenty."[22] The reader also admires her self-respect; she insists Gammon call her "Miss Sparkes" and although she had found "agreeable"

means of supporting herself, they were "[a]ll unimpeachable, for Polly was fiercely virtuous, and put a very high value indeed upon such affections as she had to dispose of."[23] As Gissing further writes, "In the muddled obscurity of Polly's consciousness there was a something which stood for womanly pride."[24] She is one of the Victorian New Women: "For some years she had lived in complete independence."[25] We can, as Gammon says, "Trust Polly to take care of herself."[26] We may laugh at her, but our humor is kindly, for both Polly's creator and the reader feel affection and respect for her.

The other characters also like Polly. Mrs. Bubb, the owner of the boarding house where she lives, intercedes on her behalf several times: The "matron […] took a kindly interest in her."[27] Mrs. Cheeseman, another boarder, says, "we're all fond of you, Polly, that's the fact."[28] Polly has an air of appealing honesty. She was "quite without false modesty in the matter of eating and drinking," writes Gissing in one of several references to her hearty appetite.[29] These references convey her frank and easy sensuality, which she briefly relinquishes in the scene with Greenacre, when she believes herself related to nobility. During the novel, she has been anything but refined, yet in the discussion about her supposed relationship to Lord Polperro, after Greenacre avers he cannot even *mention* the bigamous peculiarities of the Polperro family "in the presence of a young lady such as Miss Sparkes," Polly, in a humorous gesture, "looked at her toes and smirked."[30] The comic proportions of Gissing's fiction falter a bit but there is sharp focus in the few instances when his tone shifts abruptly. One of these episodes is the sad scene when Polly loses her self-consciousness and lapses into genuine helplessness. The incident occurs just after she and Gammon have altered their relationship from one of good-natured antagonism to an excited – indeed, almost hysterical – recognition of mutual sexual attraction (they are also excited by the possibility that she may be an heiress, and Gammon is eager to claim the reward for having made such a happy event possible). But as soon as they become engaged, they begin wrangling again. Polly begins,

> "Oh, all right; have it your own way! I thought you wouldn't be so sweet-tempered very long. You're all alike, you men."
>
> "Why, it's you that can't keep your temper!" shouted Gammon. "I only wanted to hear you say it wouldn't make any difference, happen what might."
>
> "And didn't I say it wouldn't?" shrilled Polly. "What more can I say?"
>
> Strangely enough, a real tear had started in her eye.[31]

Gammon is startled, the reader is startled, and an equally startled Gissing seems to surface briefly. A few paragraphs later there is another divergence from the comic mode of *The Town Traveller* as Polly and Gammon drive

home "through a night which washed the fog away."[32] The frequent references to Polly's teeth are another momentary lapse from the comic and recognizable only by readers sensitive to the details of Gissing's life, for he does keep a light touch when referring to Polly's teeth: "Coarse and plentiful were the viands, and Polly did justice to them. She had excellent teeth, a very uncommon thing in girls of her kind; but Polly's parents were of country origin. With these weapons she feared not even the pastry set before her, which it was just possible to break with an ordinary fork."[33] Gissing's first wife, Nell, had excellent teeth. When called upon to identify her body, Gissing had not seen her for several years, although he sent her money regularly. Nell had been a prostitute and an alcoholic. Gissing records the sordid details of her environment with all the attention to realism he is famous for, and concludes on 1 March 1888: "She lay on the bed covered with a sheet. I looked long, long at her face, but could not recognize it. It is more than three years, I think, since I saw her, and she had changed horribly. Her teeth all remained, white and perfect as formerly."[34]

The female characters in the novel represent possible choices of a wife for Gammon, and even though certain traits are reminiscent of Nell and others of Edith, Gissing is usually able to write about Gammon's quest for a wife with humor. Most of Gammon's travels are related to his sudden and urgent need for a wife. Through the plot of the novel, Gissing explores the idea that a man "try on" various styles of women before deciding upon one; moreover, he finds the idea funny! For example, Gammon even considers marrying Minnie, Mrs. Clover's quiet and refined daughter. Minnie's "features suggested a more delicate physical inheritance than Mrs. Clover's comeliness could account for."[35] She is never clearly drawn, but that does not represent a failure of the author. Minnie is deliberately a mini-character; Gammon's transient desire to marry a "lady" does not warrant further treatment. He himself realizes that Minnie's major appeal is her inaccessibility, commenting, "I could have married scores – scores; but do you suppose I'd have a girl that showed she was only waiting for me to say the word? Not me!"[36] It is only a few days after Mrs. Clover's rejection of Gammon's suit for Minnie that Minnie "glimmered very far away, at a height above him; he had made a mistake and frankly recognized it."[37] Gammon knows that "Minnie was not for him" and turns his attention to Polly.[38] "Well and good, he would find somebody else. Polly Sparkes?"[39]

Polly is a more realistic choice for Gammon. They are much alike: hot-tempered, clever, sensual, and highly independent. But Gammon's irrepressible

good humor and genuine kindness are in sharp contrast to Polly's terrible disposition and egomania; her appeal is well-defined, but her limitations are obvious to everyone except those under the spell of her "highly-coloured attractions."[40] Polly proves to be another mistake, one from which Gammon barely extricates himself. For a while he is worried.

> A change had come about in his emotions. He was afraid of Polly, he was weary of Polly, he heartily wished he had never seen Polly's face. For self-scrutiny Gammon had little inclination and less aptitude; he could not have explained the origin and progress of his nearer relations with Miss Sparkes. Going straight to the point, like a man of business, he merely knew that he had made a condemnable mistake, and the question was how to put things right.[41]

But put things right he does, and through the magic of the comic novel, he is able to do so without losing his good humor, sacrificing Polly's friendship, or compromising his honor (very much). Gammon's escape from Polly and eventual happiness may represent a form of wishful thinking for Gissing. Perhaps Gammon himself is a kind of wish fulfillment for Gissing. The two are such opposite personalities that they are almost mirror images.

> At forty years of age Gammon set off about his business with all the zest of a healthy boy. The knowledge he had gained, all practical, and, so to speak, for external application, could never become the burden of the philosopher; if he had any wisdom at all it consisted in the lack of self-consciousness, the animal acceptance of whatever good the hour might bring.[42]

Gammon "had in perfection the art of living for the moment."[43] The first few lines of *The Town Traveller* establish him as a cheerful, energetic, and immensely masculine person. His very breakfast order conveys the presence of a man with large but not indiscriminate appetites: "Two eggs, Moggie, and three rashers, toasted crisp – understand?"[44] Gammon has varied interests, manifested by the order for three newspapers. And he has immense good humor, which Gissing emphasized continually in *The Town Traveller.* He is virile, strong, and ever generous. He is good at his job, and above all, he displays a consistent ability to cope, one of the classic characteristics of a comic hero. Gammon was clever and resourceful and he has enough self-confidence to take on Greenacre's lowly job for a day "not troubled by any sense of indignity."[45] In fact, he throws himself into the work with "unfailing humour and a vast variety of experience."[46] He is a salesman's salesman who conducts the "business of the moment with conscientious gusto."[47]

Gammon, whose very name is related to the word "game," has the comic character's ability to see life as a huge joke. He reacts to the manic scene in which he breaks down Polly's door and carries her bodily down

the stairs with a hearty blast of laughter at her, at the situation, and at himself. "As he jumped into bed the events of the evening all at once struck him in such a comical light that he uttered a great guffaw, and for the next ten minutes he lay under the bedclothes shaking with laughter."[48] One cannot imagine the sensitive and intellectual Gissing emerging from such a rowdy, physical encounter able to see the humor in it, but one can imagine him wishing he could. Gissing has given the protagonist of *The Town Traveller* the gift of free and open laughter. Another gift to Gammon is the capacity to love London (which is proof he is not tired of life). Gissing hated London, and indeed, most of his fiction conveys a genuine distaste for urban ambiance. His "pseudo-autobiographical" *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* would convince the reader that he longed for a pastoral existence. Certainly the classical world which he knew and revered flourished, at least in his imagination, in a rural setting. Nevertheless, one of the few things Edith and Gissing agreed upon was the need to live in London. *The Town Traveller* incorporates his positive feelings about the metropole in a splendid passage. Gammon takes a bus ride through London, the same city of *New Grub Street, Demos, The Unclassed,* and *The Nether World,* but viewed with a contented, laughing, optimistic eye.

> In the height of the London season nothing pleased Gammon more than to survey the streets from an omnibus. Being just now a man of leisure he freely indulged himself, spending an hour or two each day in the liveliest thoroughfares. It was a sure way of forgetting his cares. Sometimes he took a box place and chatted with the driver, or he made acquaintances, male and female, on the cosy cross seats just broad enough for two. The London panorama under a sky of June [the month Gissing was writing *The Town Traveller*] feasted his laughing eyes. Now he would wave a hand to a friend on the pavement or borne past on another 'bus; now he would chuckle at a bit of comedy in real life. Huge hotels and brilliant shops vividly impressed him, though he saw them for the thousandth time; a new device in advertising won his ungrudging admiration.[49]

I have quoted the paragraph at length and wish to point out that it continues in a similar vein for almost as long to demonstrate just how much of an anomaly *The Town Traveller* is. The light-hearted style of the novel totally reverses many traditional Gissing themes. Gammon is the antithesis of the typical Gissing hero. In a letter to Morley Roberts of 10 February 1895, Gissing wrote, "The most characteristic, the most important, part of my work is that which deals with a class of young men distinctive of our time – well-educated, fairly bred, *but without money*."[50] In *The Town Traveller,* the closest anyone comes to this description is Christopher Parish – and he is not

very close. Christopher Parish's primary function is to love Polly blindly, and without any reservations. But just when she condescends to accept him, he is beginning to think he is falling out of love. Gissing deals with this sort of irony in several of the serious novels, but the Christopher situation is humorous! He is not exactly a Christ figure, but he is certainly sacrificed, for by marrying Polly he frees the town traveller to travel on.

The characterization of Gammon is only one of the many departures from standard Gissing fare. His usual motifs are present, but cheerfully and comically sketched. For example, the ever-present respiratory ailments which plague Edwin Reardon and finally resolve the plot of *New Grub Street* (and which also afflicted Gissing and caused his death) are also instrumental in the development of *The Town Traveller*. Lord Polperro, suffering from a racking cough, complains: "Always have a cold."[51] In an attempt to relieve his misery, he frequently drinks brandy. "I don't offer you any, Greenacre, it's medicine; I take it as such. One doesn't offer one's friends a glass of medicine, you know, Greenacre" (he is addressing Gammon, but Lord Polperro frequently confuses Gammon and Greenacre).[52]

At first Gammon has difficulty distinguishing between Lord Polperro's illness and his inebriation, but as his lordship's servant is neither surprised nor distressed to see him in such an unstable condition, Gammon assumes that the condition is a common one. Eventually Polperro's drunkenness reaches such proportions that he insists that Gammon take him on the town. It is New Year's Eve, and a rowdy crowd is beginning to moil with the usual New Year's Eve madness outside St. Paul's. Although Polperro is pathetic in his eagerness to partake of the festivities, the reader cannot help but smile at his innocence: "Let's go into the crowd, Gammon. I like a crowd. What are those bells ringing for? Yes, yes, of course, I remember – New Year's Eve. I had no idea that people came here to see the New Year in. I shall come again. I shall come every year; it's most enjoyable."[53]

There are crowd scenes in almost all Gissing's urban novels, but they are frighteningly grotesque representations of human nature at its worst. This one, even though there is an ugly brawl, and Gammon cannot prevent Lord Polperro from being fatally injured, is in a wildly comic vein: "Lord Polperro did not resent the tugs at his arm; he took it for genial horseplay, and only shouted louder. 'On we go! This makes one feel alive, eh? Splendid idea to come and see this. Hollo—o—o!'"[54] Someone squirts liquid in Polperro's ear and his hat is knocked off, tossed about, and finally sent skyward, but when Gammon comes and tries to extricate him from the crowd, Polperro protests,

"I'm all right! Leave me alone, can't you! How often have I a damned chance of enjoying myself?"[55] At length Gammon and Polperro are involved in a full-fledged brawl; a drunken woman strikes Polperro, whereupon "she raised a shriek as if of pain and terror."[56] Someone comes "to her defence" and the violence intensifies.[57] Once again the reader admires Gammon, for he "would not desert his friend, and was too plucky to see him ill-used without reprisals. The rough's blows were answered with no less vigour by the man of commerce."[58] Despite Gammon's efforts, Polperro, fighting with more spirit than effectiveness, cries, "Let him come on! Let him come on like a man! Take that, you ruffian, and that!"[59] Gammon sees that the seriously wounded Polperro gets to a hospital and he returns home, only to be confronted by a drunk and angry Greenacre. As Gammon engages in a minor skirmish with Greenacre and ejects him from the boarding house, the reader recognizes another standard Gissing theme – the boarding house. But once again, it is in a comic vein.

> A rush, a scuffling, a crash somewhere which shook the house. The disturbed lodger flung open his door and shouted objurgations. From below sounded the shrill alarm of Mrs. Bubb, from elsewhere the anxious outcries of Mrs. Cheeseman and her husband.
>
> Amid all this Greenacre and his quondam friend somehow reached the foot of the stairs, where the darkness that enveloped their struggle was all at once dispersed by a candle in the hand of Mrs. Bubb.
>
> "Don't alarm yourself," shouted Gammon cheerily, "I'm only kicking this fellow out. No one hurt."[60]

When Gammon finally gets to bed, he "laughed a good deal as he undressed, and was asleep five minutes afterwards."[61]

Despite Gammon's ability to cope with almost all contingencies, he yearns for domestic tranquillity. The search for a woman and a home is one of Gissing's favorite themes. Although this search was hardly grounds for humor in Gissing's own life, and although the harsh realities of romantic discord and marital cacophony are loudly sounded in most of his novels, Gammon's quest in *The Town Traveller* is as comic as only one who has known the tragedy of it could relate it. He is so ripe for matrimony that he is briefly blind to Polly's actual personality, choosing instead to invest her with the qualities he desires to see: "As she bent her head and wrote, something in the attitude – perhaps a suggestion of domesticity – appealed to his emotions, which were ready for such a juncture as this."[62] If Gammon's courtship of Minnie reminds one of a bull in a china shop, his seduction of Polly recalls the image of the wild bull of the pampas. "Excitement tingled in him – the kind of excitement which might lead either to rage or caresses. He swayed

now on one foot, now on the other, as if preparing for a dance, and his fists were clenched upon his hips."[63] His brief plan to marry Minnie manifests itself as man's desire for the chaste and unattainable virgin; his equally brief plan to wed Polly demonstrates the need to invest sexual desire with emotional splendor. Gammon is initially amused by Polly, and if acutely aware of her charms, he also recognizes her flaws; but when his friendship with her is lit by lust, he, confused and caught by his strong need for a wife, interprets his rather complicated emotions as Romantic love.

The sexual attraction between Gammon and Polly is present from the opening pages of *The Town Traveller* and is dramatized in the hilarious scene in which he breaks down her door and half drags, half carries her down a flight of stairs. Gammon is no robust Dickens hero, and he barely manages to overcome her energetic struggles. "But that Polly was slightly made, a man of Gammon's physique would have found it impossible to carry her down the stairs; as it was he soon began puffing and groaning."[64] But the "man of commerce" is not deterred and eventually deposits Polly in the parlour.[65] The scene combines subtle and humorous character development with the manic action of slapstick. It also conveys the erotic quality that is the main feature of Gammon's and Polly's relationship until he persuades himself that the strong feelings she arouses in him are quite romantic.

For example, one evening as Gammon waits for Polly to get out of work, and as alcohol begins to soften the sharp edges of reality, he contemplates her as a "dear, affectionate girl," and while he sips his hot whiskey he watches the singer

> [a] damsel sparingly clad, was singing in the serio-comic vein […] Gammon felt his heart glow within him. The melody was lulling; it had a refrain of delicious sentiment. The listener's eyes grew moist; there rose a lump in his throat. Dear Polly! Lovely Polly! Would he not cherish her to the day of his death? How could he have fancied that he loved anyone else? Darling Polly!
>
> When the singer withdrew he clapped violently, and thereupon called for another Scotch hot, with lemon.[66]

Comic as it is, love softens Gammon's generous heart further, and on leaving the music hall, he lends a "gloomy friend" a "coin of substantial value," and anticipates meeting Polly with joy in his heart.[67] "When he went forth into the cold street never was man more softly amorous, more mirthfully exultant, more kindly disposed to all the dwellers upon earth. Life abounds in such forms of happiness, yet we are told it is a sad and sorry affair!"[68]

Reader, he does not marry her. The pragmatic Gammon is far too sensible to live a life of servitude to the ill-tempered Polly Sparkes. But the apparent

sarcasm in the above quotation is puzzlingly ambiguous. Although neither the narrator nor the reader is under any illusions about the nature of Gammon's Grand Passion, the narrator, perhaps in spite of himself, conveys respect for the intensity of the emotion and its happy effect on human nature. Finally Gammon realizes that Mrs. Clover is the wife for him. "He found himself constantly occupied with the image of Mrs. Clover […] he could hardly believe his former wish to call her mother-in-law."[69] This kind of decision is common for a Gissing character; one of his biographers writes: "Above all – the greatest achievement for any protagonist in a Gissing novel [is when] – he decides that his former conception of the ideal woman was altogether false, and that simple and kind companionship is the best relationship that he has any hope of establishing."[70]

Mrs. Clover (*who* can resist the inference that Gammon will soon be in clover?) is the most subtly drawn character in the novel, but she demonstrates Gissing's comic genius less successfully. Gissing is able to write with fine high humor about urban life, business, drunkenness, deceit, and death in *The Town Traveller*, and he even shapes the dramatic relationships of sex, courtship, love, and marriage in the comic mode, but he is unable to treat the subject of class distinctions with any degree of levity. Gissing obviously likes Mrs. Clover, but he is capable of such lines as these: "Mrs. Clover made the movement which in women of her breeding signifies a formal bow – hopelessly awkward, rigid, and self-conscious – and walked rapidly away," and when describing a speech affectation of hers, he writes, "Few women of her class are prone to this kind of emphasis."[71] Mrs. Clover is an anomaly in the middle class, and what she loses as a comic figure she gains as a round one.

The encounters between Gammon and Mrs. Clover are marked by conviviality, mutual respect, and serenity; they are genuinely concerned for each other's welfare; they are friends. Mrs. Clover may be Gissing's as well as Gammon's idea of a perfect wife. "One puts into literary form hopes which are not very likely to be realized."[72] Mrs. Clover is "comely," and has a good sense of humor, and, significant in Victorian England, handles employees effectively.[73] She scolds a young assistant, but "[h]er rating had no malice in it, and only signified that she could not endure laziness."[74] Mrs. Clover is kind, has a good disposition, and manages to be both quiet and merry. Perhaps her greatest asset is her freedom from excesses of any kind. She calls on Mrs. Bubb, knocking with a touch that is "self-respecting, and such as did credit to the house, but with no suggestion of arrogance" and

"[i]n her attire Mrs. Clover preserved the same happy medium as in her way of plying the knocker; it was sufficiently elaborate to show consideration for her hostess, yet not so grand as to overwhelm by contrast."[75] Mrs. Clover is refined without being overbred. Her class origins assure Gammon that she is attainable, and somehow imply her physicality, although her attitudes convey innate refinement. Gammon must contain his blatant sensuality around Mrs. Clover, who also discourages his drinking, telling him not to visit her china shop after his visits to his "bow-wows."[76] Gammon's visits to his kennel are always accompanied by a holiday atmosphere, festive drinking, and easy sensuality. When Polly finally agrees to accompany him on one of his visits to see his dogs, Gammon rightfully interprets this as a relaxation of her restraint. While courting Mrs. Clover, Gammon sells his "bow-wows." In addition to all her other virtues, Mrs. Clover, like many Gissing women, is self-supporting. In spite of her financial independence, she accepts Gammon into her heart and life as warmly as she welcomes him into her parlor – and even her parlor is a perfect example of both "comfort and elegance."[77]

Gammon pursues his suit on frequent visits to this parlor as "[w]inter brightened into spring, spring bloomed into summer."[78] Although his proposal to Mrs. Clover is funny, Gissing conveys the sweetness of being in love with sudden intensity. Gammon's view from his window is "realistic" before Mrs. Clover accepts him; it is complete with "lank fowls […] discarded furniture and indescribable rubbish or children […] played and squabbled under the drooping soot," but after he becomes engaged, the same scene is quite different.[79] When, as he rose next morning, he looked out on to the strips of back-yard and the towering tenements, they had lost all their ugliness. And he is so distracted while recalling Mrs. Clover's "merry little laugh" that he gashes himself with his razor.[80] The reader feels optimistic about the impending marriage, for Mrs. Clover is not idealized. Though an extremely agreeable person, she is not perfect. She knows full well how to elicit the proposal from Gammon – she has felt more than friendship for him for quite a while. Furthermore, she is wise enough to have Gammon leave her house before Minnie, who is also conveniently engaged, returns. Mrs. Clover realizes that Gammon will always feel the lure of the unattainable and the temptation of the purely physical as well. She is realistic about his weaknesses, and indeed, will need to be. The conclusion of the novel finds Gammon planning to send Polly a "handsome present," ostensibly to make the happy union with Mrs. Clover possible, but there is just a hint he will

never become completely cool to the appeal of his former fiancée.[81] Gammon, like all comic characters, remains the victim of his humanity.

The Town Traveller is infused with an understanding acceptance of human nature that is somewhat lacking in most of Gissing's other novels. The characters in the novel are as realistically drawn and their frailties are as keenly observed as those of the characters in Gissing's grim and pessimistic novels. But Gammon and his fellow travellers are fleshed out with – if not love, love's manifestation – understanding, sympathy, and vast good humor.

Bibliography

Dorothy Brewster and Angus Burnell, "George Gissing, Release Through Fiction," in *Adventure or Experience; Four Essays on Certain Writers and Readers of Novels* (New York: Columbia UP, 1934), pp. 18-39.

A. O. J. Cockshut, "The Pessimists," in *Man and Woman: Love and the Novel 1740-1940* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977), pp. 100-135.

Pierre Coustillas, ed., *Collected Articles on George Gissing* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967).

ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978).

Mabel Donnelly, *George Gissing: Grave Comedian* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1954).

Lloyd Fernando, "Gissing's Studies in 'Vulgarism': Aspects of His Anti-Feminism," in *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, ed. J. P. Michaux. London and Totowa, N.J: Vision Press and Barnes & Noble, 1981.

'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel (University Park: Penn State UP, 1977).

George Gissing. Letter to Morley Roberts. 10 February 1895. From Julian Symons, "Review of *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*," *New York Review*, 3 May 1979, p. 20.

— *New Grub Street* (New York: Dutton, n.d., [1929]).

— *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (New York: Dutton, 1903).

— *The Town Traveller* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981).

Jacob Korg, *George Gissing, A Critical Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963).

"George Gissing," in *Victorian Fiction: a Second Guide to Research*, ed. George H. Ford. New York: Modern Language Association, 1978.

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five, 1892-1895* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1994).

Jo McMurty, *Victorian Life and Victorian Fiction: A Companion for the American Reader* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1979).

Herbert J. Muller, "Naturalism in England: Gissing, Moore," in *Modern Fiction: A Study of Values* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1937), pp. 184-198.

Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912).

"Introduction," in George Gissing, *Thyrza* (Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1927).

Gillian Tindall, *George Gissing: The Born Exile* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

Virginia Woolf, "George Gissing," *Nation and Athenaeum*, Vol. 60, 26 February 1927, pp. 722-723.

[1] Thomas Carlyle, "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter," *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. xlvi (June 1827), p. 176.

[2] *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, p. 109.

[3] *Thyrza*, p. viii.

[4] Donnelly, p. 187.

[5] *Diary*, p. 350; [6] *Ibid*., p. 432; [7] *Ibid*., p. 433; [8] Diary entry of 2 June 1897, *ibid*., p. 435; [9-10] *Ibid*., p. 434; [11-12] *Ibid*., p. 435; [13] *Ibid*., p. 436; [14-15] *Ibid*., p. 437.

[16] *The Town Traveller*, p. 7; [17] *Ibid*., p. 8; [18] *Ibid*., p. 28.

[19] *The Collected Articles*, p. viii. But as Jacob Korg writes, "Gissing felt he had no real chance of marrying a woman of a higher class," *George Gissing, A Critical Biography*, p. 151. According to Morley Roberts, Gissing's ambitions for a wife declined even further: "There were sadder later days when […] he fell back upon the mere haus frau [*sic*], one who would cook and do her business with some reasonable adequacy, without 'uproar,'" *Thyrza*, p. vi.

[20] *The Town Traveller*, p. 4;[21] *Ibid*., pp. 5, 10; [22] *Ibid*., p. 10; [23] *Ibid*., pp. 28-29; [24] *Ibid*., p. 61; [25] *Ibid*., p. 52; [26] *Ibid*., p. 25; [27] *Ibid*., p. 89; [28] *Ibid*., p. 68; [29] *Ibid*., p. 33; [30] *Ibid*., p. 199; [31] *Ibid*., p. 187; [32] *Ibid*., p. 190; [33] *Ibid*., p. 130.

[34] *Diary*, p. 23.

[35] *The Town Traveller*, p. 22; [36] *Ibid*., p. 26; [37] *Ibid*., p. 127; [38-40] *Ibid*., p. 165; [41] *Ibid*., p. 275; [42] *Ibid*., p. 126; [43] *Ibid*., p. 16; [44] *Ibid*., p. 1; [45 -47] *Ibid*., p. 43; [48] *Ibid*., p. 109; [49] *Ibid*., pp. 79-80.

[50] *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five, 1892-1895*, p. 296.

[51] *The Town Traveller*, p. 224; [52] *Ibid*., p. 226; [53] *Ibid*., p. 251; [54] *Ibid*., p. 252; [55] *Ibid*., p. 253; [56-59] *Ibid*., p. 254; [60] *Ibid*., pp. 260-261; [61] *Ibid*., p. 261; [62] *Ibid*., p. 183; [63] *Ibid*., p. 184; [64] *Ibid*., p. 104; [65] *Ibid*., p. 266; [66] *Ibid*., p. 205; [67-68] *Ibid*., p. 206; [69] *Ibid*., p. 278.

[70] Donnelly, p. 188.

[71] *The Town Traveller*, pp. 107, 18.

[72] Tindall, p. 7.

[73] In Victorian England, technology had advanced just far enough to make various domestic comforts possible, but not far enough to make them very likely by the efforts of one housewife. Gissing writes in one of his many diary references about the difficulty of dealing with household help: "Monday. Feb. 1. Damp. Got to work at "Polly", and wrote nearly 2 pp. Of course the beastly mother of our servant chose this very time to come and say she wants the girl to leave – for a marvel she has been here 10 months. By offer of increased wages, seem to have got over the difficulty. A joke, rather, that I, in my position, should stand trembling for the decision of the gutter-child of fifteen years old!" *Diary*, p. 434.

[74] *The Town Traveller*, p.19; [75] *Ibid*., p. 90; [76] *Ibid*., p. 120; [77] *Ibid*., p. 312; [78] *Ibid*., p. 310; [79] *Ibid*., p. 311; [80-81] *Ibid*., p. 313.

Gissing and Naples

VINCENZO PEPE
Nocera Inferiore,
Italy

Unlike the plethora of travellers and ramblers for whom the South of Italy was but a geographical expression, or at the most a route prescribed or recommended by Baedeker and travel books, for Gissing it was always a sort of dreamland, the place where time and eternity, myth and history, memories and desires coexisted indissolubly. In his imagination the South was just another word for classic heritage, for Greek and Latin, the languages and literatures that had laid the foundations of Western civilisation, and that exerted on him a palingenetic effect, since they evoked a world of beauty, or renewed and potentiated his perception of beauty:

> Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans is my land of romance; a quotation in either language thrills me strangely, and there are passages of Greek and Latin verse which I cannot read without a dimming of the eyes, which I cannot repeat aloud because my voice fails me. In Magna Graecia the waters of two fountains mingle and flow together; how exquisite will be the draught![1]

Gissing's yearning for "the exquisite [...] draught" was but a late-Victorian epigone of the same Romantic longing which had increased Keats's thirst for "a beaker full of the warm South," or Goethe's tormenting "desire for Italy." Not by chance, references to Goethe's love for Italy, and for Greek and Latin, occur in one of the most famous passages in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*:

> In his *Italienische Reise*, Goethe tells that at one moment of his life the desire for Italy became to him a scarce endurable suffering; at length he could not bear to hear or to read of things Italian, even the sight of a Latin book so tortured him that he turned away from it; and the day arrived when, in spite of every obstacle, he yielded to the sickness of longing, and in secret stole away southward. When first I read that passage, it represented exactly the state of my own mind; to think of Italy was to feel myself goaded by a longing which, at turns, made me literally ill; I, too, had put aside my Latin books, simply because I could not endure the torment of imagination they caused me.[2]

In Gissing's love for the South there was something religious, so intense and exclusive that led Morley Roberts to say that this region of Italy "was always [for Gissing] his Mecca, the Kibleh of the universe," so much so

that "in some previous incarnation [...] he must have been an Italian writer of the South he loved so well."[3]

Within this spiritual geography Naples held one of the central places, if not the central place. Meaningfully, the above passage ends with a reference to this town seen as a destination towards which he feels to be bound urged by an almost metaphysical necessity: "Then came into my hands a sum of money […] for a book I had written. It was early autumn. I chanced to hear some one speak of Naples—and only death would have held me back."[4]

But how did Naples affect the novelist's sensibility? I do believe that if we want to answer this question we must start from his diary entry dated 19 October 1888, whose tenor seems to me to be strictly in keeping with his above quoted "intellectual desire […] to escape life as it is." In this entry, in fact, the novelist stresses his refusal, or "dislike for everything that concerns the life of the people."[5] On crossing the Channel, he feels he has "become a poet pure and simple, or perhaps it would be better to say an idealist student of art" (p. 54). What these words imply is clear when we take into consideration the fact that "pure and simple," the adjectives, with which he has just connoted his new literary ideology, are thereafter used, this time in a derogatory sense, to characterise Ernst Plitt, a fellow traveller he had met some time before. Even if Plitt was a German linguist and amateur artist, he seemed to embody all the negative features of modern tourists. Gissing, in fact, is struck by his "mania of stopping before every paltry shop where very cheap articles of clothing and the like, are exposed," and by the incredible number of things he "admires in the way of designs on adverts etc. […] the paltriest scrawl on a soap-box delights him" (p. 54). But if the writer feels he must get rid of him, it is not so much because his companion's bad tastes and vulgarity threaten to spoil the pleasure of his Italian stay, but because they seem to remind him of what he wants to forget, of a reality he wants to leave behind. The bad tastes and the vulgarity of the "artisan, the mechanic, pure and simple," that "[h]e is," endanger the new aesthetic awareness which now motivates the "poet pure and simple, or perhaps it would be better to say an idealist student of art," the artist determined to fly high over crude and mechanic reality (p. 54).

In my opinion, the diary entries relative to the Neapolitan stay do signal this new literary and existential attitude. Meaningful in this sense seems to me what Gissing jots down about the landing operations at Naples on 30 October 1888. He finds himself amid the bedlam of a roaring crowd of travellers and boatmen and porters, all shouting and struggling. The noise is

deafening, and the confusion around him seems to complicate the "terrible job to keep an eye on" the luggage (p. 60). But all of a sudden he is distracted by the play of colours of the setting sun, which highlights the red of "the sails in the harbour," and "glorious […] Vesuvius" in the distance (p. 60). The reference to Vesuvius gives us the opportunity for some more considerations on the working of this new literary attitude. In these entries the volcano is never seen as a decorative detail. Whether looming in the background, or rising in the foreground, its presence seems to share the mythical, almost metaphysical, dimension in which the writer inscribes his journey to the South, and in particular Naples. The spell of the mountain is felt from afar, the moment the writer catches the first glimpse of the Neapolitan shoreline from the ship. In his diary entry for 30 October, he interprets both the direction and colour of the smoke rising from the volcano as an omen of fine weather. On the following day the volcano is still in front of the writer, who faces it from Vico Brancaccio, but the perspective is changed of course, and along with it the overall chromatic effect of the whole picture. This time it is "the early sun" which "tint[s]" the smoke, as Gissing does not fail to inform his brother Algernon: "Vesuvius in front of my window as I write,– the usual smoke issuing, splendidly tinted by the early sun."[6]

In the 10 November entry, instead the scene is that of a breezy afternoon, so beautiful and so typically Neapolitan. As the reader will note, the writer's perceptivity, always on the alert, is here particularly responsive to the play of perspectives and colours, from the red-brown of Somma, to the deep black of the cone, and again to the white of the smoke, which, with its reference to "a great train of snow" introduces into the scene a delicate touch of melancholy:

> In the afternoon a marvellous view of Vesuvius and all the Sorrento promontory. The east wind seemed to have cleared the air in that direction; the mountains were indescribably near, so that they looked much smaller than usual. Somma, with its cut, jagged ridge, was of red-brown colour, up to the top. Vesuvius had its deep black cone. But strangest of all was the way in which the wind blew the smoke; it *lay* all down the side of the mountain, to Torre del Greco, perfectly white in colour, almost like a great train of snow, and only at the bottom broke away into flying mist. (p. 67)

A final, and slightly disquieting, allusion to the mist which this time is "ghostly" concludes also the earlier entry of 5 November, which describes Vesuvius at twilight: "Fine sunset. Vesuvius crowned with enormous clouds of glorious colour. Ten minutes after sunset, these clouds had dispersed, the peak was clear, and below it wreathed a ghostly grey mist" (p. 64).

The magnetic lure of Vesuvius is by no means connected with daylight, since the fire from the volcano makes the looming presence of the mountain

even more impressive at night-time, as documented by the entry of 2 November: "Last night my first view of the fire of Vesuvius. […] The fire was like a red leaping beacon, very small, without reflex on the smoke" (p. 61); and by the following passage from a letter to Ellen of 9 November:

> The first two nights that I was here, Vesuvius was enveloped in clouds; the third night I looked in that direction, & there I saw a light like that of a great red bonfire up in the sky,—very strange & impressive. The mountain has two summits,—the lower called Somma. Its slopes are one vast garden, the richest region of the world, wonderful to look at from a height, so infinite does the space seem, so indescribable are the colours.[7]

If we reflect on these last few words, it is difficult to exclude that Gissing might be here connoting Vesuvius having in mind some of the requisites traditionally and canonically ascribed to the idea of the sublime: the landscape admired from "a height" conveys a sense of infinity ("so infinite does the space seem") and of ineffability ("so indescribable are the colours"). But this does not mean that he is here utilising a literary *topos*. The fact that his diary entries are interspersed with sketches and drawings of the volcano from different points of view (from the Vomero hill, from the sea, from the Sorrento promontory) clearly shows that his sense of the ineffable beauty of the mountain is sincere, and that he may be trying to reinforce the communicative effectiveness of his words through the use of images.

It is not only the stunning beauty of the natural landscape which alerts Gissing's sensitivity in Naples, because the writer seems to endow even apparently insignificant details of the human context with aesthetic relevance. In his entry for 3 November, for instance, his curiosity is attracted by the "splendid red patches on the walls," made by clusters of tomatoes and sorb-apples hung round nearly all the upper windows of the houses (p. 63). "Sometimes[,]" he adds, "melons […] are also seen. These things add to the singular and lively effect produced by the painting of the houses all colours"; and concludes: "The general tone, I think, is a dark yellow; there are often blue stripes" (p. 63). In his letter to his sister Ellen dated 9 November, the writer insists on the detail of the colour of the houses, but this time while his retina is trying to capture the polychromy of houses and fruit, his ears do not miss the nice noise in the background:

> The colours of the houses. Those which prevail are white, salmon-colour & bright yellow. Everywhere flat roofs, often converted into gardens. Round the doors is often a border of bright blue. […]
>
> The amount of fruit every where. I buy *white grapes at one penny a pound*—, figs at about the same rate,—3 new lemons (green inside & out) for a penny,—tomatoes for almost nothing. […] Everywhere oranges are ripening.

> The multitude of donkeys & mules, but especially of donkeys. *Never* is the sound of a donkey's braying out of your ears. […] Donkeys & mules & horses all have extraordinary harness, a pile of glistening & jingling metal, surmounted with a thing like a weathercock.[8]

Nor is it just the metropolis which enhances the writer's responsiveness, because some of the most effective synaesthesias are noted down during his visits to the Naples environs. Let's read, for example, what he writes about Pozzuoli on 3 November:

> Glorious little town Pozzuoli, richly Italian, full of colour. Remember the little square, with fountain and two statues, the delightful little port (best of all) and the little public garden, with its streets, where I sat and smoked a pipe, and looked at the ships, and over towards Baja. One of the soft Italian organs played the while. I felt happy, and more than happy. (p. 62)

Or the impressions he jotted down at Paestum. In this ancient town he is standing in the middle of the temple of Neptune, and glances "towards both ends. At the one, a very narrow strip of the bluest possible sea,- only that; the other way, a splendid valley, rising upwards on the mountains;- both these seen between the grand Doric columns" (p. 75). But just while his eyes are following the play of ineffable colours and tints made by the westering sun on clouds, mountains and crags, his ears catch "the peculiar wailing song" uttered by a carter going by (p. 75). The synaesthesia is interiorised, but, as we know, the emotion connected with it will be relived many years after by his *alter ego* Henry Ryecroft in the context of the English countryside:

> I was at ramble in the lanes, when, from somewhere at a distance, there sounded the voice of a countryman—strange to say—singing. The notes were indistinct, but they rose, to my ear, with a moment's musical sadness, and of a sudden my heart was stricken with a memory so keen that I knew not whether it was pain or delight. For the sound seemed to me that of a peasant's song which I once heard whilst sitting among the ruins of Paestum. The English landscape faded before my eyes. I saw great Doric columns of honey-golden travertine; between them, as I looked one way, a deep strip of sea; when I turned, the purple gorges of the Apennine; and all about the temple, where I sat in solitude, a wilderness dead and still but for that long note of wailing melody.[9]

In my opinion, the passage just quoted is important for two reasons mainly. On the one hand it allows us to isolate what from now until his death will be a constant in Gissing's life; on the other hand it enables us to specify another corollary of his new aesthetic credo. More and more often in his diaries, in fact, that wailing song, or the languid sound of street organs, will be connected with his memory of Naples, and the connection is so close that it is sufficient to recall the former in order for him to evoke the latter. The peasant's song, or the music of the street organ catalyse a sort of regression

to a primordial, pure, and innocent state of his conscience, which enables the artist to relive "the imaginative delight of [his] boyhood."[10] It is clear, therefore, why, according to Morley Roberts, Neapolitan music appealed to Gissing like a Greek chorus: like a Greek chorus that music and that archaic wailing song attain to the height and to the perfection of the Idea. Not by chance is the emotion connected with the memory of the peasant's song at Paestum indistinct, a synthesis of opposites, of joy and pain, an absolute. And not by chance does the reality evoked through that memory have no cultural or geographical specificity: "the English landscape faded before my eyes."
The journey South, and to Naples chiefly, enabled Gissing to fulfill the ideal of all great artists: the contemplation of absolute beauty. This concept is well expressed in *New Grub Street*, the novel which focuses on the problem of the writer's role in industrial and mass society. "The best moments of life," says the protagonist, "are those when we contemplate beauty in the purely artistic spirit—objectively. I have had such moments in Greece and Italy; times when I was a free spirit."[11]

The journey is an aesthetic route of purification and liberation, then. Even if the route starts with senses, and thanks to Gissing's aesthetic contemplation aims at freeing him from senses and prejudices. This explains why classic culture and the South had on his sensibility the palingenetic effect we mentioned above. It is not by chance that once back in England, he started writing *The Emancipated*, the novel which focuses on the stages through which a puritanical English woman becomes "emancipated," that is, becomes aware of her own cultural and religious prejudices and conditionings, and gives herself to life and love. Nor is it by chance that the "emancipation" process starts and takes place in Naples, thanks to the beauty of its natural landscapes, and to the simplicity and spontaneity of its people. Meaningfully the characters in this novel follow the same itineraries as had enchanted their author. Pompeii, Vesuvius, Amalfi, Pozzuoli, Paestum leave the pages of the diary and enter into the novel, to create life and meaning, and to dialectise feelings, emotions, pulsions. Here is, for example, the effect the scenario of Capri seen from Naples has on the main character:

> She went to the window and looked over towards Capri. A slight mist softened its outlines this morning; it seemed very far away, on the dim borders of sea and sky. For a long time she had felt the luring charm of that island, always before her eyes, yet never more than a blue mountainous shape. Lately she had been reading of it, and her fancy, new to such picturings, was possessed by the mysterious dread of its history in old time, the grandeur of its cliffs, the loveliness of its green hollows, and

> the wonder of its sea-caves. Her childhood had known nothing of fairyland, and now, in this tardy awakening of the imaginative part of her nature, she thought sometimes of Capri much as a child is wont to think of the enchanted countries, nameless, regionless, in books of fable.[12]

And here is a composite scenario which includes Naples and Capri:

> From the hotel garden opened a clear prospect towards Naples, which lay as a long track of lights beyond the expanse of deep blue. The coast was distinctly outlined; against the far sky glowed intermittently the fire of Vesuvius. Above the trees of the garden shone white crags, unsubstantial, unearthly in the divine moonlight. There was no sound, yet to intense listening the air became full of sea-music. It was the night of Homer, the island-charm of the Odyssey.[13]

As is well known, it was thanks to the money earned from *The Emancipated* that Gissing was able to leave for the Mediterranean shores again that year. On 20 December 1889 he arrived in Naples, in the state of mind that can be easily imagined from the following note in a letter to his sisters the next day: "Ha, ha! Sunlight & warmth & uproar & palm-trees & wine & fruit,— Napoli! Napoli! How glorious it is to be here!"[14]

This enthusiasm never failed him, not even in front of the transformations that Naples' identity seemed to have undergone during his absence: the changes in the urban structure due to the *Risanamento*, and the disappearance of street organs and public scriveners.[15] While in Naples he was eager to study all aspects of the town: its history, its literature, its music; bought books and records and even a "vocabulary of the Neapolitan dialect" (p. 194). He was so curious to know and understand the Neapolitan way of life that nothing of its phenomenology was missed, as we can see, for instance, from his diary entry of 28 December, where he gives the names of typical Christmas Neapolitan dishes in Italian, without even translating them, and describes one of the theatrical performances traditionally connected with the celebrations of the "feast of the Christmas Vigil" (p. 196). All through his diary there are notes on shops, restaurants, districts, streets, recipes, food, people, museums, so that the reader is left with the impression that the writer may be trying to store up as many things as possible for future use.

As we know just under eight years later Gissing returned to Naples, if just for a few days, the time necessary to see some acquaintances and to have his will executed by the consul, before setting off for "Magna Graecia." Many tried to dissuade him, reminding him of the risks to which he was exposing his health and his safety, but his dreams and desire were stronger than any deterrent, and so on 16 November 1897 he set forth to "wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, to-day and all its sounds forgotten."[16]

[1] *By the Ionian Sea, Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas. Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Books, 2004, p. 5.

[2] George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (London: Echo Library, 2007), p. 73.

[3] Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912), pp. 104, 160.

[4] *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, p. 73.

[5] Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England. The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 54. Further page numbers for quotations from the *Diary* will be given in the text.

[6] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Three, 1886-1888* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1992), p. 283.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 287.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 286.

[9] *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, p. 73.

[10] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 5.

[11] George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, ed. by Katherine Mullins. Oxford: OUP, 2016, p. 327.

[12] George Gissing, *The Emancipated*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1977, pp. 211-212.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 216.

[14] Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Four, 1889-1891* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1993), p. 174.

[15] *Risanamento* (literally: making healthy again) was the name given to the large-scale replanning of Italian cities following unification in 1871.

[16] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 131.

***

The Dickens Fellowship of Japan Annual General Meeting: "Dickens and Gissing"

MITSUHARU MATSUOKA
Nagoya University

The Dickens Fellowship of Japan held their 2017 Annual General Meeting at the University of Tokyo on Saturday, 7 October. Following a short paper session in which Akiko Kawasaki (Komazawa University) gave a talk titled, "Sharing Death: Fainting in *A Tale of Two Cities*," a special symposium on Dickens and Gissing was held. The subtitle of the symposium was "Subterranean Similarities and Differences," and it was presided by Mitsuharu Matsuoka (Nagoya University).

In his review on *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898), C. K. Shorter finds it interestingly ironic that Gissing was commissioned to criticise

Dickens favourably. Gissing describes poverty in a darker way, while Dickens provides a brighter description. Dickens is often seen as an optimist when compared to Gissing, whose work is largely pessimistic. And yet, Dickensian humour and laughter can be detected in Gissing's more sombre novels, whereas Dickens left us several novels with the same heavy themes seen in the works of Gissing. In addition, several critics have pointed out similarities between the two novelists, especially evident in their characters, plots, techniques, social problems, and scene depictions of London. However, there are also differences behind these similarities. The differences were produced by the influences of each artist's innate idiosyncrasies, as well as those of their Victorian-era mindsets. Paying careful attention to the subterranean similarities and differences between Dickens and Gissing, the five symposium speakers compared and examined their selected novels from their different perspectives. Here are the five symposium members and their respective short reports:

1. Ayaka Komiya (Meiji University), "From Dickens's London to Gissing's London"

In 1822, a young Charles Dickens left Chatham and arrived in London. There, he strolled around the capital's streets and neighbourhoods. His Wellerian "extensive and peculiar" knowledge of London helped him write novels in that city's settings. It was about half a century later, or in 1877, that Gissing, born in Yorkshire, moved to London. His move took place after a year or so of unhappy wanderings in America. The capital he saw was the very world of Dickens, who was his favourite childhood author. Gissing stated that ". . . four and twenty years ago, when I had no London memories of my own, they were simply the scenes of Dickens's novels . . ." (Gissing, *The Immortal Dickens,* 1925). London became the base and centre of Gissing's later life. Like Dickens, Gissing moved around the capital for observation purposes, and set many of his novels there. As a subject of discussion, Komiya compared Dickens's London with Gissing's London, and provided a special reference to their early novels, which depicted locales in the same slums. Gissing's version of London in his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), is a Dickensian London. However, when Gissing wrote *The Nether World* (1889), he made use of his own knowledge of London's slums, which he gained during his nine-year residence there.

2. Fumie Tamai (Doshisha University), "The Politics of Sympathy in the Works of Dickens and Gissing"

The American philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum maintains that literature, particularly novels, can make a rich contribution to education because of its ability to develop the reader's sympathetic imagination. In order to illustrate her points, Nussbaum aptly cites Dickens, who is most clearly aware of his power to form the bonds of sympathy with his readers. Audrey Jaffe argues that in Victorian fiction, "sympathy" offers an individualistic and affective solution to the problems of class alienation and conflicts, and enables an assimilation of individuals into larger communities, such as nations. While Dickens tries to reform society through the evocation of sympathy toward others in his readers' minds, Gissing is sceptical of the possibility of social reform through those means. Gissing writes to Algernon saying that his "methods & aims" are different from those of Dickens. How, though, are they different? Examining the politics of sympathy with a special focus on *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41) and *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), Tamai claimed that Dickens arouses the reader's sympathy by deemphasising the physical reality of the heroine Nell, while Gissing sticks to realistic representations of the poor, and warns the reader against forming any sentimental identification with them.

3. Atsuko Miyake (Seinan Gakuin University), "Nineteenth-Century British Design Reform in Transition and Its Literary Representations"

The design reform movement began in Britain toward the beginning of the Victorian era. Britain had recognised herself as an artistic backwater in Europe. The Great Exhibition of 1851 can be seen within this cultural context. Design reform was aimed at more closely linking arts, industry, and morality in order to enhance the nation's tastes. At the end of the 19th century, the movement developed into two cultural trends. One was the aesthetic movement, which was centred on the doctrine that art exists for the sake of its beauty alone. The other was a boom in the publication of handbooks and articles on furnishing and upholstery. Miyake compared Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53) and *Hard Times* (1854) with Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) and *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), and argued that changes in the 19th-century British art movement lay underneath the different literary representations of room furnishings by the two novelists. For example, the discussion between Sissy and the third gentleman, considered as a satirical representation of Henry Cole, in *Hard Times*,

refers to his famous campaign for "taste," while Mr. Skimpole's grumbles on furniture in *Bleak House* remind us of an over-decorated armchair displayed at the Great Exhibition. Gissing's novels capture well the results of Cole's efforts; the idea of "taste" had spread throughout society, and room furnishings were connected to the contemporary New Woman issue.

4. Mitsuharu Matsuoka (Nagoya University), "Modern Urban Dwellers and Their Self-denial, Self-alienation, and Self-deception"

The main point in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-05) is that the Protestant thought of attaining the grace of God by connecting the self-denying culture of Protestantism with the secular commercial activities, which permeated the lives of nineteenth-century urban dwellers, resulted in a major contribution to the formation of modern capitalist society. In the works of Dickens, self-sacrifice as a form of self-denial holds implications for the love of God in giving Jesus as an atoning sacrifice. Another form of self-denial appears in the shape of egoism in self-made men or of self-abnegation in the tortured through guilt. This is especially true when the self-denying spirit is directed toward profit-taking and the accumulation of capital. The egoist is alienated from society and others, whereas the self-abnegator alienates himself. It is interesting, however, that both types fall into self-deception resulting from solitude or uneasiness. The works of Gissing also contain many scenes that are based on the urban dwellers' self-denial, self-alienation, and self-deception, but their causes are sometimes rather different from those in the works of Dickens. Are the differences all due to naturalism as a literary movement, which finds no meaning in a human's self-denying aspiration for improvement? After examining Mary Kingcote's self-denial as a kind of masochistic pleasure taken in medieval asceticism in *Isabel Clarendon* (1886), Matsuoka analysed the connection of lodging-house life with self-alienation in poverty, and the high frequency of self-deception in the love problems described in *New Grub Street* (1891).

5. Ryota Kanayama (Ritsumeikan University), "For Whom is Education?"

In his *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898), Gissing points out that Dickens's lack of education reveals itself as a disadvantage to his books, and that it was more important in Dickens's days than in the late 19th century to have received a classical education. Although Dickens criticises brutal boarding schools, the crammed educational system, and classics scholars, he

still sees, with a certain amount of trust in the schooling system, the need for a comprehensive cultural education to prevent common people from rampaging violence. Gissing began his career as a novelist after the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which legally guaranteed the right of elementary education to all. This does not mean that Gissing was sorry that Dickens could have received much benefit from this educational system if he had been born half a century later. Rather, he does not hide his disdain for the masses; he perceives them as having imperfect educational achievements. Drawing a comparison between the two novelists, who are different in terms of educational philosophy though they were both interested in the lower middle class as a target for description, Kanayama revealed what is behind those differences. Dickens was sure of his social background as a middle-class man, and as such took it for granted that he could have been given a chance to study at an institute of higher education such as Cambridge University. Gissing, on the other hand, hated those who were as daring enough as him to try to climb the social ladder by improving their academic careers, and thus gaining the necessary respect to be accepted into high society.

***

Notes and News

An extremely rare first edition of Morley Roberts's first novel, *In Low Relief, A Bohemian Transcript* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890, 2 vols) with Mudie's library labels attached, sold by Keys Fine Art Auctioneers on 29 January 2015 for £120, is now offered for sale on ebay.co.uk by the purchaser for £650. Elsewhere, Richard Neylon, a bookseller based in St Marys, Tasmania, is selling for AUD 450 (£300) a very good Colonial edition of Roberts's 1897 novel, *The Adventure of the Broad Arrow, An Australian Romance*, which he describes as "one of the more famous west Australian lost race novels – though lost race is stretching it a bit. The white tribe here is descended from escaped convicts. But they are swimming in gold and there were pygmy cave dwellers."

The Limehouse Golem having had its run in the cinemas with Gissing appearing as a murder suspect, the DVD was to be released on 26 December 2017 for £9.99 on Amazon. Hopefully the extras will include an interview with Morgan Watkins who played Gissing.

Readers of these pages in former days will have heard of the 1921 film of *Demos* also known as *Why Men Forget*, the only cinematic version of a Gissing novel. There was also an American television adaptation of his short story "A Poor Gentleman" entitled "The Turning Point" made as part of the US anthology series "Favourite Story." The 30-minute episode was aired on 23 September 1953 (and repeated on 22 December 1954). The story was adapted by Stuart Jerome and the programme directed by Eddie Davis with the memorably moustachioed charmer Adolphe Menjou hosting the show and playing the part of Tymperley, and another old-timer, Mae Clarke, who famously had a grapefruit pushed into her face by James Cagney in the 1931 film *The Public Enemy*, also in a prominent role. The scene of Gissing's story was transported from London to New York.

Staying in the cinema world, I should like belatedly to mention that Federico Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*, which has given so much public resonance to Gissing's name and the word "paparazzi" since Princess Diana's death in 1997, was added to the renowned Criterion Collection and released on DVD in October 2014 in a version currently for sale at £17.46 on Amazon. Again, belatedly, I should like to report the death in 2015 of the famous Swedish actress, Anita Ekberg (1931-2015), who played the young starlet alongside Marcello Mastroianni's reporter in the film. The appearance of this issue of our journal will also mark the tenth anniversary on 20 January of the death of Walter Santesso (1931-2008), a lesser light in Italian films, who actually played the newspaper reporter called "Paparazzo" in Fellini's film. Santesso was born and also died in Vigonza, a small town close to Venice. As his acting career never really took off, he later turned to directing and had his greatest success with *La carica delle patate* which won the prize for best film at the Giffoni film festival at Campania, Southern Italy, in 1979.

To commemorate last year's International Woman's Day on 8 March 2017, University College London put the photographs of five inspirational former female alumni on their website. One of these is a remarkably photogenic image of Eliza Orme, provided by Pierre Coustillas. Under the photograph one reads: "Eliza Orme (1848–1937) became the first woman in England to earn a law degree when she graduated from UCL Laws with an LLB in 1888. Eliza was already working in the field of law prior to her studies, though in a support role as it was the only legal employment open to women at the time. While studying, she set up chambers with fellow student Mary Richardson and later worked on a public enquiry into women's employment and an

official review of women's prison experiences – these drew upon her dedicated support for women's rights and opportunities." Professor Leslie Howsam of the University of Windsor, the historian and Orme specialist, tells me she would like to direct readers to the following link at the First 100 Years Project which charts the journey of women in law since 1919 https://first100years.org.uk/eliza-orme-2/.

During the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras the works of the Danish writer, Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-1885), were immensely popular and influential in Europe. Henrik Ibsen, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Rainer Maria Rilke, and James Joyce among many other notable literary personalities greatly esteemed, in particular, his introspective 1880 novel, *Niels Lynhe*. On 4 July 1890 Gissing reports in his *Diary* that he had received from Eduard Bertz the German Reclam edition of the novel, which he at once started reading. Soon after he wrote to Edith Sichel of his sudden passionate interest in the book and its author, telling her he hoped that more of his books will be translated. Gissing's thoughts turned to the novel a second time the following spring when he remarks, "Began to re-read 'Niels Lynhe', which I admire more than ever." In his letter to Sichel he concludes that "Niels Lynhe is doomed to a life of disillusion, of frustration, of sad solitude. The interest is wholly spiritual …" The novel was to have a major influence on Gissing's best psychological novel, *Born in Exile* (1892). The first English translation of *Niels Lynhe* did not appear until 1919. However, in recent decades Jacobsen has made something of a comeback in English translations. *Niels Lynhe* was published in a Penguin classic edition in 2007 with a new translation by Tiina Nunnally. As a result of the new interest in Jacobsen, it is pleasing to inform readers of the first biography of the author in English, *Jens Peter Jacobsen: A Difficult Death* by Morten Høi Jensen, which was published on 3 October 2017 by Yale University Press.

The Antique Map & Bookshop in Thomas Hardy country at Puddletown – scene of *Far from the Madding Crowd* – was recently offering for sale an ALS dated 3 March 1898 from W. H. Hudson to Mr [Handley Carr Glyn] Moule (1841-1920) for £150. Moule was the youngest of eight sons of the vicar of Fordington, Dorchester. He was ordained in 1867 and was curate at Fordington before being appointed as sub-dean of Trinity College, Cambridge in 1873. He became first principal of Ridley Hall Theological College, Cambridge, in 1881, and Norrisian Professor of Divinity in 1899. In 1901, he succeeded B. F. Westcott as Bishop of Durham.

Among the permanent collections in the Museum of Contemporary Art at Chicago is an archive of works by the American artist R. B. Kitaj (1932-2007: born Ronald Brooks), which are regularly displayed in rotating exhibitions. One of these works, given prominence on their website, is a screenprint on paper entitled "Workers in the Dawn, 1969" showing an image of the dust jacket of the first volume of Robert Shafer's 1935 first American edition of Gissing's novel. Brooks spent many years of his life living and working in London in the 1950s and 1960s. The screenprint can be seen at the following internet address: https://mcachicago.org/Collection/Items/R-B-Kitaj-George-Gissing-Workers-In-The-Dawn-1969.

In the last issue I criticised the London Library subscription fee. I apologise for my comment.

***

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *La vera storia di Will Warburton*. Transl. by Vincenzo Pepe and with an introduction by Markus Neacey. Cava de' Tirreni (SA), Italy: Marlin Editore, 2017. Pp. 344. ISBN 978886043122-6. PB €14.00.

Christine DeVine, *Class in Turn-of-the-Century Novels of Gissing, James, Hardy and Wells*. Routledge Library Editions: the Nineteenth-Century Novel. London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 172. ISBN 9781138675926. PB £27.99.

Sophia Celina Diesel, *The Evolution of the Man of Letters: George Gissing and the Fight for Survival in New Grub Street*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2017. Pp. 200. ISBN 9786202060257. PB £58.00.

David Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing* (Routledge Library Editions: the Nineteenth-Century Novel). London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 172. ISBN 9781138649804. PB £27.99.

Martin Ryle and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds), *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed* (Routledge Library Editions: The Nineteenth-Century Novel). London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 174. ISBN 9781138675537. PB £27.99.

J. C., "Liberated Reader," *TLS*, 20 October 2017, p. 40. J. C. refers to the last issue of our journal and the Italian translations of Gissing's works.

J. C., "Star and Storm," *TLS*, 3 November 2017, p. 40. J. C. reports receiving a letter from Peter Hirschmann of Harrogate who was somewhat put out by his comment on 20 October that Gissing's *Eve's Ransom* is "hard to find in English." Hirschmann "direct[s] him to the Idle Bookshop on the outskirts of Bradford." J. C. remarks that "four hours each way on the train, with the cheapest ticket costing £107" is expecting a bit much. But after checking the Idle Booksellers website and finding seven copies of *Eve's Ransom* he writes, "We look forward to hitching a lift up North. When we do, we might pick up *Il Riscatto di Eva* […] as a sweetener for Mr Hirschmann."

Maria Teresa Chialant, "George Gissing, Greece and the Mediterranean Passion," *Literary Geographies*, 3:2 (2017), pp. 153-168. Online journal.

Sheila Cordner, "Neither Inside or Outside in George Gissing," in *Education in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 82-99. Appendix 4, pp. 141-145, contains an excerpt from *Thyrza*.

Adam Daly, "George Gissing: Classicist Manqué, Harlot Lover, Visionary Pauper," *Wormwood*, 22 (Spring 2014), pp. 45-57.

Anthony Dowling, "Masculine Failure in *New Grub Street*," in *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature* (London: Routledge, 2016: The Nineteenth Century Series), pp. 96-115.

Mark Samuels, "A Weekend with a Latterday Henry Ryecroft: Roger Dobson and the Lost Club's Last Literary Expedition," *Wormwood*, 26 (Spring 2016), pp. 35-44.

Federica Zullo, "Tra Chelsea e Charing Cross c'è una nuova energia," *L'Indice*, September 2017, n.p. Online review of *Le donne di troppo*.

Subscriptions

The Gissing Journal is published four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

Rates per annum are as follows:

Individuals (Europe):	£14
Libraries (Europe):	£16
Individuals (ROW):	£18
Libraries (ROW):	£20

Payment should be made in sterling to Markus Neacey by cheque or to thegissingjournal@outlook.com via Paypal.

***

Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays, book reviews, and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with bibliographical, biographical, critical, and topographical subjects. They should be sent as a Word document to the editor, Markus Neacey, either by email to forfarmarkus@fastmail.co.uk or by post to:

Markus Neacey, The Gissing Journal,
Hohenstaufenstrasse 50, Gartenhaus, 10779 Berlin, Germany

***

Editorial Board

Markus Neacey, Berlin
Pierre Coustillas, University of Lille
Hélène Coustillas, La Madeleine
Mitsuharu Matsuoka, University of Nagoya