

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
– George Gissing’s *Commonplace Book*.

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Plitt into Tritt: Gissing’s Travelling Companion
in a short story by Morley Roberts

Pierre Coustillas

The name of Plitt has been familiar to students of Gissing’s life since the publication of the novelist’s letters to Eduard Bertz late in 1961. This German acquaintance of his is but one piece in the gigantic puzzle of his life – an unattractive piece at that, since the picture he gives of him in the letters to Bertz is that of a mean, selfish, third-rate artist who was apparently something of a fool as well – but as the puzzle is worth assembling, Plitt cannot be overlooked and dismissed. That the truth about him was not fully told in the correspondence with Bertz was obvious enough to those

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scholars who, before 1978, had been privileged to read Gissing’s diary in the Berg Collection. The publication of this document has made available a number of anecdotes about Plitt, testifying to Gissing’s painful fascination by this strange individual who, whatever his shortcomings and his mediocre capacities as an artist may have been, was something of a linguist since it is clear that in addition to his native German, he could speak English, French and Italian.

In a postcard of September 28, 1888 to Bertz written on his arrival in Paris, Gissing wrote: "With me in the same hotel is an acquaintance named Plitt, a German whom I have known slightly for a year or two, and who happened to be coming to Paris; of course we have separate rooms, but it is pleasant to have an acquaintance at hand. He is an artist, though of very slight attainments." Indeed he knew him very little and was not prepared to say much to Bertz about his travelling companion. In one of his next letters (October 7, 1888) he somehow tried to satisfy Bertz's curiosity about Plitt, but gave a truncated version of the circumstances of their first coming together. "He came to see me at 7. K. one evening, and said he was going to Naples by way of Paris. 'Mais, voilà mon affaire!' I at once cried, and in half an hour our plans were made." He was to repent this hastiness bitterly.

Recent research in Gissing's unpublished correspondence and elsewhere has produced a few additional facts about Plitt, and thanks to Professor T. E. M. Boll, who drew my attention to it, a fictional image of him also emerges from oblivion, an image which corroborates Gissing's pronouncement after a fortnight's living together that the man was not an artist, but an artisan. Now, as it was through a common acquaintance, Edgar Erat Harrison, the former tenant of his flat at 7K Cornwall Mansions (afterwards Cornwall Residences) that Gissing met Plitt, it is perhaps in order to introduce Harrison first. For one thing, although he was at least the fourth person of that name to enter into Gissing's life,¹ E. E. Harrison is easy to identify since he belonged to the well-known

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firm of printers Harrison and Sons Limited, who boasted to be "Printers to Her Majesty the Queen." In two books on the firm published in 1914 and 1950 we see that Edgar Erat Harrison was the son of Thomas Harrison (1826-1896) and of Ann Caroline Erat (1826-1896), and the brother of Alan Erat Harrison (1863-1934). He himself was one year older than Gissing – the family history published in 1950 supplies the dates of his life (August 14, 1856-October 15, 1933). He had married a German girl, Maria Ida Antonia Augusta Bobardt (born 1856) on September 15, 1880 and had, perhaps from that date onwards, rented the flat that Gissing was later to occupy for six years. It was doubtless the prospect of the birth of their only child, Victor Bobardt Harrison on April 9, 1885, which had led the couple to move to Gunnersbury (29 Arlington Park Gardens) where Gissing paid occasional calls on the family until the end of the decade. Plitt being a friend of the Harrisons and a frequent visitor of theirs, he had naturally met Gissing when the novelist went to Gunnersbury for a change. The information given by the correspondence with Bertz suggests that Gissing made acquaintance with Plitt about the time *Thyrza* was published. Plitt was by no means an intellectual, but the fact that he bought Pascal's *Pensées* in Paris with a view to impressing Gissing, who would not let himself be impressed, is an amusing index to his intellectual snobbery. He must also have been temperamentally and professionally unstable. One interest at least he shared with Gissing – hence the misunderstanding which spoilt a substantial portion of the latter's stay in Paris and Naples – Italy and her inhabitants. A visit together to the National Gallery had misled Gissing to believe that the man was genuinely interested in art, just as conversation with a friend Plitt had brought with him to 7K and who happened to know Walt Whitman had prompted Gissing to imagine that Plitt really cared for literature.

It is characteristic of Gissing's delicacy and weakness that during the two months they spent

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together in Paris and Naples, his diary was the sole recipient of his bitter recriminations against his companion. After they had parted they continued to correspond for some time, which may well

mean that, thick-skinned and slow-witted as he was, Plitt never suspected that he often infuriated the nervous, long-suffering author. Probably also, once he had left Plitt behind, Gissing easily forgave and forgot, or at least he chose to see only the ludicrous side of their temporary association. One entry in his diary for February 16, 1889 shows nonetheless that it took him some time to reach that stage, if he reached it at all: "Letter from Plitt – proposing that we should journey home together. I thank you, no!" But the pseudo-artist was destined to affect Gissing's mood again when he visited Cornwall Residences to give an account of the rest of his journey: "By telling me of an Italian girl who lived with him there [in Rome] he made me so wretched in my loneliness that work was impossible" (diary, April 18, 1889).

Plitt returned to Italy in July 1889, and it was probably during the few weeks before his departure, about the time he came to Gissing's rooms "to talk over his gloomy prospects" (diary May 15, 1889) that Morley Roberts, who in those days also visited Gissing regularly, was a witness to the scene which he described in "Tritt." There is a passage in an unpublished letter from Gabrielle Fleury to Clara Collet dated January 15, 1905 which refers to that particular occasion. If placed in the sequence of letters between the two women, it clearly suggests that Plitt had been discussed by them at St-Jean-de-Luz, where Morley Roberts had joined them for the first anniversary of Gissing's death: "You know," she wrote in her unidiomatic English, "I now think I remember G. telling me – oh but long ago, in the first times – of Plitt weeping on the floor! I have so lost my memory that I have probably forgotten many things he told me, unfortunately." But Roberts may also have based the short story on an account of the anecdote to which Gissing was perhaps sole witness. At all events, the latter's diary for April 18, 1888 shows that Plitt and Roberts

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had met on that day at Gissing's home, and therefore had known each other for at least one year by the time Plitt made an exhibition of himself in his friend's rooms.

"Tritt" was published in one of Roberts's many collections of short stories, *Midsummer Madness* (London : Eveleigh Nash, 1909; pp. 199-221), a title which, incidentally, had been used by Gissing in one of his uncollected short stories of the 1890s. That it first appeared in a periodical, like Roberts's other pieces of short fiction, is almost certain, although its serial publication still has to be traced. The end of 1904 would be a likely period for two reasons: Roberts observes in his narrative that his friend Ryecroft is dead, and the discussion of Plitt by Gabrielle Fleury and Clara Collet, first orally at Christmas 1904, then in the letter previously quoted, may indicate that Roberts's story had just been published and that the two women had been reading it. Roberts's papers in the Brotherton Library and in the University of Pennsylvania Library offer no clue.

As in his novels *In Low Relief* (1890) and *The Degradation of Geoffrey Alwyth* (1895), both of which contain characters modelled on Gissing, Roberts borrows extensively from reality in "Tritt." The veil of disguise is so thin that thousands of readers could recognize Gissing through Ryecroft at a time (1909) when Gissing's most popular book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, was selling in tens of thousands in sixpenny reprints. As for Plitt, he was unknown except to his tailor and his friends – neither his activities nor his whereabouts in the 1900s have been ascertained. The dates of his life are as much of a mystery as his Christian name, and Roberts presents his fictional *alter ego* in a way which suggests that he and Gissing were in the dark as to Plitt's origin. Gissing himself would be easily recognizable in the story even if he did not appear under the pseudonym of his best known character. Ryecroft is said to live in Baker Street, at a stone's throw from Gissing's actual home in Cornwall Residences, and the passages describing him are compellingly evocative

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of Gissing's personality and intellectual achievement: "author of so many big books, a great writer, a keen critic, a swift judge of character, a hanging judge of shams, a man we shall not soon see again." Or again: "The time of Ryecroft in Rome was limited by his limited means. At that time he was poor (he never got rich but once in one year; a Great Year made five hundred pounds), and could not stay in Rome too long. Publishers needed him (or he them) in vast publishing London, and no one indeed but a wise fool like Ryecroft would have spent what he did in visiting Italy. Yet without Italy what were man or Ryecroft?" And we similarly agree with the view of Gissing as "wondrous wise ... in the ways of women when they did not cling to *his* heart, did not speak soft things to *him*," as "a scholar, a lover of classic times, who achieved distinction by writing books of deadly unclassic London ... [a man] who adored the past and hated Time for the gift of Now, ... yet put aside the Great Dead and painted the Mean Living." Yet again we concur with Roberts's statement that Gissing "who had been better born with Vergil or with Petrarch, showed the world what Camberwell was like" in *In the Year of Jubilee*, "or Clerkenwell" in *The Nether World*. Lastly, Roberts's homage to his friend as a linguist who would have been likely to address Plitt in German and Italian, besides French and English, sounds consistent with the principles of fairness.

In describing Plitt's character Roberts does not seem to have deviated substantially from reality either. True, the various anecdotes about Plitt's behaviour offered by Gissing's diary for September to November 1888 give a more sober picture than that supplied by Roberts in his characteristically ebullient style, but the difference apparently lies in the treatment of the subject rather than in the basic elements of its nature. Gissing would not have judged Plitt so severely as an artist if Plitt had been something more than a mere humourless dauber. Perhaps also his pathetic weakness towards him would have known definite bounds, had he not sensed that Plitt had remained very much of a child in adulthood. Anyway, Roberts's representation of the man as he

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"burst into tears and lay upon the bare floor and howled tumultuously, ungermanically, more like Philoctetes than a Teuton" – Gabrielle Fleury's short evocation confirms this – is an accurate enough transcription of what Gissing actually saw.

The rest of the story is more obviously a mixture of fact and fancy. If Plitt did meet the flesh and blood Giulietta in Rome, Gissing did not play the role assumed by Ryecroft in the story. It was not through the Italian girl that Gissing came to know Plitt: indeed he never met her and, if he gave any money, it was to Plitt under circumstances which are recorded in detail in the novelist's diary. Lastly the chronology of events in "Tritt" with the Italian episode functioning as a flashback, is a reversal of actual events, since it is established that Roberts met Plitt before the latter recounted his Italian love affair to Gissing.

Perhaps some day letters from Gissing to his extraordinary German acquaintance or the counterpart of this correspondence will surface in a sale room. Plitt is one of those many names in Gissing's diary that raise hopes that further batches of letters may eventually turn up. Meanwhile "Tritt" is as good a substitute as can be offered.

1 - E. E. Harrison came fourth in chronological order after (i) Joseph Harrison, Gissing's old schoolmaster at Back Lane School, Wakefield; (ii) Marianne Helen Harrison (Nell), the Manchester girl of the streets who became Gissing's first wife; (iii) Frederic Harrison, the Positivist Leader.

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“Tritt”

Amazing man, Tritt! You shall believe it if aught I can write may convince you. And yet Tritt, being Tritt, was so amazing as hardly to be credible. To write of the incredible and unbelievable may be waste, and one is not Rabelais, to justify wild invention in quaint words, while one shakes with gusts of laughter. But to resume, to begin again with Tritt, the humble, the amazing, the petty, the magnificent Tritt. Tritt had no humour – not a spark, not a scintilla. He was sober, serious, high-minded, wonderful. He was also a German. He claimed to be the fellow-countryman of Goethe, Heine, Frederick the Great, Richter, *und so weiter*. I vow he transcended them all, was greater than Great Frederick himself, than Goethe swimming in the unfathomable second pool of Faust, than Richter in Titan, than Heine in the Travels. But Tritt spoke English and French and Italian, and other odd tongues, barely indicating Germany’s accent as he talked seriously and to the simple point. His nationality was nothing. He was Tritt pure and simple. *That* for his being a German! He sprang from nowhere, was the son of no man, no woman. He was not a cosmopolitan, he had no country, and all countries were not his. You might think he was a gypsy. God forbid you’re being so foolish.

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Man alive! Gypsies are born, after all. I believe a mad writer, my literary friend Frankenstein, made Tritt of paper and ink. I suspected Ryecroft, my friend Ryecroft. I suspect him still at times. He showed Tritt to me: told me about him, instructed me in him, set him working before me, made him howl and smile, and weep and groan, pulled out the stops – in fine, blew the bellows of Tritt.

I wasn’t introduced to Tritt. I became aware of him. “He’s coming presently,” said Ryecroft. Tritt came in meekly, wandered round a corner, with an apologetic smile on his lips. He appeared; as it were, he materialized. In his hands he dangled certain forlorn, miserable odd pieces of art work in which (at that moment only) his quiet soul was lapped.

“Fire screens,” said Tritt proudly.

In the name of all that’s holy, unholy, heavenly, hellish, picaresque and suburban, what was Tritt doing in Ryecroft’s room in Baker Street with fire screens? Answer, Vulcan; answer, Liberty’s! I sat confounded, confused, while ready Ryecroft indicated Tritt with the modest hand of a creator showman.

“I told you about Tritt!”

Ryecroft: clever, inscrutable Ryecroft, with the finely cut mouth of the true artist, smiled as

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though he said, “My *chef-d’oeuvre*, friend.” He knew Tritt (or so he said). He had read him, analyzed, dissected Tritt.

In his voice one read –

“This is the marvellous, peculiar, solitary, solipsistic, ordinary, wondrous, terre-à-terre Tritt of whom we spoke aforetime. I don’t know him, and I know him. He represents mystery and is mysteriously commonplace, sane, mad, rare, mild, generous, mean. See how sweet he is. See how he dangles fire screens! In the name of heaven and earth and the queen of illusion and reality, why fire screens, and what fire? But, as I said before, he’s the small, gigantic, harmonious, discordant, unimaginable Tritt.”

That’s what Ryecroft’s smile said. It was a tremendous smile: as strange as Heine’s, but more human.

“They’re on satin,” said Tritt.

On satin! He was a phenomenon with phenomenal paint marks on phenomenal satin. Why satin, why paint? I looked at him.

“Painted?” I inquired benignantly.

“On satin,” said Tritt.

He smiled tenderly on the screens.

“I’m trying to sell them!”

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So might a mother in a famine go round with her brats, saying, “Children for sale.” His lips trembled. If he sold them he would weep, might even spot them.

They were the ghastly, hideous, abominable, damnable miscreations of an art miscreant. They were not screens, they were extinguishers. Hold one before the fire of London, the fire of Chicago, what awful fire you will, and that fire (for you) goes out at once, is nothing, not two sticks and a match, my friend. Their glaring, bolting-eyed colours confounded my weak eyes. They would have shamed a peacock’s tail into folding. They would have confounded a fire: firemen would have put them out or have tried to do so.

But Tritt, seated on the humble edge of a chair, explained them to us. He told us meekly how he did them. They were flowers, he said.

“I’ve been going round with them,” said Tritt, cheerfully and sadly. “Some shopkeepers were very rude to me. They are very good though, are they not?”

He held them up for us to see. Ryecroft and I shut our eyes and said they were good. A stranger, a common poor stranger (all men we don’t know are asses) would have said, “Here’s a wild ass, a poor thing, a wandering lunatic who should wear straw!” Such a blind ass of a stranger

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would have retreated from his screens; would have eyed him with a contempt; would have lifted his nose in the air as for a bray. A thousand stay-at-homes would have put him aside, would have hustled him, would have said, “Here at last is a meek person we can trample on. He will cry if he can’t sell us a screen. We will give him a penny and dispatch him to the German Consul to be sent home and taken care of.”

“Oh, sir, you stranger ass, what an ineffable ass you are!”

The above is my reply to the embodied fools who can’t understand Tritt, or Trittism, which is really a great philosophy. I put Tritt above Descartes, Hobbes, Berkeley, Spinoza, Kant, and beneath his heel I hear Hegel screaming. Do you think, Sir Ass, that a man like Ryecroft, author of so many big books, a great writer, a keen critic, a swift judge of character, a hanging judge of shams, a man we shall not soon see again, would have taken all the pains he did to show me Tritt acting Trittically, if Tritt had been a nobody, a nothing, a sort of zero, an elided word, a lacuna, a cancelled factor, considering I am what I am? But I scorn to speak of myself, and will not blow against the

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walls of Jericho. I tell you Ryecroft put Tritt preciously into my extended eager palm as if he were an archaeologist handling gifts from the graves of a great old city, or a numismatist with a coin among ten thousand, or a biologist with protoplasm made in a laboratory. I tell you again he was as proud as if he had constructed Tritt out of chaos. If I could only have made him! If I only could put him down now!

Good Lord! what a man Tritt was! I fail, I fail! With flat brush or round, or graver, or burin, or even a camera, Tritt shall elude me.

I perceive, as you stand dumbfounded, aghast, and yet near to giggling, not one touch, one iota, one faint indication of understanding in you people. I must explain. Well – Tritt — Good Lord, assist me to deliver myself of Tritt, the body and bones and blood of Tritt. I maintain, pathetically, that he was real, that he had form, a body, and blood, and bones not a few. Tritt – if I annoy others I annoy myself, for this is a devil of a task, this vain painting of Tritt, not on a fire screen, but still, it might be, to be sold. Let me get at Tritt, get him down, put pins in him, peg him out, cut him up, docket him.

He was a hero and didn't know it. He was a fool and didn't suspect it, a great wild lover and

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wouldn't have believed it, an artist bigger than he knew in spite of fire screens. He was a man and a child. He roared on the floor when grim necessity, having snatched his last obol, took Giulietta from him. But I forgot: you know not Giulietta. Tritt, then, was in Rome. You ask how, why, and when he was in Rome? Tut, man, do not interrupt. I tell you it matters not an obol, or a dime, or a para, or a centime, or a groschen, or what you will in current coin, how and why he was there. He was Tritt, man alive! and for Tritt to be in Rome or in Ramsgate, in Athens or in Kamschatka, in Naples or Newgate, in Syracuse or Chicago, in Callao or Berlin or Bordeaux or Penobscot or Chilliwack or Penang or Santa Rosa de los Andes or Brighton, was nothing. Why, when he was painting scenery in Bundaberg (don't you know where Bundaberg is, you ignoramus?) he started right off with coals for the Lord-knows-where. I shall explain the coals presently, I hope, but am not sure. For one must explain Tritt first. And yet Tritt, as one sees, was humble and serious, given to staring past one, dreaming, perpending, brown-studying. How came he to carry coals at Bundaberg, and to offer satin

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screens in Baker Street, when he should have been teaching Greek or Latin at some gymnasium in Heidelberg? That's what I don't know. No one knew or could know. I saw Ryecroft didn't make Tritt, after all. He didn't know or learn his past, not even when he dragged him from the half-starved arms of Giulietta. The man's all in pieces, and how shall one assemble him like the parts of a disparted Maxim gun, say? In truth I know not.

Obviously the man knew things, was educated, "civilized," as Ryecroft would have said. For Ryecroft was quite as wonderful in his way as Tritt, and had absurd ideas. However, it tells something of Tritt that the super-civilized Ryecroft loved him, dandled him, showed him, drew him out, and even fed him out of his scanty scholar's larder, while the screens were unsold. He told me all about Giulietta. Now I remember it was through Giulietta that Ryecroft knew Tritt in Rome. For Tritt, discharged from Bundaberg coals, had shipped before the mast in Brisbane and come back to Europe, where, I know not, and proceeded to drift to Rome, getting there by way of Paris and Constantinople and Vienna, perhaps, but having got there, he smote his palms together and said he would be an artist of great magnitude. He saw the big men and determined to be big. Having by

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some occult, inscrutable, probably honest, means got some money together, he took a ramshackle den of a studio somewhere in Rome, and proceeded to paint. Paint means models, models means love, or so it was with Tritt.

He picked up a girl of the Campagna, and painted her, loved her, adored her, would have carried coals for her, if any one would have hired him for it. She was big and fine, and had the darkest eyes and the most lovely brown olive skin, and she was as big a fool as any woman can be. But Tritt gave her shelter, half a rug, half his food, half everything, or all of it, and painted her damnably. It would have made Raphael shriek to see his pictures, so Ryecroft says, and Ryecroft knows – or knew, for he’s dead, poor chap, and gone perhaps to some celestial Bundaberg or Penobscot. They starved, these two poor fools, the Italian model and the German adventurer, and he wept into his paints. Next door Ryecroft lived for a while, saving money and seeing Rome: he, too, being poor as a mouse, but just then burdened with no Giulietta, and he heard Tritt’s oaths as he painted, and his moans as he failed to paint or to feed Giulietta. They howled in company, poor

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children, sobbed as if their hearts would break, and Ryecroft, human and humane Ryecroft, stepped out of his den into Tritt’s and found Tritt there blubbering, while Giulietta also howled and looked very thin.

Said Tritt simply (he was Tritt, you see) —

“We’re hungry!”

“The devil,” said mild Ryecroft.

“Very hungry, both of us,” said Tritt.

Ryecroft looked at the paintings. They were nudes which wouldn’t have shocked any Puritan. It was as much as one could see that they *were* nudes.

“No wonder you’re hungry,” said Ryecroft. “Tell me about yourself. You’re a German?”

Tritt said he was.

“Tell the girl to put her clothes on, and go out and get some bread and a bottle of wine and sausage of sorts,” said Ryecroft, producing five lire. Giulietta smiled, adorned herself in her rags and went out.

“I love her,” said Tritt.

“Very much?” asked Ryecroft, who also loved people very much at times.

“Oh, *so* much,” said Tritt.

He extended his arms as if to measure with a fathom his unfathomable love for Giulietta. So they were in sympathy and talked, and Tritt told Ryecroft fragments of his heroic life, coals, and

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Bundaberg and so on, until Giulietta returned and they all had lunch together on the floor, with the *Secolo* spread out as a table. After three mouthfuls of wine and bread and sausage, Tritt expanded like a balloon, and soared. He was going to be great, and by and by he would marry Giulietta. He told her so in the worst Italian Ryecroft had ever heard, but it was sweet Italian to Giulietta, and she smiled and held his hand till he took it away to grasp the neck of the bottle. For an hour or two Tritt was mildly stupendous. He wasn’t exactly stupid, but he was awfully mild. Ryecroft said that the whole scene made him feel as if he had met a cow in a field, a cow with super-cowlike eyes, who had spoken to him of what she meant to do to rival Michael Angelo. Such a mildness, thick, crass, inspissated, was our Tritt.

He told Ryecroft how he painted scenery at Bundaberg. There he wandered in a dusty street, past a dusty hall, where a dusty company prepared to act some dusty play. Why they proposed to act it, and who in Bundaberg cared a “continental” whether they did or did not, I cannot tell. And how it came about that some wild-eyed genius had an inspiration on finding that the scenery was

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missing, and went out into the street and grasped Tritt, saying "Come in and paint for us," I cannot say, either. But so it happened, or so Tritt said, and I affirm it was the truth, for who in the name of all gods and devils *could* invent such a story? He went in and demanded brushes and paints, and manufactured something so lurid and awe-inspiring, so terrific in dawns and sunsets, or woods or oceans, that on the first night the audience rose up on their feet and thundered applause. So said the mild, ox-eyed Tritt. The audience roared for the painter, and they threatened to pull the roof off if Tritt didn't come, while the manager, overwhelmed with his success, entreated their patience as he sought out the desired Tritt. And then it appeared that Tritt, on leaving the theatre, had seen some one who said, "Come to the wharf and help discharge the *Mary Jane* schooner of coals, and you shall be shipped before the mast and go back to Sydney!" "Why not?" said Tritt. So down he went and plunged into coals and coal dust. To him and others sweating in the dark, dimly illumined by stinking lamps, appeared a theatrical emissary, who had tracked him. He demanded Tritt, had to have him, told him that he was a success and must appear before the curtain. So Tritt, getting half-

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an-hour's leave, rushed to the theatre, washed his face or partly washed it, and showed himself to the connoisseurs of Bundaberg, and was applauded to the echo.

"It was wonderful," said Tritt to Ryecroft. "It was my first success. It showed me I could paint."

His eyes fell fondly on the outrages on the easels, and Ryecroft shuddered. What was the taste of Bundaberg? And where, oh, where was Bundaberg? That was what Ryecroft inquired. As for me, I knew where Bundaberg was, but the knowledge brought no solution of the Trittism of the thing. I could hardly bracket Tritt and Bundaberg. By the gods, what was he – the mild, the ox-eyed, the dreamer – speculative as when he painted and carried coals at Bundaberg? Could I visualize Leopardi giggling drunk at Gottenberg? Or Michael Angelo sewing on buttons in Hoxton? Or Cervantes as a pander? Or Gibbon as a raping swashbuckler, a brigand? Or Kant admiring Captain Kidd? I could not, and how could I swallow Tritt and Bundaberg?

And yet Tritt, solid truthful Tritt, said so! Let it be. There are mysteries in the Theory of Groups, in non-Euclidean geometry, in hyperbolic spaces, and in man!

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To return to Giulietta.

And yet equally mysterious to hyphenate Giulietta and Tritt, to bracket them. Ryecroft said, "I saw them together, and because it was impossible I believed it." She hung on his lips, looked in his beaming eye, mild as moonshine, but ever and again glowing with pride of pictures. Ambitious Tritt, magnificent, hopeful, hopeless Tritt, with a dark jewel of a Giulietta, even though sadly starved, on thy breast!

To proceed with Ryecroft and the pair of lovers.

"How do you propose to live?" said Ryecroft on whom fate thrust a vast responsibility. There was that about Tritt which said, "Take care of me, please, and also of my Giulietta. You understand that I am talented, can paint, as you see, and all I require is bread and cheese, for a while, and I shall shine." With bread and steel, they say, one can get to China. But the land of fame for Tritt was further. "How could I?" asked Ryecroft of me, his friend. Yet he was even then self-condemnatory.

Tritt's silent natural demand for help, aid, sustenance, rent and tore him in pieces even when Tritt had passed out, screens in hand, into Baker Street and the beyond. Ryecroft stared at me

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sorrowfully. "I felt a beast," said poor, kindly, wise Ryecroft; "and was to feel a greater one by and by."

The time of Ryecroft in Rome was limited by his limited means. At that time he was poor (he never got rich but once in one year; a Great Year made five hundred pounds), and could not stay in Rome too long. Publishers needed him (or he them) in vast publishing London, and no one indeed but a wise fool like Ryecroft would have spent what he did in visiting Italy. Yet without Italy what were man or Ryecroft? Now his pockets were near as empty as Tritt's.

"How should I support Tritt, the sudden Tritt, thus thrust on me by sobs penetrating a thin partition, and yet go home to work?" gloomed Ryecroft. How indeed!

Wondrous wise was Ryecroft in the ways of women when they did not cling to *his* heart, did not speak soft things to *him*. He could give good sound advice to fools wrapped in silk, bondmen to pretty flesh and slaves of dark eyes and rounded cheeks. 'Tis a common gift, alas! So now what could be done but to abandon Tritt or persuade Tritt to abandon Giulietta? Horrible the alternative, and some would weep to do the latter. For she was sweet, a daughter of sunny earth, whose fathers

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had been fed in vineyards for a thousand generations. How could one leave her, cast her adrift again in the Piazza di Spagna, to await some other Tritt! But then to abandon Tritt himself, to leave him ashore, wrecked, bilged, on the sands of Rome, was absolutely, utterly, *gar und ganz*, unthinkable.

"I determined," said the stern and awful Ryecroft, "to take him away to Germany."

The stern and awful Ryecroft sighed. Yet had not he, a scholar, a lover of classic times, achieved distinction by writing books of deadly unclassic London? He who adored the past and hated Time for the gift of Now, had yet put aside the Great Dead and painted the Mean Living. He who had been better born with Vergil or with Petrarch, showed the world what Camberwell was like, or Clerkenwell. Should such a hero fail with Tritt? It was impossible to think of, and yet, Tritt being Tritt, the outcome of Tritt, minus Giulietta, but plus a fare to Potsdam, say, was merest guesswork.

"Germany, what's Germany to me?" said Tritt. "I'm not hungry now. I will paint again. Giulietta!"

Giulietta, the obedient slave, rose in her rags and her beauty, and would indeed have discarded

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both to serve her Tritt. But Ryecroft intervened and took Tritt away into the Colosseum, if I remember, and there tied him to a post and served him as if he were an Early, a too Early, Christian. He raged round him with lions of arguments, tortured him with logic, tore him with pleas, showed him to himself as if he were skinned like St. Bartholomew in the Duomo at Milan. Tritt the heroic pagan, tied to the hypothetic post, endured tortures mildly and fought with Ryecroft's horrid menagerie of arguments.

Impossible to make Tritt believe that he and Giulietta would be hungry again in some three hours. Impossible to make him believe that he would not sell the horrid libel he was doing of dark Giulietta without her rags. And as for Germany and Potsdam (if it were Potsdam), he snapped his

fingers at them and the Empire, Holy or Roman or Infernal.

"I left him mildly beaming hope," said Rycroft. "I walked on the Pincian Hill by myself, considering, and he returned to Giulietta ardent for carnations and rich impastos, speaking of Correggio and Raphael, meekly proud of being one of them."

And on returning from the Pincian he found Tritt and Giulietta hungry again. It was a horrid

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surprise for Tritt, though not for Giulietta. Tritt rebelled against the fact, swore he was not hungry, could not, would not be hungry. By the nine gods and ninety devils he swore food was a superfluity, was not needed. And yet, oh, how hungry he was!

"This can't last," said agonized Rycroft. He pointed out to Tritt that he had never seen or heard of him till twelve hours ago. Did Tritt expect to be fed by him? Was Rycroft to be his Raven? Tritt modestly suggested he might buy or acquire an interest in a picture of Giulietta, but this Rycroft declined to do even at the price of fifty centesimi, though the canvas was worth far more than that.

"If I could buy Giulietta herself, and take her out and give her away to some unhungry capable, I would," said Rycroft to himself. He appealed to the girl of the Campagna in floods of good Italian, such as Tritt could not follow. He pointed out to Giulietta that death was on this path. Would she starve for ever with her Tritt?

"Mio adorato," said Giulietta, flinging her thin arms about Tritt's thinning neck; "mia gioia!"

She burst into a torrent of weeping, a bridal veil fall of tears, and sobbed as if her heart would

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burst. This roused Tritt, and like an angry and ferocious lamb he asked Rycroft what he had said. Rycroft, being a fine linguist, explained in German, and presently Tritt, overcome, perhaps, by hearing his own tongue, also burst into tears and lay upon the bare floor and howled tumultuously, ungermanically, more like Philoctetes than a Teuton. For the Teuton's more usual gift of tears is mild, sentimental water.

"I'm starving you, my beloved," said Tritt, sobbing.

Giulietta wept.

"You are getting anatomical," said Tritt. Giulietta wept, though she did not understand.

"Woe is me," said Tritt.

Giulietta still wept.

"I must not kill you, dear," said Tritt. "He's right."

Giulietta knew it, but she roared that Rycroft, the sudden intrusive Rycroft, was a "maladetta bestia." She also kissed his hand, poor thing, hoping he would buy her picture. "It was quite awful," said Rycroft, a scene to outrage human hearts, to make them doubt Providence, who didn't

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provide. Rycroft said that he also wept and wanted to kiss Giulietta. That was very like Rycroft. He had a tender heart and loved beauty, even when thin.

"I'll - I'll do it," said Tritt. "I'll go with you to-morrow to Germany. I'll go home and see my people. I'll paint there, achieve fame, come back and marry Giulietta."

What was beyond him who had carried coals at Bundaberg and achieved horrible sunsets for a theatrical company? He hugged his Giulietta and said sweet pitiful things to her, and Rycroft went

out and bought bread and wine and meat.

"My adored," said Tritt.

"Mia gioia," said Giulietta.

"Good Lord," said Ryecroft.

He went away and left them, but even before he went, the ever-hopeful took him aside.

"I'm not so sure now," said Tritt.

"You're not hungry now," said Ryecroft "but you'll be so in the morning. I'll come at ten."

"Lend me a lira," said Tritt, beaming.

But Ryecroft wouldn't do it. They were capable of living three more hopeful wasted days on a lira. Ryecroft tore himself from him and went back to his own den to dream of Tritt.

"Why should I burden myself with a coal-carrying, paint-spoiling amorous ass from

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Bundaberg?" asked Ryecroft, as he lay in bed.

Only those who had seen Tritt could answer. And yet not everyone was touched by the man from Potsdam and Bundaberg. It took a certain sympathetic genius to understand Tritt.

The dread morning came.

"The struggle comes, too," said Ryecroft. He packed his little bag, knocked at Tritt's room and entered.

"Away," said Tritt; "I cannot!"

"You must," said Ryecroft.

Absolutely impossible to leave him there! It couldn't be done. Giulietta howled. Tritt bellowed, lay on the floor and bellowed like a bull-calf, like a Tritt.

"My adored Giulietta, I cannot," said Tritt desperately.

"You shall not," said Giulietta. And yet, how hungry she was!

"If you will come I'll give her ten lire," said Ryecroft, "so that she can get some good food while she has not you to rely on."

It sounded like satire, but they saw no satire in it. Ryecroft was good. Giulietta no doubt loved her Tritt, but she had some simple sad Campagna wisdom in her. She fell to weeping again, and Ryecroft spoke to her quietly.

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"I'm doing all I can for him. Kiss him and go, dear Giulietta, and don't come back, child. It's been sweet while it lasted, but now's the end," said Ryecroft.

She understood only too well, poor thing. If he stayed with her what would be the result of it? He could not paint, even she knew that. She kissed the howling Tritt upon his cheeks and forehead, and rose up and fled. Ryecroft followed her and gave her 10 lire. Perhaps he kissed her. I do not know. Perhaps she smiled through her tears. I saw her two years after in the Piazza di Spagna. She was plump and gay. Folk have to live, one sees.

"Where's Giulietta?" said Tritt, as he raised his tear-stained face to heaven and Ryecroft.

"She's gone," said Ryecroft.

Draw a curtain over this, the last woe of our Philoctetes howling on the stage of that dark studio in Rome. Why should one depict his grief, and rage, and pain, and passionate adjurations to the gods? In two hours or more Ryecroft calmed him down, and made him pack up his few mean things. The others he had destroyed in his wrath. And now he smiled, he absolutely smiled.

"Poor dear Giulietta. I'll come back and marry her," said Tritt. "I'm ready now."

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They went to Germany, and on the way Tritt related strange things of Chile and Borneo, and China and Hungary. He thought nothing of them. How could anyone? It was so natural to be there. It was natural to be anywhere, he explained. I suppose it is. Rycroft said he supposed so, too. Tritt prattled all the way to Berlin, and then explained he did not think he could go home, after all.

"I always wanted to go to Russia," said Tritt. "I can live by painting scenery. And portraits."

Or by carrying coals, perhaps.

Rycroft gave him five marks in Berlin, and saw him sink like a mild moon behind chimney pots. Perhaps he was on his way to Russia. Or, having five marks, he might go back to Giulietta.

Yet he did not. A year afterwards he turned up in Baker Street with painted fire screens.

"They're on satin," said Tritt; "painted on satin. I'm trying to sell them".

He stood and beamed at us.

"Fire screens," repeated Tritt, "on satin. I think they're very good. Don't you?"

Rycroft and I said they were very good.

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Reviews

John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books*, Oxford University Press, 1982.

It is now nearly eighty years since Gissing died in southern France and over a hundred since he embarked on a literary career in Chicago. Thousands of pages have been written on his life and work, and a substantial proportion of these has been devoted to discussions of the relationship between the two. Admittedly, not much could be done in this field while Gissing was alive, and the paucity of the biographical material on which bio-criticism could have been based in the decade after his death spelt the vanity of it until a *Life* became available. *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* responded to public expectation and henceforth, for about fifty years, the biographical approach to Gissing's works reigned supreme. Roberts and Swinnerton conspired to encourage it, as their books were far more influential than the monographs by May Yates, Ruth Capers McKay and Samuel Vogt Gapp. Even when such a talented commentator as Virginia Woolf tried to say a kind word on Gissing's achievement, she struck up the familiar tune. "Gissing," she wrote condescendingly, "is one of those imperfect novelists through whose works one sees the life of the author faintly covered by the lives of fictitious people. With such writers we establish a personal rather than an artistic relationship."

After some twenty years (1962-1982) during which Gissing has been observed from a variety of angles by such critics as Peter Keating, Jacob Korg, Gillian Tindall, C. J. Francis, John Goode and Adrian Poole among others, it is, somewhat unexpectedly, the old approach that is favoured again by Professor Halperin in *Gissing: A Life in Books* – a step backward, some will say not unfairly, but, it seems to me a justified step now that the novelist's life is so much better known.

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The time had probably come for an enterprising scholar to write a thorough and fairly systematic

reassessment of the relationship between the fiction (including some recent additions to the corpus) and the life (including a few obscure areas, known to a very few scholars, such as the novelist's intercourse with Martha Barnes in America and Mrs. Williams in the spring and summer of 1898), and this is what we are offered in this attractively produced, well-written volume of some 430 pages.

Contrary to what the publishers have declared on the jacket and in the advertisements this is not a biography, but a biographical survey accompanied by a discussion of and abundant quotations from the works in the light of their biographical interest. Professor Halperin begins in Wakefield and ends in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, he reviews the whole of Gissing's life, private and public, and, except for some posthumous publications, gives a summary of the critical reception of each book. He certainly knows his subject well and one often feels that he would like to write at greater length than he actually does; he quotes from unpublished letters in the main public repositories of Gissing's correspondence and he overlooks no work that is worth considering in connection with the truly fascinating rapport between the novelist's tormented personal life and the multifarious reflections of it in the written products of his imagination. Throughout a good deal of information is offered on Gissing's attitudes to his successive wives, to his children and his relatives, and the closest of his friends are often given a chance to express their views on a man who has often been judged summarily rather than understood. It is very much in favour of John Halperin that his volume is pleasantly free from the carping tone of those biographers old or not so old who cannot help reiterating their disapproval of Gissing's ill-advised decisions at critical moments. The relationship between the writer and his publishers is also examined with much fairness and in a

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way, it seems to me, that would have won the approval of the novelist himself. George Smith and James Payn get the treatment they deserve – it is clear they grossly exploited Gissing in the days of his greatest vulnerability. Above all, I think, should be praised the level-headed approach to Gissing's personality. It is explained patiently, with much understanding and sympathy. What Gissing needs is biographers and critics who forget their moral and psychological measuring instruments and are prepared to view the man and his work dispassionately and lucidly. John Halperin meets this requirement: he does not apostrophize or gesticulate; nor does he patronize or show off at his subject's expense.

Of course, one of the potential dangers of such a book lies in the temptation to see too much autobiography in the novels and short stories, but Professor Halperin is not to be criticized on this score either. Another danger might be monotony in the discussion of the works from the same point of view throughout, but here again no complaint can be registered. The author has exercised the virtue of moderation. Just as newcomers to Gissing will find him a reliable and well-informed guide, readers who are familiar with the facts he relates will be pleased to find them again interpreted by a pen which has not been dulled by overlong familiarity with the subject nor temperamental prejudice against Gissing's personality. This is a book which does Gissing the man full justice, makes him constantly interesting and sorts out the contradictions of his character and behaviour without any fuss or pernicious delight in jargon.

Perhaps objective consideration of the works has not been achieved with the same degree of success and the reason for this is a simple one. It is Halperin's repeatedly expressed belief that Gissing's best stories are those which are richest in autobiographical elements, a belief which tends to be perverted into a postulate as the book progresses. The measure of artistic success cannot reasonably be found in such a criterion, even though it is true to some extent that deep personal

involvement often resulted in very strong work (*New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile* come readily to mind). Halperin's system works well when he is dealing with those novels, for instance *Workers in the Dawn*, *A Life's Morning* or *Denzil Quarrier*, which no reasonable critic would rank among the writer's best. It is in the case of the minor but highly respectable stories not markedly inspired by any autobiographical factor that the system fails to work. The first stumbling block is *Eve's Ransom*, in which Gissing experimented a new approach to story-telling. His unusual distancing from the story, his subtle irony, the enigmatic character of Eve (brilliantly pointed out by Adeline Tintner in this journal) have been overlooked by Professor Halperin, who, *a contrario*, overpraises *Sleeping Fires* because of its muted personal echoes. When Edward Garnett read the book for Fisher Unwin, he undoubtedly went too far in his depreciation, but he also exposed deficiencies in this slight novel which Halperin could not have easily dismissed, had they been brought to his notice. Nor is justice done to the best short stories and three novels of the later career, *The Town Traveller*, *Our Friend the Charlatan* and *Veranilda*. This last story is only thought "unreadable" by people who are determined to consider it so; one may find the period in which it is set so remote and confused as to be intellectually unexciting, one may find the eponymous heroine lacking in vitality, but the story qua story is eminently readable.

However these are very minor points of disagreement about a long book which, I am bound to admit, is even more readable than *Veranilda* and has many other positive aspects worth mentioning. It is first of all an accurate record of Gissing's career which incorporates significant material that has surfaced since the last reliable biography was published. It is also an example of straightforward scholarship. John Halperin is generous to his predecessors and gives his sources in thirty-three pages of notes printed in small type which will repay close reading. The quotations used as epigraphs are well-chosen and as a rule especially illuminating; misprints are almost non-existent

(on p.181 "crossly" for "crassly" seems to result from a misreading of the diary). Most useful will prove the appendix on the Gissing revival since 1961, while the fifteen illustrations are sure to be new to many readers. (Owing to an oversight for which no one living is responsible there has been a confusion between the portraits of Margaret and Ellen Gissing). The photograph of Bertz in 1891 which was found in Gissing's wallet after his death never seems to have been reproduced in a book. It is to be hoped that Oxford University Press, if a paperback edition is published, will give Professor Halperin a chance of correcting the very few factual errors which have almost inevitably crept into the volume. Meanwhile we have a book which has succeeded in its aim – discussing in an uncomplicated way the intricate network of relationships between the novelist and his characters. Such a volume should bring many new readers to Gissing and facilitate the publication of new, differently-orientated studies of his life and work as well as of moderately priced new editions of the works themselves.— Pierre Coustillas

George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.; London : Constable, 1982.

It was a pleasant surprise about two years ago to see a firm like Dover include Gissing among its authors. The paperback edition of *Eve's Ransom*, distributed by Constable in England, was a success. It was attractively produced; the text, which seems so artificially long in the old Appleton,

Lawrence & Bullen, and Sidgwick & Jackson editions, had been entirely reset and brought down to a mere 125 pages. *Eve's Ransom* had been a scarce Gissing title in any edition, including the 1929

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Benn edition, for years; with the Dover edition, the book became and remains available for \$3.00 or £2.25. As no other Gissing title was announced at the time of publication, the present edition of *In the Year of Jubilee*, which appeared last summer, is another equally pleasant surprise. The text is that of the first American edition (404 pages) published by Appleton in 1895 and the type is remarkably clear. No introduction is offered but the assessment of the story on the back cover will help newcomers to Gissing to form a good idea of his themes. It does justice to both author and story.

“Like his other mature works, *In the Year of Jubilee* benefits from Gissing’s sharp eye, keen ear for speech and practice of recording his observations in copious notes. With many a shrewd psychological insight, he explores the Victorian mind in its environment, reflecting upon debating societies, suburban tract-homes, evangelism, advertising, politics, education, the theater, celebrities, scandals, evolution, temperance, the changing status of women, vacationing in the Bahamas and a full range of problems related to family, home and business. Practically the whole panorama of Victorian society appears in what Gissing called his ‘picture of certain detestable phases of modern life.’ And there is no more honest, sobering image of late-nineteenth century English life than that which is reflected in these pages.”

It is to be hoped that other titles will follow. Now that *The Unclassed*, *Demos*, *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile*, *The Odd Women* and *Henry Ryecroft* are available in paperback (actually, *The Unclassed* will not be ready until the Spring) from various publishers, good choices would be *Thyrza*, *The Whirlpool* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*. The first two could safely be reprinted from the editions for which Gissing corrected proofs, but *Our Friend the Charlatan* had better be reset. Meanwhile, Dover Publications must be congratulated for producing two excellent new editions, so pleasantly got up.— Pierre Coustillas

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Notes and News

Frank Swinnerton, whose critical study of Gissing, first published in 1912 and reprinted in 1924 and 1966, had for years such a negative influence on the reputation of his predecessor, died on November 6, 1982 at the age of 98. He might nearly have met Gissing as he was born just when *The Unclassed*, which Meredith had read shortly before for Chapman & Hall, was being reviewed in the London press. Short of that he was, as *The Times* said in its obituary of November 10, a link with the era of H. G. Wells and Bennett. He claimed to be middle-brow and this seems to be a fair assessment of his approach to literature. Of the forty-odd novels that he wrote the earliest ones had such a strong Gissing flavour that two books, one American, the other German, were devoted to a comparison between the two novelists. Perhaps his masterpiece was *Nocturne* (1917). Besides fiction he wrote numberless reviews and literary chronicles and started reminiscing at an age when he still had over fifty years of life ahead of him. Such books as *A London Bookman* (1928), *The Georgian Literary Scene* (1935) and *Swinnerton : An Autobiography* (1937) contain allusions to Gissing, whom he could never forget – witness some passages in *Arnold Bennett : A Last Word* which appeared in 1978. Many of his comments on Gissing are doubtless still unrecorded, buried as

they are in the files of old magazines which either have no index or never attracted the notice of bibliographers. Joseph J. Wolff, in his annotated bibliography, lists a very few items, but he has overlooked many more. Those of us who can easily consult the London *Bookman* will for instance find a review by him of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* in the sumptuous Christmas 1912 number.

In the second, revised edition of *George Gissing: A Critical Study*, Swinnerton toned down some of his sharpest strictures, and some signs of remorse can be found in certain later writings on

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Gissing as well as in his private correspondence with people who wrote to him about Gissing. The studies of the latter's life and works published in recent years he does not seem to have reviewed, but as late as 1968 he contributed an introduction to the Doughty edition of *The Odd Women*, and it was also to him that Baker had turned when he reprinted *By the Ionian Sea* in 1956. It was about that last date that came to an end what might be called the Swinnerton era in Gissing studies, but such worthy champions of Gissing as May Yates, Ruth Capers McKay and Samuel Vogt Gapp would, with some excellent reasons, have rejected this appellation.

Besides *The Times*, the *Observer* (14 November) and the *Daily Telegraph* 9 November) published obituaries of Frank Swinnerton. Thanks are due to the various friends who kindly sent press-cuttings and photocopies of these obituaries and indeed of other documents.

Professor Martha Vogeler contributes the two following paragraphs:

Nicholas Delbanco in *Group Portrait : Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Ford Madox Ford, Henry James, and H. G. Wells*, N.Y. : William Morrow, 1982, names Gissing among others on the fringes of the circle he studies who would "repay close attention" (p. 41) and also as one of the collaborators of the play "The Ghost," performed on 28 December 1899 in the Brede schoolhouse as part of the festivities arranged by Stephen and Cora Crane, occupants in the nearby Manor House, an occasion described by one of the guests, H. G. Wells, in his *Experiment in Autobiography*. (It was he who was sent to fetch a doctor the night of the performance, when Crane suffered a hemorrhage that presaged the end of his life the following year. Gissing, who was apparently not at that gathering, sent his letter of condolence to Crane's widow through Wells).

There are two references to Gissing in J. R. Hammond's collection, *H. G. Wells: Interviews*

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and *Recollections*, (Totowa, New Jersey, 1980). In one, from *H. G. Wells and His Family* (Edinburgh, 1956), Mathilde Meyer, governess of Wells's two sons, recalls seeing at his Spade House a photograph showing "the beautiful head of George Gissing," whom she goes on to say died "at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, where Mr. and Mrs. Wells paid him the last visit." The Editor corrects the error about the visit in a footnote. In "Wells as seen by his Friends," from *An Autobiography*, Frank Swinnerton writes about learning little from Wells or his wife about Gissing when he interviewed them while preparing his book on Gissing, which, he notes in this excerpt, "contained little that was not already familiar in Thomas Seccombe's preface to *The House of Cobwebs*."

In their latest catalogue of New Paperbacks, Trade Titles and Hardback Books, the Harvester Press Ltd. announce *The Unclassed* in paperback at £4. 95 for March. This will be a reprint of Jacob Korg's critical edition. The same firm informs us that *The Whirlpool* is to be recorded as a Talking

Book by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (Braille House, 338-346 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7JE). Also of interest is the announcement for next April of *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-Postponement*, by Kathleen Blake of the University of Washington.

We should like to recommend a book which contains a few pages of genuine interest to anyone concerned with Gissing, *History of the Friends' School Lancaster* (now the George Fox school) by Ralph H. S. Randles. In this volume of 195 pages with a number of illustrations, the end of Ch. VI is devoted to Gissing's headmaster, James Wood, who was in charge of the Friends' School at Lancaster from 1857, the year of Gissing's birth, to 1863. Much new information about James

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Wood's life will be found in Mr. Randles's careful study. A portrait of Gissing's schoolmaster is reproduced on p. 64. This is a volume to be placed by the side of *George Gissing at Alderley Edge*. It should be ordered from the author, Mr. Ralph Randles, 6 Hillside, Lancaster LA1 1YH. The price postpaid is £10 for orders from England, £11 for orders from abroad.

We have been requested to print the following announcement:

LITIR (Literary Information and Retrieval) Database, initiated in 1980, has now published five volumes of its *Annual Bibliography of Victorian Studies* and a *Cumulative Bibliography of Victorian Studies : 1976-1980*. LITIR's current active computer file contains approximately 15,000 entries of books and articles published from 1976 to 1982. By July 1983 an almost equal number of entries covering the publications from 1970 to 1975 will be added to the file. This storehouse of information both on line and in printed version is now available to Victorian scholars for research. For on line searching, the researcher must have an access to LITIR ONLINE, an interactive system which makes possible an extremely rapid instant search of material on a computer terminal.

The printed version of LITIR's computerized information is published as *Annual Bibliography of Victorian Studies*. Each volume of the *Annual* consists of approximately 500 pages (two columns per page) and a comprehensive keyword subject index. This *Annual* is primarily meant as a library subscription serial. *The Cumulative Bibliography of Victorian Studies : 1976-1980*, which is just published, with approximately 14,000 entries classified into seven broad sections and more than one hundred sub-sections, is available to individual scholars at only \$44. 00 (a saving of \$66.00 on its regular price of \$110. 00).

Having completed its initial phase, LITIR is now trying to reach out to every individual scholar

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working on the Victorian period through its quarterly bulletin, *Litir Newsletter of Victorian Studies*. The newsletter will try to alert scholars to new projects, seminars, conferences, books, articles, and current trends in Victorian Studies. The subscription to the newsletter is free; its first issue is scheduled for publication by the first week of February 1983.

Victorian scholars as well as publishers and organisations concerned with the Victorian period are requested to send to LITIR information on projects, books, articles, seminars, conferences, programmes, or courses – anything that might be of interest to fellow scholars. Enquiries, correspondence, prepaid orders, and requests for the newsletter should be sent to Brahma Chaudhuri, Editor, LITIR Database, c/o Dept. of English, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, with an introduction by Margaret Walters, London : Virago, 1982, pp. xvi (unpaginated) + 336. Green paperback. £3.50. This is a reprint of the 1980 edition.

George Gissing, *The Nether World*, edited with an introduction by John Goode, Brighton : The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. xviii + viii + 392. Grey and red paperback. £2.95. The same title is available in a new red cloth edition priced at £9.95. This is a reprint of the 1974 edition.

George Gissing, *The Nether World*, with an introduction by Walter Allen, London, Melbourne and Toronto: Dent (Everyman's Library), 1982, pp. xx + 392, khaki and white paperback. £3.50. This is a reprint of the 1975 edition.

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George Gissing, *The Paying Guest*, edited with an introduction and notes by Ian Fletcher, Brighton : The Harvester Press 1982, pp. xxxii + 171. Blue cloth, gilt titling. £9.95.

George Gissing, *Demos*, edited with an introduction and notes by Pierre Coustillas, Brighton : The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. xlv + 477. Orange and grey paperback. £4.95. This is a reprint, with some corrections in the introduction and bibliography, of the 1972 edition. (The same title is still available in blue cloth with gilt titling at £9.95).

George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, with an introduction by John Stewart Collis and bibliographical notes by Pierre Coustillas, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. xxxi + xiv + 298 + 6 (unpaginated). Grey and green paperback. £4.95. The same title is available in hardback at £9.95, but no copy has been received to date.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Martin Seymour-Smith (ed), *Novels and Novelists: A Guide to the World of Fiction*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980. Gissing is discussed or mentioned seven times.

Joan Seddon, "Setting a Bad Example," *Manchester Evening News*, 16 September 1982. Review of *Gissing : A Life in Books*. Besides the reviews listed in our October number, the following have appeared (the page number is given when known): Tony Brode, "Fiction from his

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Poverty," *Southern Evening Echo*, 16 September, p. 40; Harry Reid, "Creativity that just

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