

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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Dr. G. C. Williamson,

Sympathetic Critic and Friend

F. J. Woodman
St. Bees, Cumbria

On February 23rd, 1903 Gissing wrote to Dr. George Charles Williamson in Guildford, Surrey, in answer to some kindly expressions of appreciation made by Williamson in a letter about *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Later, Williamson quoted from the letter as follows: –

That you, who pass so much of your life among things nobly beautiful, should be able to find some measure of success in my attempts to tell of the beauty I have seen and felt, cannot but gratify me. I should like to add that your estimate of my work, as a whole, seems to differ refreshingly from that which is more often brought under my notice. After having been told by all manner of authorities, year after year, that the note of my writing is its depressing monotony, and that variety of subjects and manner seem wholly beyond my reach, it is, I confess, very encouraging to hear from you a different opinion. I suppose the fact of the matter is that very few reviewers have read more than one or two of my books. To those who, like yourself, keep a certain number of them in mind I am indeed grateful, all the more so, that I must needs wonder how you do it, amid the press of writing which calls for your attention.¹

It was most apt of Gissing to refer to “the press of writing” of his correspondent: born in 1858, by the end of 1903 Williamson had written, co-authored or edited over a score of books and by the end of his long life (he died in 1942) the tally was some five score (in his 1933 memoirs he refers to himself “as the author myself of one hundred books”²). His writing career

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started with newspaper articles on local archaeology and history followed by books on coins and trade tokens in 1889 but he soon turned to writing on art and this was his main field of interest for the rest of his life; he was appointed art editor for the publishers George Bell & Sons and became an international expert on portrait miniatures, producing scholarly catalogues of a number of private collections including the famous Pierpont Morgan collection of some thousand miniatures.

It is interesting to speculate on how and when Williamson met Gissing and how their friendship developed. In his chapter on Gissing in his 1921 publication *Behind My Library Door* Williamson says that “Gissing’s first wife had died when I knew him. From his second he had for some time been separated, and then, later on, when again I met him, he was living in that strange and absorbing friendship with the lady whom Roberts called Thérèse.” The separation from Edith occurred in September 1898, so that Williamson’s association with Gissing was limited to the last five years of his life. In a letter from Arcachon dated December 26th, 1901 to his sister Ellen, Gissing mentions “a certain Mr. Williamson, who is staying with his wife at the great hotel here, and who had seen about me in the newspapers”³; but this is, of course, C. N. Williamson the novelist, as is made clear in the letter to Gabrielle of the same date. I can find no reference to George Williamson in the *Diary*⁵ or in the published correspondence with Bertz, Wells, Gabrielle Fleury, Hudson or Clodd.⁶ His friends described him as a “clubbable” man, his clubs including the Burlington Fine Arts and the First Edition Club, and this environment coupled with his editorial association with George Bell & Sons resulted in a very wide circle of friends and acquaintances in the literary and art world. On the other hand, “clubbable” is not a

description that springs to mind in connection with Gissing; indeed in the letter to the editor of the *Academy and Literature* mentioned in footnote 1, Williamson says of Gissing: “As a

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conversationalist he had few equals. His voice was a delightful one, full of charm and melody, and he loved to read aloud and to talk of nature, of flowers, and of mountains. He had few friends and few of them knew one another, as Gissing did not love to have many men about him, but to commune with one at a time and to admit but very few into the secret recesses of his heart.” Although there is some truth in this, one must not forget Gissing’s several evenings with the Omar Khayyám Club and the enjoyable meetings at Aldeburgh with Clodd, Shorter, Grant Allen and others. There is no evidence that Williamson was ever involved with the Omar Khayyám meetings so that he is unlikely to have met Gissing in that situation. In his will, Williamson directed that “all my Diaries shall within five years after my death be sent to the authorities of the British Museum.” No doubt he recorded his meeting with Gissing in his diary (and probably the later course of their friendship), but unfortunately the British Library tell me that the diaries never reached them and I have been unable to trace their location.

Williamson was born in Guildford and was associated with it most of his life, so it is natural to think of Frederic Harrison of Sutton Place, Guildford as a potential introducer; Harrison’s association with Gissing is well-known from 1880 onwards and Williamson records that “for many years there was near to my native town an interesting group of followers of Auguste Comte, with many of whom I got into conversation.”⁷ Amongst other mutual acquaintances of the two men who might have effected an introduction we have Grant Allen, Edward Clodd and Clement Shorter. Of these, the last named seems rather likely; Shorter’s association with Gissing is well documented whilst an unpublished letter from Williamson to T. B. Mosher of April 13th, 1922 acknowledging the presentation of a “delightful little book” (very probably Mosher’s 1922 reprint of his selections from *Ryecroft* entitled *Books and the Quiet Life*) connects the writer Williamson clearly with Shorter and Gissing. In the letter Williamson

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indicates that he has organised with Shorter the provision to Mosher of “a familiar photograph of Gissing” which Mosher had requested.⁸

Whatever the circumstances of their first meeting, it is clear that Williamson was familiar with most of Gissing’s writings and held him in high esteem as an author. It can, for example, be demonstrated with some confidence that the laudatory and sympathetic review of *By the Ionian Sea*⁹ in the *Guardian* of July 31st, 1901, although unsigned, was by Williamson; there are a number of passages in the review which correspond identically in wording with passages in Williamson’s chapter on Gissing in his *Behind My Library Door*, published in 1921. To take only one example, where the wording is not identical, but so closely related that one cannot but assume that the same author was responsible for both:

It is very seldom that a writer is found who is so strangely and deeply moved by the sonorous words of Latin and Greek that so move Mr. Gissing (*Guardian*, unsigned review).

We find him moved by sonorous words of Latin and Greek in strange and deep fashion (*Behind My Library Door*, p. 17).

On similar grounds, it can be argued confidently that the unsigned review in the *Academy* on March 7th, 1903 of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*¹⁰ was penned by Williamson.

Again to take only one example:

This book interests, nourishes, calms me; it is a permanent addition to my pleasures: I read it often (*Academy*, unsigned review).

This is a volume that a critic reads over and over again. It interests, it nourishes, it calms. It is a permanent addition to the pleasures of a bookman... (*Behind My Library Door*, p. 17).

Both these reviews give the impression that Williamson was very familiar with a great

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deal of Gissing's earlier work from *Demos* onwards and that he regarded himself as a friend.

One other coincidental link between Williamson and Gissing is worthy of mention. In 1900 Williamson visited the prolific, eccentric (if not to say somewhat "dippy") novelist Ouida at her home in Lucca; Williamson was at the time staying in Florence and his visit was at the behest of a London publisher negotiating with Ouida on the publication of a new book. His account of the visit¹¹ is most entertaining and revealing: "I stayed a long time with her and we talked well into the evening ... I had one of the most interesting conversations that I ever had in my life." Now, on July 10th, 1900 Gissing had received to his "great surprise, a note from Ouida, from Lucca, praising 'Ionian Sea' and wondering how I understood the dialects!"¹² Ouida must have been reading this in serial publication in the *Fortnightly Review* where it started in May 1900; she herself contributed to this periodical under W. L. Courtney's editorship on several occasions. One wonders whether Gissing's work and his ability to read and speak Italian came up during Williamson's "long time with her"; it is perhaps significant that Ouida had written to Sir Sydney Cockerell in May 1900 saying: "When you write tell me if you read Italian. Frederic Harrison is the only Englishman I know who does."¹³ Let us hope that after her subsequent correspondence with Gissing and, perhaps, her long talk with Williamson, she was no longer in ignorance and that she fully appreciated Gissing's ability to read and speak Italian.¹⁴

A curious feature of Williamson's quotations from Gissing's letters to him is a lack of precision in repetition; an example is the nostalgic lament from the Pyrenees where Gissing says: "Oh, to live in Sussex or Surrey, to see Spring come up over the heaths. Here, certainly, we have primroses and violets, yes, even here and there hartstongue and spleenwort, but these

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things on the slopes of the Pyrenees are indeed not the same as they are in the lanes of England in April."¹⁵ This quotation was made in 1921, but seventeen years earlier it appeared as "To live in Guildford, as you do, and to see Spring coming up over the heaths! Here (St. Jean de Luz) we have primroses and violets, yes, even hartstongue and spleenwort; but all these things on the slopes of the Pyrenees are not the same thing as we see them in a Surrey lane."¹⁶ Is it possible that Williamson tended to rely on his formidable memory rather than transcribing from actual letters? The very recent discovery by Pierre Coustillas¹⁷ of a copy of the original of this 1903 letter shows that neither version is quoting Gissing exactly although only a word is altered or omitted here and there. What is perhaps slightly reprehensible is that the tiny changes tend to make the letter sound more intimate and personal. A typical example is where Gissing refers to the reviewers of his books, especially those who have read more than one or two of them; in the original letter he says "To those who, like yourself, keep a certain number of them in mind, I am grateful – all the more so that I must needs wonder how they do it amid the press of writing which calls for their attention." In Williamson's quotation "they" becomes "you" and "their"

becomes “your,” tiny changes which nevertheless give a subtle increase in familiarity.

Perhaps we should not exaggerate the depth of the friendship between Williamson and Gissing; the former prefaced his 1933 memoirs with the statement that “it has fallen to my lot to meet and know many delightful people, and some curious personalities.”¹⁸ And, indeed, the subsequent pages include a huge range, from Queen Victoria and Gladstone to numerous authors, publishers and collectors. It is to be suspected that Williamson’s friendship with Gissing was limited to a few meetings and some quite limited correspondence, noted for its relative formality rather than any great intimacy, although on one occasion Williamson refers to “a letter, from which I must not quote, because it is full of his own personal story.”¹⁹

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Nevertheless, it seems clear that Williamson held Gissing in the highest esteem, both as a writer and as a man; he admired his erudition and scholarship, his knowledge of the classics, his great ability as a conversationalist and his charitable nature as “one of those who would take any trouble to help another, especially if the man requiring help was a writer who was striving to live by the pen.”²⁰ No doubt, their admiration for and mutual familiarity with the Surrey countryside around Guildford and Dorking was a common bond. Paradoxically, the attitudes of the two to religion could not be further apart: Williamson was a devout Roman Catholic (Mass for the repose of his soul is still said annually at St. Peter’s, Guildford), Gissing was probably an atheist.

In conclusion, let us quote Williamson’s last words on Gissing: “...one would hope that this strange, shy, fastidious man, this kindest of companions, and this most wonderful of conversationalists, has at last entered into a fuller appreciation of that for which he always longed, ‘rest, refreshment, joy.’”²¹

I must record my thanks to Mrs. Mavis Davies of the Local Studies Library (Surrey County Library) at Guildford for the provision of some of the information on Dr. Williamson and to Pierre Coustillas for providing some of the source material and for his encouragement.

1. G. C. Williamson, *Behind My Library Door*, London: Selwyn & Blount, 1921, p. 19, and *The Academy and Literature*, “Correspondence: George Gissing,” Letter to the editor, January 9th, 1904, p. 46.
2. G. C. Williamson, *Memoirs in Miniature*, London: Grayson and Grayson, 1933, p. 5.

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3. *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, ed. A. and E. Gissing, London: Constable, 1927, p. 379.
4. *The Letters of George Gissing to Gabrielle Fleury*, ed. P. Coustillas, New York Public Library, 1964, p. 145.
5. *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978.
6. *Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz*, ed. A. C. Young, London: Constable, 1961; *George Gissing and H. G. Wells*, ed. R. A. Gettmann, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961; *Landscapes and Literati*, Letters of Hudson and Gissing, ed. D. C. H. Shrubbsall and P.

Coustillas, Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1985; and *The Letters of George Gissing to Edward Clodd*, ed. P. Coustillas, London: Enitharmon Press, 1973.

7. *Memoirs in Miniature*, pp. 90-91.
8. Letter from Dr. Williamson to T. B. Mosher, April 13th 1922, unpublished (Carl H. Pforzheimer Library).
9. *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, ed. P. Coustillas and C. Partridge, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 387.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 420.
11. *Behind My Library Door*, pp. 3-4.
12. *Diary*, p. 527.
13. *Ouida: The Passionate Victorian*, by Eileen Bigland, London: Jarrolds, 1950, p. 232.
14. Cf. *George Gissing at Work*, by P. Coustillas and P. Bridgwater, Greensboro, N. C.: Elt Press, 1988, p. 113.
15. *Behind My Library Door*, p. 19.

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16. *The Academy and Literature*, p. 46.
17. Private communication, P. Coustillas to F. J. Woodman, March 20th, 1989.
18. *Memoirs in Miniature*, p. 5.
19. *Behind My Library Door*, p. 20.
20. *The Academy and Literature*, p. 46.
21. *Behind My Library Door*, p. 21.

Appeal from The Gissing Trust
The Trust needs period furniture for
The Gissing Centre

Patrons are being sought who would be willing to donate or lend suitable items of period furniture, or make contributions to help purchase such articles.

The centre, as most readers of the *Newsletter* will know, is to be established in the house in Wakefield where Gissing lived as a boy.

It is just ten years since the Trust was set up with the aim of creating the centre as a place of interest to visitors and to house a library which would be a major resource for scholars working on aspects of Gissing or the literary history of Wakefield more generally.

Now, thanks to generous support from National Westminster Bank and a number of other patrons, the Trustees have a lease of a suite of rooms in the Georgian house that was Gissing's parents' home and hold exhibition material and a considerable collection of books on Gissing.

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With the assistance of National Westminster Bank, the principal lessees of the Gissing House, the rooms have been reinstated and decorated, with wallpapers which reproduce 1870's designs.

The Trustees are seeking a few quality items of furniture of the 1870's or earlier to complete the period "feel". They would particularly welcome offers of small tables, chairs, a desk and china-cabinet or bureau.

Would-be donors are invited to contact the Trust's secretary, Mr. Tony Petyt, 10 Station Street, Wakefield WF1 5AF, from whom further information may be obtained.

Gissing Down Under
(concluded)

C. M. Wyatt, Canberra, Australia
and Pierre Coustillas

Anon., "Literary Gossip," *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 11 April 1906. Some comment on the well-known anonymous article which A. H. Bullen published in the recently revived *Gentleman's Magazine* ("Some Recollections of George Gissing," February 1906, pp. 11-18). Edith Lister, the author, who published novels and articles under a number of pseudonyms, notably Noel Ainslie, knew Gissing during the late spring and summer of 1898, after his return from Italy.

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Lionel Lit., "Letters on Literature: Re-Readings," *Brisbane Courier*, 23 June 1906, p. 13. A careful evocation of the charms of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, followed by a quotation of and comment upon the passage on honey. The critic mentions the recent pocket edition of the book published by Constable.

Anon., "Current Literature: On a Little Oatmeal," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 1906, p. 4. A review of *The House of Cobwebs*, a volume "chiefly noticeable by reason of the preface by Mr. Thomas Seccombe ... a document of pathetic importance." Indeed the reviewer has not a word to say about the short stories and his comment upon the details of Gissing's life taken from Seccombe's inaccurate account and from Ryecroft's private papers are both snobbish and condescending. The gist of this comment is that, being poor and handicapped by a retiring disposition, he could not write good works. Seccombe's introductory survey is commended to readers "mainly as an instructive guide to the hard experiences of a modern Chatterton."

Anon., "Literature: Gissing's Early Struggles," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 14 July 1906, p. 107. Although this long piece appeared on the occasion of the publication of *The House of Cobwebs*, it is not really a review of the short stories. Throughout the writer comments genially upon Gissing's experience of poverty as described in the Introductory Survey, observing that Seccombe gives a fuller account than has yet been published of the novelist's

early struggles and hardships. While the most part of the details is accurate, some of them, which were repeated in the *D. N. B.* entry, also by Seccombe, must be regarded as erroneous, for instance the so-called “gas-fitting episode in Boston” or the clerkship in Liverpool. Not a word is said of the collection of short stories.

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Anon., “Fiction of the Day: Gissing’s Short Stories,” *The Argus* (Melbourne), 27 July 1906, p. 7. An essentially descriptive review of *The House of Cobwebs*, a volume in which “the greater peace of mind, the more abundant hopefulness which characterised the last two novels of George Gissing is manifest.” Here at last he appears “to see beyond and behind the sordidness and bitterness of narrow lives and the cruelty of mean circumstances ... he insists rather on the fine altruism, the compelling generosity which inspires the poorest and loneliest of people to help their neighbours.” Short analyses of five of the short stories make up the bulk of the review: “The House of Cobwebs,” “A Charming Family,” “A Poor Gentleman,” “Christopherson,” and “A Daughter of the Lodge.”

Anon., “Literary Gossip,” *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 1 August 1906, p. 43. Another review of *The House of Cobwebs* which focuses exclusively on Seccombe’s Introductory Survey. Anecdotes about Gissing’s poverty are quoted as well as Seccombe’s opinion about Gissing’s early imitation of the ponderous type of fiction favoured by George Eliot. This review is reprinted from the London weekly *Public Opinion* (“Literary and Journalistic Notes,” 15 June 1906, p. 756).

Anon., “Books and Authors,” *Tasmanian Mail* (Hobart), 15 September 1906, p. 5. A mere quotation from Seccombe’s Introductory Survey to the effect that if Gissing is in temperament and vitality palpably inferior to the masters, “he will remain exceptionally dear to the heart of the recluse, who thinks that the scholar does well to cherish a grievance against the vulgar world beyond the cloister.”

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Anon., “[*Henry Ryecroft*],” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 October 1906, p. 118. A paragraph on the new edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Constable, 3s.), “in splendid type and thin paper,” which was obviously the pocket edition actually issued by Constable in September 1905. The paragraph was probably written by H. H. Champion. In this shape the book “will last many a year amongst that comparatively small circle who knew Gissing as he really was. It shows the man very lucidly, and, on reading each page of it, one feels how great a man was passed in the race for popularity until he was too old to enjoy it ... It is a book to keep.”

James Douglas, “Literary Notes,” *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 10 October 1906, p. 81. A characteristic paragraph worth reprinting *in toto*: “George Gissing is still one of the unclassed novelists, although many attempts to class him have been made by his admirers. No novelist has won more appreciation from fellow-craftsmen. His reputation has been made by writers rather than by readers. It was kept alive during his life by literary champions who made up for the smallness of their numbers by their intensity of advocacy. It is being kept alive now that he is dead by the same heroic band. Indeed, the love, and the loyalty displayed by Gissing’s friends may be cited as a shining disproof of

the theory that the literary temperament is incurably envious. The friendship of so many friends is a fine testimony to his genius. Even those who cannot believe in Gissing can hardly refrain from believing in the belief of the true believers.”

The manner in which the authorship of the paragraph is given shows that the source is another newspaper. James Douglas (1867-1940) was a London journalist, the editor of

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The Star and a contributor to *The Daily News*. He played a prominent role in the quarrel over the publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* in 1912. See Pierre Coustillas, “The publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland: A Literary Event*,” in *Twilight of Dawn: Studies in English Literature in Transition*, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987). The source of the paragraph still has to be traced.

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 October 1906, p. 11. A long paragraph consisting in quotations from and comment upon Austin Harrison’s article on Gissing in the September 1906 number of *Nineteenth Century*. The whole passage amounts to a portrait of Gissing seen through the consciousness of a man who liked him, but saw very little of him after the mid-eighties.

Anon., “[*Henry Ryecroft*],” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 November 1906, p. 127. A paragraph written, probably by H. H. Champion, in the first person singular about book binding as a test of the esteem in which a writer is held. The author of the paragraph called on Miss Chapman, at the Craftsman Bindery, Flinders Street, Melbourne, and asked for what books she was most often asked to find a binding. After the books by Richard Jefferies and *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, probably came Gissing’s *Henry Ryecroft*.

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *The Morning Herald* (Perth), 10 November 1906, p. 2. Hostile and tendentious comment on Austin Harrison’s article on Gissing in the September number of *Nineteenth Century*, which is called a very badly written “impression.”

B. C. D., “George Gissing,” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 6 May 1909, p. 58. An informal

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essay expressing in emotional terms a great admiration for Gissing, especially his later books, *By the Ionian Sea* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. The writer reviews Gissing’s memorable statements on poverty, books, antiquity, the temple guardian at Paestum, the ignobly decent, and concludes sentimentally: “Sometimes I wonder who now has the pen that he bought twenty-five years ago in Tottenham Court Road, and that made a callosity on his forefinger – the pen that I wish had lain against his finger for many more years ere he laid it down in weariness.”

Anon., “Red Page,” *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 24 November 1910, Red Page. A paragraph on the first number of *T. P’s Magazine* (October 1910). Edward Clodd’s reminiscences of Herbert Spencer, Grant Allen, Gissing and others, entitled “A Garland of Friendship,” are selected for praise. In this short article Clodd had little enough to say of Gissing (pp. 23-24); he wrote at greater length on him in his *Memories* (1916).

Anon., “[*The Seasons*],” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 6 March 1911, p. 26. Three short

paragraphs on an anthology entitled *The Seasons* and compiled by Helen and Lewis Melville. Among the contents are many poems, but also passages from prose writers “and amongst them prominence is given to George Gissing, of whom it is now safe to say that justice is every day being given to his delightful works.”

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 1 January 1913, p. 79. Essentially a long quotation from comment by C. K. Shorter on *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* in *The Sphere* for 16 November 1912, p. 182 (“A Literary Letter: Concerning George Gissing”). Shorter accused Morley Roberts of not having been generous enough to his friend.

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“Gissing was simply unfortunate, and it is not for the fortunate ones in our social system to throw stones at him. Had he not become a great novelist people would have said that he was unlucky, and nothing more; but he did become a great novelist.”

Anon., “The Red Page: Gissing,” *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 30 January 1913, Red Page. A rambling review of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (Bell’s Colonial Library) which focuses on Gissing’s three matrimonial ventures. To Roberts’s inaccuracies the reviewer adds a few of his own. He is mainly concerned with facts, but he has doubts about the method adopted by Roberts: “The question whether one literary man can thus botanise on the grave of his closest friend can be answered only by the need for the task and the manner in which it is done. The truth about Gissing has never yet been told, though it was widely known there was a story to tell; and Morley Roberts in this book has done his dead friend but bare justice in setting forth his inner life.”

Anon., “Reviews of Books: A Page from Life,” *The Register* (Adelaide), 1 February 1913, p. 4. Another review of the Colonial edition of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. The author first observes that “a storm of comment and protest has been aroused in England by this book” and that Roberts “has done the thing in an utterly wrong way.” He then objects to the transparent pseudonyms, used by the narrator to conceal the identity of those friends of Gissing who are still alive and to the useless initials, J. H., printed on the title page. Gissing is defined as “a strange compound of ancient Greek and modern Russian,” as a man who revelled in the classic authors, but was compelled to write

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about the squalid side of modern life. The review ends with the remark made about Gissing by one of the executors, an unnamed woman who was of course Clara Collet: “He was sent into hell for the purpose of saving souls.”

Anon., “Recent Fiction,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1913, p. 4. The Colonial edition of *Henry Maitland* is reviewed briefly, some doubt being expressed as to the method used by Roberts, but the writer thinks “there is nothing at all offensive in the book. It is written in a spirit of high appreciation and sympathy.”

Anon., “New Books,” *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 February 1913, p. 4. Yet another short review of the Colonial edition of *Henry Maitland*, beginning with Roberts’s opinion on the biographer’s mission, but no revelation is made of the real identity of Maitland. “It is the life of a man of genius in all its vicissitudes, narrated by an admiring, but discriminating, friend, who unsparingly sets forth the blemishes of character as well as the strength and

the lovable qualities of his hero. The long continued struggle against poverty by a gifted writer is told with an amount of detail which increases its painful interest."

Norman Lilley, "The Red Page: Gissing in His Books," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 20 February 1913, Red page. Lilley disapproves of the method used by Morley Roberts, whose book he judges through the description of it given by the *Bulletin* for 30 January. He thinks it is "perhaps worth while to indicate a few directions in which one has often guessed at the relation of the novels to the character and experience of the man," noting in passing that he has read and reread all that Gissing wrote, whether collected or scattered. He suggests that Ida Starr and Harriet Smales, in *The Unclassed*, may correspond to opposite aspects

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of the novelist's first wife, and quotes the key passage in "A Lodger in Maze Pond," a short story which Gissing, as we know, confessed to be autobiographical. Similarly Lilley suggests that Osmond Waymark and Julian Casti offer complementary aspects of the author, and he quotes Waymark on the subject of money. The ensuing paragraph on the theme of pretence in Gissing's novels is the most perceptive as it links up such apparently different novels as *Demos*, *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*. Of Mutimer, Milvain, Peak and Lashmar, Milvain is the only one who benefits from his pretence to the end, so that, after all, Gissing's working out of the pretence plots is moral. Lilley also draws the reader's notice to the importance of food in Gissing's fiction, especially in *Henry Ryecroft* and *The Nether World*. "Even his two or three potboilers are worth half a circulating library of average novels; and at least nine of his books are masterpieces. Read, for a start, *Will Warburton*, *The Odd Women*, *Born in Exile*, *New Grub Street*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *Henry Ryecroft*, *Human Odds and Ends* ... 'The Day of Silence' ... is one of the greatest things in tragedy ever written. Forced into the slums, he found such pearls in the gutter."

(Norman McIntosh Lilley is described in *Who's Who in Australia* as a journalist living in Sydney 1907-1916, then sub-editor of the *Argus* and dramatic critic on that paper. He contributed to many journals. The editor of the *Bulletin* in 1913 was Alfred George Stephens (1865-1933), who signed his articles with his three initials and was nick-named by Joseph Furphy "the Three-initialled Terror." An example of his style is offered by his paragraph on Gissing in the *Bulletin* for 19 January 1905. "The Red Page," that is the literary section of that journal, was inaugurated in September 1894.)

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Anon., "Literature: A Novelist's Own Tragedy," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 23 February 1913, p. 6. A long review of *Henry Maitland* which, like so many others, begins with a declaration of doubt about Roberts's moral right to deal with his dead friend in the way he has, and goes on with an evocation, interspersed with lengthy quotations from the book under review, of Gissing's personality and major artistic themes. The reviewer quotes Roberts on Gissing's so called lack of humour; he is concerned with the evolution noticeable in such later books as *The Whirlpool* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*, and views his subject as "a strange and sombre genius, indebted to no predecessor, unless, perhaps, to Tourgenieff," a striking figure in English literature, a man whose life was full of contrasts, an embodiment of high ideals in squalid surroundings.

Anon., "Fiction of the Day: The Life of Gissing," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 28 February 1913, p. 5. *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* "is a merciless record of the unfortunate life of

George Gissing ... A more distressing book to read it would be difficult to imagine." As a character study the novel is a failure and it has a self-conscious air about it. The reviewer quotes from H. G. Wells's own review ("The Truth about Gissing," *Rhythm*, Literary Supplement, December 1912, pp. I-IV) and from Swinnerton's critical study, which is recommended in preference to Roberts's fictionalized biography .

[H. H. Champion], "*The Private Life of Henry Maitland*," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), February 1913, p. 16. Champion relates how he came across a copy of the book and chose not to write about it until, on taking up the journal of the Society of Authors, he

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read that the real identity of Henry Maitland was an open secret ("Literary, Dramatic and Musical Notes," *The Author*, 1 December 1912, pp. 73-74). Answering the question on everyone's lips, including a lady in a train ("What a book! Is it really true about Gissing?"), he is content to say that "all the salient facts are of my own knowledge true, and, though I may differ here and there as to the interpretation of them, Morley Roberts has very honestly given you his view of them." Champion relates the circumstances under which he came to know Gissing and quotes from three letters he received from him dated 8 January 1896, 9 May 1900 and 11 January 1902. In the first W – is Joseph Woolf, a Melbourne solicitor and a remarkable personality (1861-1947).

Anon., "Literature," *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 8 March 1913, p. 20. A review of *Henry Maitland* (Colonial edition) which reads throughout as though its author had not realized that the book is a thinly disguised biography of Gissing. It is viewed essentially as a picture of artistic Bohemia with a not impossible central character. "It is not a novel in the ordinary sense, but the relentless turning inside out of a human life."

Anon., "In Bookland," *Brisbane Courier* (Courier Home Circle Supplement), 12 March 1913, p. 6. This is the same review as the previous one.

Anon., "Literature: Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 10 May 1913, p. 1099. A series of contrasting quotations about *Henry Maitland* from Hamilton Fyfe (review untraced), H. G. Wells (see above, entry for 28 February 1913) and Upton Sinclair ("Genius and Privacy," *Academy*, 29 March 1913, pp. 389-90).

[H. H. Champion], "The Book Lover's London," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), January 1914,

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p. 7. A review of A. St. John Adcock's *The Booklover's London*, in which Gissing is frequently mentioned. Once more Champion refers to *The Unclassed*, but misdates it.

Anon., "[A New Life of Gissing]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 February 1916, p. 32. A paragraph which reads:

The late George Gissing had a brother named Algernon, very well known also as a novelist. It is stated that the survivor will write a life of the author. It should be very interesting. "The Clarion" refers to George Gissing as "the author of such dreary, affected, unimaginative slush as "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft"!

Algernon's intention to write a biography of his brother was short-lived. It stemmed from the anger roused in the Gissing family by the publication of *Henry Maitland*. As for the *Clarion*, it had written of Gissing more respectfully in former days.

[H. H. Champion], "Comments," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 October 1916, p. 161. In a review of W. A. Mackenzie's novel *Flower of the Peach*, Champion mentions that the author, together with Gissing and a third unnamed writer (who was Morley Roberts), dined with him at his last dinner in England. Gissing's diary shows that this was on 29 December 1893.

Anon., "Gissing and the Nineties," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 12 April 1924, p. 23. This long, important article consists essentially in a reprint of an article by A. N. M., that is Allan Noble Monkhouse, which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* for 22 February

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1924, p. 152. It was reprinted in the *Perth Daily News* on 3 May 1924. The occasion for this article was the second (revised) edition of Frank Swinnerton's critical study of Gissing's works originally published in 1912. Monkhouse reminds his readers of the stir made by the first edition and of Thomas Seccombe's defence of Gissing. He acknowledges that Swinnerton has toned down his criticisms of Gissing's novels, but he is not pleased with this revised edition either and, so as to understand better Swinnerton's hostility to Gissing, he recommends *Young Felix*, one of his early novels, "I don't think Mr. Swinnerton gives Gissing any adequate credit for his wonderful recovery from social and moral disaster. To say that his moral character was unstable is to make the accomplishment more wonderful. Gissing was down: you could hardly be more hopelessly down than he seemed to be; but he pulled himself together and then fought a long, losing battle which became a victory." Monkhouse goes on to mention the paper he read about him to the Manchester Literary Club (12 December 1904; published in the *Manchester Quarterly*, April 1905, pp. 106-25, and reprinted in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 467-78), the committee for the Gissing memorial in Manchester (1913), of which he was a member together with H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, and the only occasion on which he met Gissing (see Diary entry for 4 January 1896; the meeting took place in the home of Mrs. Henry Norman, the author of *Gallia*, who was a cousin of Monkhouse): "I met Gissing, talked with him, and liked him very much ... I have always remembered [his] noble face and his gentleness and courtesy." Monkhouse takes up the defence of *The Town Traveller* ("it is good enough for Dickens") and *The Nether World* ("a very moving book") and refers us to an article by Dr. Bonnier, of

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Liverpool University, which no one has apparently identified (Monkhouse can hardly have had in mind Bonnier's striking chapter on Gissing in his book *Milieux d'art*). The conclusion is a quiet reply to Swinnerton's unfair arguments: "If he carried his nether world about with him we must remember that he was an artist; or if he descended into hell he was under no obligation to give a genial account of the place."

C. R. Bradish, "Red Page: Frank Swinnerton," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 31 July 1924, p. 3. An article on Swinnerton's novel with an unfavourable judgment on his *George Gissing: A Critical Study*.

T. B. C., "Unclean Realism," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 13 November 1924, p. 3. Gissing appears only in the introduction to this long article, which is devoted to recent literature. He had little honour and scant reward in his lifetime. "He was a realist because life in the sordid environment of poverty, dirt and hopelessness was his life. He bared his soul that he might become the voice of his fellow-sufferers, and throughout his realism was inspired by an ideal: to raise this submerged life to higher ground."

Anon., "Books and Bookmen: A Revived Novel," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 9 October 1925, p. 9. The novel in question is *Rachel Marr*, by Morley Roberts (Nash & Grayson) and the reviewer reminds his readers that Gissing (and Hudson) praised it when it appeared in 1903.

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Anon., "The Magazine Section: Fireside," *Daily News* (Perth), 24 October 1925, p. 8. Rambling remarks on the seasons with allusions to and quotations from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*.

Anon., "Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 24 October 1925, p. 1112. A paragraph about the recent discovery in London of Gissing's prefaces to the Rochester edition. They are to be published under the title of *The Immortal Dickens*.

Anon., "New Books," *The Age* (Melbourne), 14 November 1925, p. 6. A review of *The Immortal Dickens*, telling the story of the prefaces, three of which were then considered to be lost, and reflecting Gissing's negative opinion on Dickens's narrative technique.

Anon., "A Satchel of Books," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 3 December 1925, p. 3. A brief review of *The Immortal Dickens*, focusing on Gissing's balanced estimate of Dickens's unequal achievement as a story-teller.

Anon., "Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 3 April 1926, p. 850. A notice of *Frederic Harrison: Thoughts and Memories*, which consists mainly in a quotation of a passage on Gissing.

John Austin, "George Gissing: A Hit or Miss?," *The Western Mail* (Perth), 3 March 1927, p. 36. A reprint of the review of Gissing's Letters to his family which Austin published in the *Weekly Dispatch*, a London newspaper (23 January 1927, p. 7).

Anon., "A Tragic Career," *West Australian* (Perth), 5 March 1927, p. 13. Another review of Gissing's letters to his family, comparing his early struggles with those of Trollope and

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stressing his proneness to depression. The writer thinks that *Henry Ryecroft* will probably be read when *New Grub Street* is forgotten.

Anon., "About Books and Bookmen: George Gissing," *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 2 April 1927, p. 9. A short review of Gissing's letters to his family beginning with the oft-quoted statement: "I mean to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental and moral), of our poorer classes" (3 November 1880). In the front rank of the writers who

made the 1890s a memorable period Gissing must be placed. His letters give a remarkable picture of one of the most tragic figures of literature.

Anon., "Current Literature: George Gissing," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1927, p. 10. A chaotic, mistake-ridden account of Gissing's life based on his letters to his family – the book under review – and *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. Chronology is cast to the winds. The reviewer seems to believe that it was at the end of his life that Gissing met Meredith, John Morley, Frederic Harrison and Thomas Hardy.

Anon., "George Gissing, Scholar and Artist: Novelist's Career," *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 9 April 1927, p. 5. A reprint of the review of Gissing's letters to his family published by George Blake, the novelist, in *John o' London's Weekly* (5 February 1927, pp. 616-17).

Anon., "Literature: Notes on Dickens. Early Writings Reconsidered," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 16 April 1927, p. 16. A belated review of *The Immortal Dickens*, over two thirds of which consist in quotations from "Dickens in Memory" and from Gissing's critical assessments of *The Pickwick Papers*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House*.

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Anon., "Too Late!", *West Australian* (Perth), 16 April 1927, p. 11. An imprecise report of a sale of Gissing MSS at Sotheby's. The manuscript of *The Town Traveller* fetched £260, while those of ten short stories and sketches realised £355 in all. Six letters from the writer to his literary agent, William Morris Colles, totalled £122. The author of the paragraph invites his readers to compare these high prices with the meagre income Gissing derived from his writings. Sotheby's catalogue for the sale of 22 February 1927 shows that the short stories and sketches were "A Capitalist," "A Freak of Nature," "By the Kerb," "The Day of Silence," "His Brother's Keeper," "A Despot on Tour," "Humble Felicity," "Under an Umbrella," "A Man of Leisure" and "Of Good Address." They were all bought, together with *The Town Traveller*, by Walter T. Spencer.

Anon., "Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 16 April 1927, p. 995. A paragraph quoting a letter from William Holloway to the editor of the *Sunday Times* (20 February 1927, p. 10): "As an Oxford man, I speak with knowledge when I say that, with his astonishing mental equipment, he would have been sure of a scholarship of £80 a year at Balliol, or at Corpus of £100. He could easily have made twice as much by private tuition." Holloway thought that a fellowship would have followed in due course. This letter was published in the *Sunday Times* shortly after the review of *The Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family* by Edmund Gosse (6 February 1927, p. 8). The review was reprinted in Gosse's *Leaves and Fruit* (1927).

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Anon., "Books and Bookmen," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 10 May 1927, p. 75. Same paragraph as in the *Australasian* for 16 April 1927.

Anon., "Books and Bookmen," *Daily Telegraph Sunday Pictorial* (Sydney), 12 June 1927, p. 17. In a paragraph on love interest in novels, an ingredient rarely dispensed with, but not to be found in, say, *Don Quixote* or *Typhoon*, occurs this passage: "Allied with the

passionless book is the film without the conventional happy ending. One English film company some time ago had the temerity to cut out the customary mushy finish from the picture drama, and produced Gissing's 'Demos,' truly and tragically right to the bitter end."

Ellen Gissing, "George Gissing: A Character Sketch," *The Register* (Adelaide), 22 October 1927, p. 6. Reprint of a long extract from Ellen Gissing's article in the *Nineteenth Century and After* for September 1927 ("Let us consider for a moment... imperishable gold").

Anon., "Literature: Sir Edmund Gosse's Latest," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 31 December 1927, p. 6. A review of *Leaves and Fruit*, with a paragraph on Gosse's chapter on Gissing.

Anon., "Writers and Readers: A Prolific Author," *The Age Literary Supplement*, (Melbourne), 26 February 1938, p. 1. A long, rambling article which begins with some account of Morley Roberts's last book, *Bio Politics*, then develops into a history of the Roberts-Gissing relationship as related in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. The article is accompanied by a portrait of Gissing taken by Russell in 1895. The following passage is

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of some interest: "The efforts Morley Roberts made in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* to disguise the fact that Maitland is Gissing were not intended to deceive those who had known Gissing. But disguise of some kind he considered necessary in order not to hurt Gissing's relatives too deeply or to injure the prospects of Gissing's two young sons."

Anon., "Latest Fiction," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 2 April 1938, p. 12. A notice of *Stories and Sketches*. "These are trifles, but they display the characteristic Gissing qualities. They are of interest today if only they send the reading public back to his important work ... Gissing, who had a considerable reputation among English novelists at the end of the last century, possessed some of the qualities of Tchekov. He had an abnormal sensitiveness which, brought up against inescapable facts, turned him into a shrinking pessimist."

A New Contact with Gissing's Devotees in Japan.

Pierre Coustillas

Twelve months ago Gillian Tindall contributed to this journal an entertaining piece on the stay she made with her husband in Japan, partly in quest of those friends whose admiration for Gissing had just led to the publication of an impressive batch of new translations of his

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works. She wrote glowingly about her visit, and I hope I shall be excused if I in turn relate my own experiences and those of my wife on a similar occasion. Journals and newsletters devoted to single authors – I am thinking of the *Kipling Journal* in particular – usually welcome lighter contributions, and some readers may think that more of these could profitably find their way into the present journal. Surely not only biographical information, literary criticism and

bibliographical investigations are welcome, but also topographical enquiries – and why not accounts of significant gatherings of people actively interested in the author?

When a westerner happens to mention in conversation the lasting interest of Japanese readers in Gissing, he is sure to be asked for an explanation. Indeed many explanations have been given over the years. Professor Koike dealt with the subject in an essential article published twenty-five years ago; he again tackled the subject – the inevitable subject – in his general introduction to the “Selected Works of George Gissing” published last year by Shubun International, and Gillian Tindall herself added a substantial footnote to the ever longer debate on the question. Even such a recent comment as that of Sôzô Umemiya in the 1988 number of *Atomi English Studies* (see “Recent Publications”) seems to be a variation on the theme “Gissing and I,” even though its title – “The Reading Habits and Choices of Henry Ryecroft” – seems to promise something else. So if one is to try to understand why Gissing appeals to a specific minority of readers in Japan, it is vital to see something of Japan and to investigate this puzzling matter on the spot. I should not have gone to Tokyo with that aim in view but for Shigeru Koike’s longstanding invitation, supported as it came to be in recent years, by an increasing number of friends and correspondents.

Until he himself published his seminal article in the *Bulletin of the New York Public*

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Library for November 1963, only Englishmen had alluded in western books or journals to this interest of the Japanese in Gissing, as though the Japanese themselves, with touching yet excessive modesty, had not thought it decent to confess to the world in some European language that that uncommon English novelist and essayist had written books which strongly appealed to them. William Plomer was surely a pioneer in this respect. In his introduction to the Home and Van Thal edition of *A Life’s Morning*, he wrote:

When I was in Japan, I found that *Ryecroft* had been much read there in the twenty-five years after its publication. Its theme of withdrawal from the hurly-burly much appealed to the intelligentsia of a country caught up in an exceptionally rapid and intensive process of industrialisation, a country which had a long tradition, inherited from China, of the charms of reclusiveness. In the late nineteen-twenties it was banned by the Japanese authorities as a propagator of “dangerous thoughts.” How pleased, how wryly pleased, Gissing would have been by this act!

* * *

We had met Shigeru Koike on two or three occasions, in the mid-1960’s in France, then in England, at the time the *Gissing Newsletter* came into existence, then in 1970 in France again, but we still had to see him in his own country, no longer a young associate professor with a major interest in Dickens and Gissing and a critical edition of Joyce Cary’s *Art and Reality* among his recent publications, but a scholar with a solidly established reputation in his own country, a reputation based on his many books, all too rarely mentioned by him, and on his expertise in all that pertains to railways, from the days when they were a disturbing novelty in

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the Japanese countryside to the latest developments with the opening of the Shinkansen line between Ueno and Morioka. I am bound to say that if Professor Koike’s modesty has remained unaltered, it has been amicably exposed by his friends and colleagues from whom he has not

been able to conceal all his activities, including his participation in television programmes when railways are being discussed – and railways play a more important part in the economic life of Japan than in any other country I know. Their cleanliness, comfort and punctuality are unrivalled.

The lecture I gave at the Faculty of Liberal Arts of the University of Tokyo on the teaching of English in French universities was for me an occasion to discuss Romantic and Victorian literature with a number of colleagues in the informal conversation that followed. Among them were Professors K. Kamijima, the head of the English Department and a specialist of the Romantic period, H. Izubuchi, currently busy with Yeats, Y. Takahashi, whose interest in Matthew Arnold enabled us to realize that we had a number of acquaintances in common, including the late Louis Bonnerot, H. Yamanouchi, who recalled his years in Cambridge when he was working on Coleridge, A. Namekata, a Henry James specialist with whom it was pleasant to revisit Lamb House mentally, and K. Takahashi, whose absorption in Kipling reminded me of my own major current interests. Our discussion of English literature was continued until late in the evening during a memorable dinner in a Chinese restaurant.

“The Relevance of George Gissing” was, it was hoped, the kind of survey which would appeal to a gathering of Gissing devotees. This lecture offered an opportunity to meet or to see again the translators of the selected works published last year, that is Mrs. Ryôko Otah, who, after translating *The Odd Women*, turned to *The Whirlpool* and was reading the proofs of this

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The Meeting at International House of Japan,
Tokyo, 13 May, 1989.

Standing, from left to right: Motoko Ono, Sumiko Nakamura, Keiko Kawachi, Keiko Izubuchi, Fumio Hôjoh, Pierre Coustillas, Shigeru Koike, Suguru Fukasawa, Kazuo Mizokawa and Kiyoto Shiotani. Sitting, from left to right: Miyoko Adachi, Hiromi Mitsunaga, Hélène Coustillas, Ryôko Otah and Ryôta Kanayama.

book, Mr. Kazuo Mizokawa, already known to the readers of the *Newsletter* for various articles besides his translation of *Born in Exile*, and Mr. Ryôta Kanayama, co-translator of *Charles*

Dickens: A Critical Study and currently busy with a rendering into Japanese of *The Immortal Dickens* and various uncollected essays which Gissing wrote on Dickens after 1898. The meeting took place in very attractive surroundings at International House of Japan, and the group can be seen on the photograph, taken after lunch, and reproduced above.

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The whole afternoon was spent in discussion of literary matters with Professor Fumio Hôjoh, whose unflinching kindness from our arrival at Narita Airport to the last day of our stay will not be easily forgotten. Mrs. Hôjoh is the general editor of a series of late Victorian and Edwardian novels which is being published in Japanese by a feminist press. She herself has translated *Esther Waters* which, together with *The Whirlpool* and *Jude the Obscure*, makes up the Victorian part of the series. Her considerable experience of translation marked her out as the most competent person to review for this journal the "Selected Works of George Gissing." We very much appreciated Mrs. Hôjoh's capacities as a cicerone when we visited Kamakura, with its famous bronze statue of the Great Buddha, seven hundred years old. Time passed too quickly at International House for more than a quick review of common cultural interests besides Gissing's life and works with Mrs. Keiko Kawachi, whose work on Ford Madox Ford might conceivably lead her to discover what Ford actually knew of Gissing's works and where he met him (was it at Conrad's?); Mrs. Keiko Izubuchi, with her major interest in Ruskin; Mrs. Miyoko Adachi, currently surveying Gissing's works from a feminist point of view; Miss Hiromi Mitsunaga, whose work on Bennett will have repeatedly led her to those reviews of Gissing's works which Bennett signed with pseudonyms; Professor Suguru Fukasawa, a Hardy specialist in a country which has a Hardy Society; Mrs. Motoko Ono, a Shaw scholar; as well as Mr. Kyoto Shiotani and Miss Sumiko Nakamura.

Of Japanese hospitality and generosity Mr. Hiroshi Nakamura, the executive Director of Shubun International, proved a shining example in Tokyo. It was encouraging to hear that the library edition of the "Selected Works" is almost out of print and that two thirds of the paperbound edition have already found buyers. The time is coming when it will no longer be a rash thing to commission a second series of translations, though choosing the titles most likely

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to interest Japanese readers will be something of a hit or miss game. It is perhaps no accident that the lower-class stories have hitherto, with the exception of *The Nether World*, which is currently being translated, been ignored altogether. Still a novel like *Thyrza*, with its typical Gissing anti-hero Gilbert Grail, might rouse much sympathy among the local misfits of industrial civilization.

As copies found in the Tokyo bookshops testify, a number of Gissing textbooks are still being used in universities. The publication data speak for themselves. For instance *A Daughter of the Lodge and Other Stories* (ed. Norio Akamatsu) is in its 12th impression, *A Victim of Circumstances and Other Stories* (ed. Sakuro Kuno) in its 23rd in the Kenkyusha Pocket English Series, while the meagre selection from *Henry Ryecroft* (sixteen incomplete sections from Spring) in the Choice Reading Series first published by Nichieisha in 1960 is in its 45th, and the more copious selection from the same book published by Kaibunsha has been reprinted forty-two times since its original issue in 1955. The Sanseido translation of *Henry Ryecroft*, an altogether different kind of book, unabridged and printed on thin paper, is now in its 27th impression (5 April 1989) at the very low price of 460 yen. This is only a handful of examples of titles which were all first printed after the war; they are left far behind by the edition (English text) of *Henry Ryecroft* edited by Sanki Ichikawa (no. XLII in the Kenkyusha British and American Classics) which is still regularly reprinted nearly seventy years after it was first

published in the series. What English publisher has kept Gissing in his catalogue for seven decades?

Looking for old editions of Gissing in secondhand bookshops might be an enjoyable game, but we had no time for that kind of search. Sightseeing was – even to me – just as tempting, if not more, not only in and around Tokyo, but also in and around Kyoto, where Professor Koike, who rarely travels without his Japanese “Bradshaw” in a bag, joined us. In Kyoto new forms of

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kindness and hospitality awaited us when we met Professor Masaie Matsumura of Konan University, a Dickensian who reminisced about his encounters with fellow specialists such as Philip Collins and Sylvère Monod, Professor Akira Usuda, co-translator of *Le Roman anglais au XIXe siècle*, and Mrs. Yuko Noguchi, whose active interest in Conrad and Virginia Woolf, two novelists who were equally ill-prepared for peaceful cohabitation in the jungle of English literature, afforded a subject for lively conversation. She was as expert and competent a guide to her French visitors in Kyoto as Mrs. Hôjoh had been in the Tokyo area.

To all these friends and acquaintances (and others of whose names I have no accurate record) we are very grateful for the amount of time and attention, among other valuable commodities, which they gave us. Like Gillian Tindall a year ago we hope to meet them again in the not too distant future, either in France or on what Edwin Reardon would have called “neutral ground,” that is England. One of the deepest and most abiding satisfactions given by such amicable international gatherings is the sense they rouse in participants that intellectual interests between persons of different cultures and civilizations can transcend all barriers – in particular those barriers which Gabrielle Fleury in a letter to Eduard Bertz called “ces odieux préjugés de frontière.” Could Gissing have been sure that devotion to his work among people of East and West could prompt such profitable reunions, his darkest days – I like to imagine with a touch of sentimentality – might have been lighter to bear. They are at all events the nearest approximation I know of to that form of sweet posthumous revenge upon indifference and hostility in which he once delighted by proxy when discussing the artistic achievement of Charlotte Brontë.

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Book Review

Max Foran with Nonie Houlton, *Roland Gissing: the Peoples' Painter*, Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988.

The first time I came across the name of Roland Gissing (1895-1967) was in the Berg Collection in July 1961. Among the dozens of index cards I was examining there was one about a letter from Roland Gissing dating back to the 1950s. John D. Gordan, the Curator of the Berg Collection, must have discovered his existence some time before, rather belatedly perhaps, and, as he was anxious to acquire more material concerning Roland's uncle, he had written to Roland, but Roland had nothing to offer; he was not aware that his uncle had become so famous (this, in the 1950s, was, it would seem, a strange way of viewing things since George's reputation was then very nearly at its lowest), and surely he could not remember that his uncle had once seen him, on 18 September 1897, during a farewell visit to Smallbrook Cottage, prior to his leaving for Italy, and found him “a fat, strong boy, in great health.” The word “boy,” in Gissing's mind, was contrasted with the word “baby,” which he applied to Alwin, then Algernon and

Catherine's youngest child and undoubtedly, if one has in mind the straitened circumstances in which the family was living, a superfluous addition to it. Uncle George was to remain an unsubstantial figure, occasionally mentioned in conversation, and a sender of books (though presentation copies of George's books to his brother are few enough for the later years). In the present volume he never appears after page two, that is after he is reported to have written "several short stories" besides his "twenty-three novels" which "earned him a national reputation."

Indeed Max Foran is hardly concerned with Roland Gissing's ancestry or even with his life before he left for Canada in the Spring of 1913, and information from other sources is scarce

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about Algernon's children up to that date when, after writing thirty books, nearly all volumes of fiction, Algernon decided to discontinue writing for a living – for a very meagre living indeed. The only way to follow Roland Gissing during his childhood and adolescence would consist in reconstructing his father's doleful journey through literary life, partly by scanning George's allusions to the whereabouts of his brother, partly, after George's death, by compiling a chart of Algernon's movements as reflected in the hundreds of surviving letters written by Algernon himself, by Clara Collet, Gabrielle Fleury and a number of literary agents, editors and publishers – all of them concerned with George's affairs. Roland's childhood was geographically erratic if emotionally stable. The family was frequently on the move, afflicted by chronic poverty, as his brother Alwin wrote to me a few years before his death. When Roland was asked by interviewers what training he had received as an artist, he replied that he was almost completely self-taught, and the general education he was given in those pre-war years which were the heyday of Liberal England but also a period when the western world was heading for catastrophe cannot have been an impressive cultural equipment. He went from school to school as his father moved from Cumberland to Northumberland, then to Gloucestershire and Edinburgh, where he received his early art training at Watson's College. Roland was fascinated by railways, but no railway job offered; his father suggested he might become an architect like his cousin Walter, and Roland did study architecture for a while, but he was interested in other forms of art, in particular the cinema, which to him meant cowboy pictures. The life of the cowboy in the vast open spaces of the West appealed to him more than the limited prospects offered by clerical or professional work in England. The decisive moment came when a lawyer friend who had emigrated to Canada agreed to help get the boy started. Then Roland left

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England, and left it for good. He was hired as a cowhand at Calgary and rode the range for ten years in Alberta and later Montana, Nebraska, and Arizona. During those years he made sketches of bucking horses, ranch scenes and cowgirls. He did not try to paint until later. He returned to Calgary and one day his sketches were seen by a Captain Mortimer, a cousin of the Duke of Richmond, who purchased some of them and advised him to follow up formal art training. That was in the mid-1920s. A prominent Canadian artist, C. W. Jeffreys, who was a friend of Mortimer, encouraged him to paint, and thus in 1929, while still working on farms and ranches, he came to hold his first one-man show at Jack Booth's gallery in Calgary.

Max Foran's book, written with the assistance of Nonie Houlton, Roland Gissing's step-daughter, offers a detailed account of the artist's career which, in a way, began in 1929. The exhibition was so successful that he opened a studio in Calgary. In 1933 he married a woman in her fifties, Alexandrina Gillies, a devout Catholic and an excellent housekeeper of the traditional type. This proved to be an error which brings to mind the two disastrous matrimonial errors made by his uncle. Max Foran's comment on this union is worth quoting:

Gissing's reasons for this improbable marriage were his own. He never confided in anyone about it and in later years rarely referred to Alexandrina, or Enie as she was called, except in bland though positive terms. In many ways they were incompatible. Her fervent, even fierce, Catholicism contrasted sharply with his own Agnostic views. Certainly she could not provide the wide-ranging dialogue he enjoyed, and she furthermore had no affinity with art, or with his own work specifically. She was, however, a capable homemaker and hostess. To a man like Gissing, long steeped in solitude, the promise of female warmth and companionship might have been

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enough to warrant a permanent relationship. Also, if Gissing had no desire for a family, the age factor may not have been so pivotal.

From about that time, Roland Gissing diligently painted for a living. His early work is said to have been influenced by Leonard Richmond and A. C. Leighton, but he developed a style of his own of which the excellent illustrations of the book will give a vivid idea. His landscape paintings strike me as his best. His view of art he always expressed unassumingly: "I am inspired to paint firstly because I am so moved by the beauty of the Western scene that I longed to be able to put it on canvas. I would call myself, first and foremost, a lover of nature, and secondly an artist. Being a lover of nature I have little sympathy for art which springs from, or has its inspiration in, the haunts of man, such as cities, industrial plants, and like subjects. Abstract art comes under this heading also because it is meaningless to me except purely as decoration. I believe that an artist has a mission in the world and should talk to his public in a language that they can understand and thus educate them to see the beauty in the world about them." By the mid-1930s his reputation was made and there was distinctly a market for his work. He was already one of western Canada's most successful landscape painters.

According to Max Foran the decade from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties was his best period. His financial security enabled him to turn to other forms of artistic activity. His model train hobby was to develop into a time- and money-consuming affair. It was celebrated in an article in the *Calgary Herald*, not reproduced in the book, for 8 February 1941. Two photographs show Roland Gissing at work when he was about forty-five. Richard J. Needham, the author of the article, wrote: "The model railway at the back of the house is one of those things which must be seen to be fully realized. The whole thing is done to scale – 17/32nds of

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one inch to the foot; and is made almost entirely by hand. The locomotive (there are actually four, but one is the showpiece) runs by steam, with methylated spirits as fuel." This aspect of Roland's activity is left for the reader to imagine, but documents sent by Nonie Houlton testify to the enormous amount of energy and to the uncommon ability he showed in this field. His practical capacity is here best instanced, but simultaneously he began to write fragments of autobiography and short stories. He had published his first poem in 1915 and he was now writing more verse. Because his pictures sold well and the demand was increasing, he also came to realize that it might be a good thing to divide his production into two categories. There were what he called, using a favourite word of his uncle, the potboilers, and those pictures which he painted for his sole satisfaction, those which he kept in his private portfolio. But a tragedy was at hand. On 3 March 1944 his studio and house were burnt to the ground: all his unsold paintings, all his papers and model trains were reduced to ashes, so that his dream of

simultaneously supplying the public demand and painting for himself vanished abruptly. He henceforth had to produce mainly for the market place. A letter to his sister Enid, some seven years his elder, reviews the situation some time after the disaster: "It is a terrible loss," he concluded, "the complete loss of the work of a lifetime. It is impossible for me to value the loss in money for the pictures and books cannot be replaced." Commercialism was henceforth his danger and Max Foran observes that, because he was a traditionalist in an art world seething with change, Roland Gissing's commercial success made his purity suspect.

The accidental destruction of his home had another consequence than his need to earn more in order to recoup his losses. He and his wife Enie drifted apart, and the new home failed to replace the old one in all respects. As in his younger days, Roland became restless, and his

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restlessness was increased by the arrival of his brother Alwin in 1948. Eventually he separated from Enie in 1954 and settled in Calgary. Boredom succeeded restlessness until in 1957 he bought some acres of foothills land south of Calgary and made the lasting acquaintance of a widowed Calgary schoolteacher, Ester Glockzin, who was then forty-eight. After divorcing Enie he married Ester in 1961 and found happiness again – until his death in 1967 at the age of seventy-two.

The present book, which is carefully written and printed, will give much satisfaction to anyone who, out of interest in painting or in the Gissing family, will purchase a copy. It has a foreword by Grant MacEwan and a preface by Roland Gissing's doctor and friend, Morris Gibson. Just as the notes will be of great assistance to scholars who might wish to enquire deeper into some biographical or artistic matters, the list of paintings discussed and/or shown will prove a good starting-point to any further research; unsurprisingly, it shows that many of these pictures are in private collections. The *Dictionary of Canadian Artists* compiled by Colin S. MacDonald (1967) supplies useful information on the subject. Thus at the head of the list of private owners one finds "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh." It also appears that such public collections as the Edmonton Museum of Art and the Vancouver Art Gallery have much to offer. Clearly Roland Gissing was and is likely to remain for some time Alberta's best known artist. A local obituarist wrote with perceptible pride: "If ever a man sold Alberta it was Roland Gissing." In fact most of his paintings seem not to have left western Canada. Owners tend to keep their Gissings. So do the owners of his uncle's books. When you have been looking for a first edition of *Isabel Clarendon* or *The Nether World* for years and at long last find one which you can afford to buy, you don't wish ever to part with it. The uncle

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died too soon to have the faintest idea of what "little Roland" might achieve in adult life, but I am confident that if fate had been kinder to him and if he had lived, as Algernon and his wife did, into the late 1930s, he would not have been indifferent to the artistic achievements of his nephew. Gissing's appreciation of English landscape painters, with its culmination in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, is at once solidly documented and discriminately disclosed in his works and private papers. So three generations of Gissings – Thomas, the botanist and poet of Suffolk, George and Algernon in whose novels landscapes play such a significant role, and Roland, "the peoples' painter" – paid homage to nature each in his way. Has artistic talent, one wonders, run dry in their descendants?

Pierre Coustillas.

Notes and News

It has been no easy task to obtain clear and definite replies about the intentions of the Hogarth Press and the Harvester Press regarding their Gissing programmes under the new managements. As could be expected since the publication of *Denzil Quarrier* was cancelled in 1987, the changes in the structure of the Hogarth Press mean that the reprinting of Gissing's novels will be discontinued. From January 1990 the Hogarth Press will become an academic hardback and paperback list – non-fiction only – and there will be a new paperback company for the whole Chatto & Windus group which will be called Vintage. Gissing is not at all likely to be included among Vintage authors. The list of publishers about whose dealings Gissing

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complained in his twenty-five years' career would be a long one; the list of those who have let him down posthumously is getting longer every decade.

The reply from the Harvester Press, now a member of the Simon & Schuster group, is hardly more satisfactory. Since January 1987 when we listed the Gissing titles available in paperback, a number of Harvester titles have run out of print and the publishers do not intend reprinting them. Four titles only are to be kept in print – *Workers in the Dawn* (hardback and paperback), *Born in Exile*, *The Crown of Life* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (paperback only). Considering the unscholarly introduction contributed by the late John Stewart Collis to the last named title, the decision of the publishers is difficult to understand.

Belatedly we must record the publication by Greno in 1986, simultaneously with the clothbound edition, of a special limited edition of 999 copies, issued in a leather slipcase, of *Zeilengeld*. It is a very attractively produced volume indeed.

To anyone interested in the activities of the German firm founded by Baron Tauchnitz in Leipzig, the new bibliography which we listed among recent publications last January, is strongly recommended despite its apparently steep price, £68.00. It contains a wealth of information on the Tauchnitz editions in general and throws some new light on the history of the two Gissing titles published under the German imprint. Whether the authors have seen copies of all the variants known to Gissing collectors is nonetheless doubtful.

As noted elsewhere *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature*, edited by Michael Stapleton (Cambridge University Press and Newnes Books, 1983) has been replaced by *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, edited by Ian Ousby (Cambridge University Press

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and Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1988). The number of objectionable statements and factual errors concerning Gissing in the former book was a matter of indignation. The whole entry has been rewritten; the objectionable statements have disappeared but the new entry is hardly satisfactory. It degenerates into a dry list of titles. Fresh errors have been substituted for old ones. The most extraordinary one consists in placing *Eve's Ransom* between *The Unclassed* and *Isabel Clarendon*. Obviously the compiler, at some stage or other, could not read his own notes and he transcribed 1885 instead of 1895. When two books were published by Gissing in the same year they are usually given in the wrong order. *In the Year of Jubilee* has been accidentally skipped. Two dates – 1897 for *Human Odds and Ends* and 1900 for *By the Ionian Sea* – are likely to prove misleading, as one would look in vain for English editions of the two books with these dates. Lastly one is surprised to read that Gissing's only friend was H. G. Wells. If all the entries are as poorly written and inaccurate as that on Gissing, deciding which, of the Oxford

Companion and the Cambridge Guide, is the better reference work should not be difficult.

Frank Woodman, whose article on Dr. G. C. Williamson explores a little-known area of Gissing's life, has sent a copy of a booklet which offers a pictorial record of some Cumberland places known to the Gissing brothers in their childhood and early manhood. *Views on the Whitehaven and Furness Railway 1852*, published by Michael Moon's Bookshop (41-43 Roper Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria), contains twelve steel engravings of such places as Ennerdale, St. Bees, Calder Abbey, Seascale Hotel (Seascale, where Gissing stayed with his family as late as 1888), Wastwater and Furness Abbey. All these illustrations, from drawings by R. Shepherd, were originally published in *A Handbook of the Whitehaven and Furness Railway*, by John Linton.

In his article Frank Woodman establishes the authorship of the review of *Henry Ryecroft*

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published in the *Academy* on 7 March 1903, an interesting ascription as this particular review, like that of *By the Ionian Sea* in the *Guardian* for 31 July 1901, expresses an avowedly personal response to Gissing's work. The interest is enhanced by the fact that another friend and correspondent of Gissing, Henry Hyde Champion, selected this review of *Ryecroft* for special praise in his own journal, the Melbourne *Book Lover* (1 May 1903). Here we have the uncommon case of a writer's friend commending a piece of criticism published anonymously by another friend of the writer. Williamson was more discreet than Champion. Unless some unknown letter emerges and contradicts our assumption, he did not reveal to Gissing that he reviewed *Henry Ryecroft* in the *Academy*.

The house in which Gissing lived at Dorking between his return from Italy in the Spring of 1898 and his departure for France a year later is offered for sale by Prudential Property Services, 179 High Street, Dorking. It is described as "a very spacious end-of-terrace Victorian town house providing excellent family accommodation in a quiet elevated position close to Dorking town centre." A photograph shows that the ground floor has been altered considerably since Gissing's time, ninety years ago – a double garage has replaced the front room and the entrance hall. The house is said to have been built in 1896 and to have "interesting literary and historical associations in that the Victorian novelist George Gissing used [it] as a secret refuge to escape the constant harassment of his second wife, Edith!" The agents' description mentions (1) on the ground floor, a covered entrance porch, a reception hall, a sitting-room, a kitchen-dining room and a kitchen (2) on the lower ground floor, a utility room and a cloak-room with W. C. and access to the garage (3) on the first floor, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a separate W. C. (4) on the second floor, two bedrooms, one with "panoramic view over the

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town from Ranmore Common towards Leith Hill." The description would be incomplete if it failed to include a front garden, which was severely reduced when the driveway to the garage was built, and a rear garden with a timber summerhouse which, to judge from a photograph, is obviously a late addition. In this house Gissing was visited by Edith and Alfred, by Gabrielle Fleury and by his mother. Surely the place has literary and historical associations. Perhaps, before time has a chance of effacing them, a plaque could be put up above ... the garage door?

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *Aphorisms and Reflections*, edited with an Introduction by P. F. Kropholler, Edinburgh: The Tragara Press, 1989. Dark brown card covers with white label on front cover. 43 pages. Edition limited to 125 copies (of which 95 are for sale) set in Baskerville type. £12.50. The quotations in this attractively produced, hand-set booklet are classified in chronological order under the following headings: The Arts, Character, England and the English, Family Life and the Home, Food and Drink, Happiness and Unhappiness, The Human Condition, Human Relations, Humour and Laughter, Life and Death, Literature and Books, Love, Marriage, Memory, Money, Poverty and Riches, The Past and the Future, Religion, Social Classes and Distinctions, Time, Women, Youth and Education. The volume ends with a chronology of Gissing's works.

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George Gissing, *De intieme geschriften van Henry Ryecroft*, translated with an afterword by Geerten Meijnsing, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers, 1989. This white, blue and black paperback of 263 pages is selling at 39.50 florins or 790 Belgian francs, that is approximately £11.00. The portrait of Gissing on the cover is one of those taken by Elliott and Fry in the spring of 1901. The afterword covers pp. 221-254. A short list of background literature is given, followed by two and a half pages of textual notes and explanations about the monetary system in Ryecroft's time. The last six pages consist in an index much like that to be found in all English and American editions up to World War II.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Paul Goetsch (ed.), *Englische Literatur zwischen Viktorianismus und Moderne*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983. Contains many references to Gissing.

Sylvère Monod, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Unwin Critical Library), London, Boston and Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1985. The author quotes from or comments upon Gissing's opinion of this novel in over a dozen places.

Robert L. Selig, "Reviews," *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. XLVII, no. 3, September 1986, pp. 334-36. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*.

Robert L. Selig, "Book Reviews," *Bulletin of Bibliography*, Vol. XLIV, no. 1, March 1987, pp. 53-57. Review of *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study*.

Hans Peter Breuer, "British and Irish," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, no. 4, Winter 1987, pp. 717-18. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*.

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Henry James, *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987. The section entitled "The Novel as Relief; and George Gissing and the Lower Middle Class," pp. 322-25, contains James's well-known assessment of *The Whirlpool*.

Kate Flint (ed.), *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change*, London, New

York and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987. Gissing and *The Nether World* appear on pp. 1 and 9.

Francesco Badolato, "George Gissing; An English Italophile," *Anglo-Italian Club News* (Reggio Calabria), December 1988 and April 1989, pp. 4-7 and pp. 5-6. Parts II and III.

Anon., "Recent Books," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. XLIII, no. 3, December 1988, p. 422. A notice of *George Gissing at Work*.

Andrew McNeillie (ed.), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. III: 1919 to 1924, London: The Hogarth Press, 1988. Contains "An Impression of Gissing," pp. 373-75. This is the essay which first appeared in the *New Statesman* for 30 June 1923.

Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino (eds.), *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. Contains a few references to Gissing besides his letter to Crane of 20 November 1899.

Sôzô Umemiya, "The Reading Habits and Choices of Henry Ryecroft," *Atomi English Studies*, no. 2, 1988, pp. 31-39. In Japanese. The author has kindly communicated an abstract: "*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* has a specific quality which appeals to the Japanese mentality and imagination. Some impressive scenes in it have a capacity for prompting one to probe more deeply into one's past life and surroundings. This essay attempts to define the various kinds of books read by Ryecroft in his happy, secluded rural home and to catch

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the essence of Gissing's style, that is its poetic quality."

Ian Ousby (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, Cambridge University Press and Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1988. The entry on Gissing (p. 395) has been rewritten and five of his works, instead of three, are analysed.

Francesco Badolato, "George Gissing in un raggio di sole," *Il Corriere di Roma*, Anno XL, no. 533, 23 February 1989, p. 3.

Arthur Krystal, "On Writing: Let there be less," *New York Times Book Review*, 26 March 1989, pp. 1, 21 and 23. A passage on *New Grub Street* occurs on p. 23.

Anon., "Victorian Novelist Honoured," *Wakefield Express*, 31 March 1989, p. 3. With photograph of the entrance to Gissing House in Thompson's Yard and a portrait of Gissing taken in 1895.

Anon., "A Novelist at Home," *Yorkshire Post*, 25 April 1989, p. 8.

Shigeru Koike, "George Gissing and Nineteenth-Century England," *Eigo Seinen (The Rising Generation)*, April 1989, pp. 5-7. The same number contains an article by Fumio Hôjoh, pp. 12-14, on "Love and Marriage in the Victorian Age." It is mainly about George Moore's novels, with references to *The Unclassed* and *The Odd Women*. The whole number contains six articles on "Literature and Society in the Victorian Age." In Japanese.

Anon., "Author's Hideaway for Sale," *Dorking Advertiser*, 11 May 1989, page unknown. This

unsigned article which, in fact, was written by the person who lives at 7 Clifton Terrace, is about the house and its Gissing associations.

Martha Vogeler, "Book Reviews," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. XXXII (1989), no. 1, pp. 88-90. Review of *George Gissing at Work*.