

“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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Gissing and Henry Ryecroft:

Some Parallels and Affinities

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Paris

It has often been pointed out that Ryecroft represents certain aspects of Gissing at certain times. He is an idealized picture of what Gissing may have wished to be. Ryecroft is not harassed by financial and marital problems. He has a permanent home situated in a beautiful part of rural England. He has a discreet and efficient housekeeper. In all these respects his situation is very unlike Gissing’s own around 1900. However, even an idealized Gissing remains very much a Gissing. Ryecroft’s character, his views and experiences recall those of his creator. The situations and incidents described in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* are echoed in numerous passages

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in the novels. We find some striking similarities but also some notable differences.

The Ryecroft character, the scholarly recluse, the sad but resigned spectator of human life, is not confined to *The Private Papers*.

In such an early novel as *A Life’s Morning* we might even speak of a married couple à la Ryecroft if this were not something of a *contradictio in terminis*. When Wilfrid and Emily get married, the former gives up his parliamentary career. Although he is young and successful,

ambition has “no more meaning for him.” Emily meditates on “the exquisite sadness of life.” Besides past sufferings she remembers a visit to the shores of Greece and Italy, “the world’s holy of holies.” No child will “trouble the exclusiveness of their love.” “All their plans [are] for solitude.”

In *The Crown of Life*, a novel nearer in date to *The Private Papers*, old Jerome Otway aspires after a life in the country, devoted to meditation and the study of Dante. Having made the mistake of marrying a nagging wife, he is only partly successful. In the same novel Irene Derwent’s two female relatives are closer to the ideal. Like Ryecroft they live “in circumstances of simple security,” in a “safely rural” corner of England. Their excellent library supplies them with “all the essentials of culture.” They have an impressive knowledge of history and literature. In their home Irene discovers “the virtue of repose.”

Another novel from the same period, *Our Friend the Charlatan*, contains the character of Lord Dymchurch, a young but disillusioned man who does not feel at home in the world. He longs for solitude and finds comfort in nature and in books. Like Ryecroft he is a student of Marcus Aurelius. He finally withdraws to his Kentish farm. Perhaps we have here a reminder of Horace, whose “*hoc erat in votis*” appears on the title page of *The Private Papers* and who withdrew to his Sabine farm.

In this light the differences between Ryecroft’s views and those expressed in the remaining

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works become significant.

Ryecroft’s hatred of war can be found again in the novels but Ryecroft’s anti-militarism is somewhat qualified when he adds: “Let England be imperilled and Englishmen will fight.” This is in keeping with the more anglophile tone of *The Private Papers*. The praise of English cooking, which fills quite a large part of *The Private Papers*, is practically absent from the novels.

Another important difference concerns the attitude to Puritanism and – a related subject – the English Sunday. In *The Emancipated* Gissing set out to show the impact of Italian life on people brought up in a narrow-minded northern atmosphere of Puritanism. Italy does not lead any of them to sympathize with the Roman Catholic church. In this respect they resemble Ryecroft, whose love of Italy does not include modern Italian religion. The effect of Italy is to give them a new sense of the joy and beauty of life. In *The Private Papers* the author’s feelings have undergone a change. He is more inclined to see the benefits of Puritanism and the virtues of an English Sunday. Ryecroft is also more appreciative of church-bells.

A complete list of resemblances between *The Private Papers* and the remaining works might well fill a whole issue of the *Newsletter*. The following is a selection of some curious points of contact between the Ryecroft persona and the novels which Gissing after all wrote directly without assuming an imaginary interpreter.

## SPRING

### II

To Ryecroft his bookroom is beautiful because it is “home.” The theme of a home, preferably solid and old, runs through the novels. In *The Whirlpool* part III opens with a description of Basil

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Morton’s house “which had stood for a century and a half, and for eighty years had been inhabited by Mortons.” It represents a contrast to the London whirlpool with its constant movement and

bustle. The old ladies in *The Crown of Life* who stand for security and culture, inhabit a house that had come to them from their yeoman ancestors of long ago. In *The House of Cobwebs* Mr. Spicer reflects what a delightful thing it must be to have a house of one's own.

#### IX

Ryecroft realises that his literary occupations did not make him a free man. "I served, not one master, but a whole crowd of them." A similar thought occurs to Will Warburton. As a shopkeeper he is really "the slave of every kitchen wench who came into [his] shop" (*Will Warburton*, XXIV).

#### XII

Ryecroft's delight in Gibbon finds an echo in Ch. IX of *The Unclassed*, where we read that Casti had "mastered his Gibbon, knew him from end to end." When Thyrza visits Egremont in his Lambeth library (*Thyrza*, Vol. II, Ch, VI) he points to a massive Gibbon, "our corner-stone."

#### XIV

Ryecroft's condemnation of horse-racing and all that goes with it corresponds to Mr. Duffy's fulminations on the subject in "The Riding-Whip."

#### XVI

Ryecroft confesses he is no friend of the people. In Ch. VII of *A Life's Morning* Emily Hood shrinks "from the thronged streets of London."

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#### XVII

Ryecroft remembers reading Diogenes Laertius in the British Museum during his days of extreme poverty. In *New Grub Street* (Ch XII), Reardon writes an article on this author in the same place, also during a critical period. Diogenes Laertius obviously stands for the kind of old-world author an unpractical man would turn to.

#### XX

Ryecroft wonders whether he would enjoy his reading more if there were someone to share his pleasure. In *New Grub Street* (Ch, IX), Reardon's reading to his wife is the means of temporarily restoring their former loving relationship.

#### XXII

The public which reads is small. The complaint still sounds familiar. Gissing must have been convinced of its truth. The old ladies in *The Crown of Life* belong to "the very small class of persons who still read, who have mind and leisure to find companionship in books" (Ch. X).

#### XXII

Ryecroft speaks contemptuously of “perky mispronouncers.” In *Born in Exile* (Part I, Ch. I) Peak writhes under his uncle’s “offensive purity of Cockney accent.” Later in London his French landlady’s Franco-English is pleasant to an “ear constantly tormented by the London vernacular.” The typical mispronouncer of authors’ names is the half-educated Barmby with his references to “Gurty” (*In the Year of Jubilee*).

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## XXIII

Every morning Ryecroft thanks Heaven for silence. In *A Life’s Morning* (Ch. VII), Emily Hood too is a lover of silence, “the nurse of the soul.” For this reason she prefers the early morning and the late evening.

## SUMMER

### II

Ryecroft describes his trip to the Mendips and Wells. It was here that Humphrey Snell had the fatal meeting with his future wife in “The Fate of Humphrey Snell.” Glastonbury, mentioned in the same section, is the scene of “A Victim of Circumstances.”

### IV

Ryecroft’s love of Sunday quiet is not reflected in the novels. In *Isabel Clarendon* (Vol. II, Ch. X), the Sunday atmosphere is called “soporific.” The dreariness of a provincial Sunday is described in considerable detail in *A Life’s Morning* (Ch. XII) and in *The Emancipated* (Part I, Ch. XIII). In *Thyrza* (Vol. I, Ch. V), Gissing referred to “the unutterable dreariness of a Sunday afternoon.” Godwin Peak in *Born in Exile* (Part IV, Ch. III) thought Sunday “a day of weariness and despondency.” In *The Odd Women* (Ch. XXVII), Sunday is “terrible in its depressing effect upon the lonely and unhappy.”

### V

The idea of certain books “of the higher rank” being set aside for Sunday reading occurs in *Isabel Clarendon* (Vol. II, Ch. X). Mr. Meres reserves the Sunday – at least in theory – for “great authors [...] more talked about than read.”

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### VI

Ryecroft discusses the difficulty people have in living together. Even love is no safeguard against petty irritations. In *New Grub Street*, Reardon and his wife in their small flat are very much aware of this. Finally, a sigh of relief escapes Amy: “How good it was to be alone” (Ch. XVIII). Cf. also *Whirlpool* (Part III, Ch III): “it is common enough for people who have been several years wedded to feel exasperation in each other’s presence.”

## XIX

Ryecroft remembers with pleasure how he was once woken up by church bells. In *Winter XIX*, church bells lure him to Exeter Cathedral on Christmas Day. However, in the novels church bells are more likely to be a source of irritation. In *The Unclassed* (Ch. XXIV), at a critical moment in Casti's relations with Harriet "there seemed to be a ringing of great bells about him," In *Thyrza* (Vol. I, Ch. IX), the "clangorous discord" of church bells adds to the sordidness of the scene. In the same novel (Vol II, Ch VIII), at the very moment when Thyrza accosts Egremont the bells suddenly break out. Later Egremont remarks that he would not like to live near those bells. *The Emancipated* (Part I, Ch. XIII) describes the clanging of religious bells as part of a dreary provincial Sunday. The short story "Mutimer's Choice" opens with a description of the bell-ringing at St. Mary's, Battersea. Their sound intensifies the irritableness of Mr. and Mrs. Mutimer.

## AUTUMN

### VII

A reflection on our ability to subdue ourselves to the conditions of life. Contentment so often

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means resignation. Will Warburton was a case in point. His slavery as a grocer became so supportable that he felt regret at the idea of giving it up (*Will Warburton*, Ch XXXIX).

### XII

Ryecroft discusses country churchyards, which are as attractive as town cemeteries are repugnant. After Mr. Tollady's funeral Arthur Golding feels as if only here (i.e., in a semi-rural cemetery) "was true peace to be found" (*Workers in the Dawn*, Vol. II, Ch. VII). *Demos* (Ch. XVI) contains a description of a remote East End cemetery, where Jane Vine is buried. A country churchyard, we read, evokes the tenderest memories. The cemeteries of wealthy London abound in historical associations in complete contrast to the depressing effect produced by the burial places of the poor. *The Crown of Life* (Ch. XXXII) contains a reference to "the sombre and crowded hideousness of a London cemetery." In Ch. VIII of *By the Ionian Sea* Gissing says that when travelling he always visits the local burial ground. Tombstones, he adds, have much significance.

### XIV

Ryecroft describes how during illness his mind "had become a barrel-organ." The metaphor may have some significance in view of Gissing's interest in barrel-organs. Arthur Golding (*Workers in the Dawn*, Vol. III, Ch. II) "entertained the utmost liking" for barrel-organs. In *Thyrza* (Vol. I, Ch. IX) a barrel-organ in a poor district represents the longing of the inhabitants for beauty and a higher life. In *By the Ionian Sea* the arrival of a barrel-organ at Cotrone is described as something of an event (Ch. X).

### XV

Ryecroft thinks of places in London where he stood savage with misery, looking at the

prosperous folk who passed. Two typical Gissing characters shared this experience. Godwin Peak (*Born in Exile* Part II, Ch. II) watched the passing of the aristocratic vehicles in Hyde Park. Reardon (*New Grub Street*, Ch XV) tells his wife that he often stood staring at the houses of the rich until he could not believe that they were inhabited by mere human beings like himself.

## XXII

Anthony Trollope is allowed some “notable merits.” In *The Emancipated* (Part II, Ch. I) Mrs. Lessingham considers Trollope useful as a guide to what is permissible in English conversation. As often happens, Ryecroft holds a mellower view.

## XXIII

The sudden thought of passing time is echoed by Harvey Rolfe when he realizes that his youth lies definitely behind him (*The Whirlpool*, Part I, Ch. XII). Later (Part III, Ch. II) Rolfe remembers sadly that “the best of his life is over.”

## XXIV

Ryecroft recalls the deep misery of waking up at early dawn. Reardon (*New Grub Street*, Ch. XV) had the same experience. “Of all the sufferings collected into each four-and-twenty hours this of rising to a new day was the worst.”

## WINTER

### III

No joy money has brought equals that of using it to help others. Philanthropy bulks large in Gissing’s novels. In *Workers in the Dawn* Helen Norman uses her wealth to help the poor. In *The*

*Unclassed* Ida’s philanthropy is part of her redemption. Mrs Ormonde in *Thyrza* is engaged in philanthropy. Jane Snowdon (*The Nether World*) is dragged into her grandfather’s scheme for doing good. Lilian (in *Denzil Quarrier*), though a shy character, finds joy in philanthropy. Mr. Tymperley (in “A Poor Gentleman”) is a supposed philanthropist.

### V

Ryecroft recalls his long walks as a young man. Several fictional characters are good walkers. Arthur Golding (*Workers in the Dawn*, Vol III, Ch II) “walked at a rapid pace along the main streets,” he merely obeyed “the impulse which led him to quick motion.” Peak (*Born in Exile*, Part IV, Ch. III) walked at great speed, talking to himself. During a visit to Yorkshire (*The Crown of Life*, Ch. XIII) Piers Otway rambles about the moorland “for health and for weariness.”

## VII

In contrast to Ryecroft's obviously sincere praise of English cooking, we have Denzil Quarrier's exclamation: "They know how to cook here [in Paris]" (Ch. XI).

## IX

Vegetarianism is here spoken of as a *pis aller* for the needy. In "A Poor Gentleman" Mr. Tymperley similarly adopts vegetarianism, pretending that a vegetable diet is good for one's health. In *Will Warburton* (Ch. XXX) Godfrey Sherwood, a whimsical character, thinks of founding a vegetarian colony.

## X

Old-fashioned housewives used to refer to potatoes as "balls of flour." Will Warburton heard the expression in this sense (*Will Warburton*, Ch. IX).

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## XI

Little girls should be taught especially cooking and baking. Cf. Harvey Rolfe's remark (*The Whirlpool*, Part III, Ch. II) about Wager's daughter: "What better thing for her, and for the community, than to make her a good cook? They are rare enough, Heaven knows." In *Our Friend the Charlatan* Lady Ograms's will provides for the founding of a school for domestic servants.

## XVI

In retrospect Ryecroft smiles sadly at the diversity of his intellectual interests. The question was of real concern to several characters in the novels. In *A Life's Morning* (Ch. I), Wilfrid's despair is "the universality of his interests." He envies a friend who concentrates all his efforts on Celtic literature. It is one of Eustace Glazzard's weaknesses in *Denzil Quarrier*. He is well-read, a musician and a sculptor. In Ch. VI he exclaims: "I want excitement. I have taken up one thing after another." Quarrier himself is too much of a drifter. He has been in the Navy, the timber trade and the law. He is a politician and a student of the Norse sagas. In *Born in Exile* (Part I, Ch I), Peak misses the first prizes because, as Buckland Warricombe says: "Peak has been taking up half-a-dozen extras, and they've done for him." Also Harvey Rolfe and Basil Morton discuss the point in *The Whirlpool* (Part III, Ch. II). The right advice is given by Christian Moxey (*Born in Exile*, Part I, Ch. IV), who hardly follows it: "A man must concentrate himself. Not only for the sake of practical success, but – well, for his own sake." And a little later: "There's nothing like having a special line of work and sticking to it vigorously."

## XVII

Ryecroft admits the fascination of history and at the same time doubts its value. In the novels

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we find an evolution towards Ryecroft's standpoint. Mr. Tollady (*Workers in the Dawn*) and Grail

(*Thyrza*) have good collections of historical works. Both of them are characters Gissing thoroughly approved of. The more skeptical view is expressed by Harvey Rolfe (*The Whirlpool*), Part III, Ch. II): "I have gone through a small library of historical books – and it's all a mist on the mind's horizon."

## XVIII

Ryecroft dislikes science. His feelings are shared by several characters. In Ch. XXIX of *New Grub Street* Alfred Yule, a literary scholar, states that his "ignorance of scientific matters is fathomless." The characters Gissing sympathizes with have no scientific books (Tollady, Grail, Waymark). In *The Crown of Life* (Ch XXXIII), Piers Otway, in business himself, remarks that "science, on the whole, has come to mean money-making and weapon-making."

## XXV

Ryecroft thinks the ideal way of life would have been for him to be a schoolmaster in some little country town. Similarly in *New Grub Street* (Ch XXXI), Biffen says he might have become "a schoolmaster in some small town." And he adds: "One might have been worse off than that."

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## Gissing Down Under

(continued)

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

F. F. J., "The World of Letters," *The Champion* (Melbourne), 23 January 1897, p. 2. An apology for the reading of good literature instead of the latest bad new books. Meredith, Hardy and Gissing are called "the three great living story-tellers." *The Unclassed* is included in a list of books recommended to an anonymous correspondent, "Turn-over."

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Canterbury Times* (Christchurch, N.Z.), 18 February 1897, p. 45. A paragraph on Henry Seton Merriman and Gissing. The author reports that a Strand bookseller and other booksellers do not keep Merriman's and Gissing's novels because the two-shilling public will not buy them. "Yet, both Gissing and Merriman have long been recognized by the upper ten of readers and reviewers."

Anon., "Literary Gossip," *Sidney Morning Herald*, 20 February 1897, p. 4. A paragraph on the well-known coincidence recorded in Gissing's diary for 31 December 1896. While having lunch in London with W. H. Hudson and Morley Roberts, Gissing discovered that Roberts had just proposed to his publishers, Hutchinson & Co., as a title for his new book, *The Whirlpool*. The first proofs of Gissing's novel of that name reached him that very day. Gissing commented in his diary: "Happily, I have priority, but thing is a nuisance." The coincidence was reported in the gossip columns of English newspapers, for instance in the *Daily Chronicle*



for 8 January 1897 (“Writers and Readers,” p. 3).

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Anon., “Literary Notes,” *The Age* (Melbourne), 29 May 1897, p 14. A curiously negative paragraph “from our special correspondent,” dated “London, 23rd April.”

“There was a time when one anticipated with absolute certainty the coming of George Gissing to the literary forefront. Just as the irrational reading public neglected George Meredith for the best part of 20 years, and then woke up suddenly to find him a genius, so I fancied a Gladstonian post-card, or some such freak of fortune would one day open people’s eyes to Gissing’s merits. Not that our reviewers have overlooked him. As long ago as 1886, when ‘Demos’ was published anonymously, Mr. Lang, Mr. James Payn and others proclaimed the advent of a writer of unusual powers. But neither ‘Demos’, nor ‘Thyrza’, nor ‘The Nether World’ caught on with the public. The last named contains some masterly pictures of working folks lives, notably an unequalled description of bank holiday at the Crystal Palace, to which I have often referred. But somehow Mudie’s patrons wouldn’t have Mr. Gissing. His sketches of the seamy side of literary existence in ‘New Grub Street’ attracted a good deal of attention. And still the book wouldn’t sell. I am now beginning to fear this novelist’s day will never dawn. His last books, ‘In the Year of Jubilee’ and ‘Eve’s Ransom’, showed symptoms of deterioration, and ‘The Whirlpool’ – supposed to be a study of the Stock Exchange, and just published – is long, dull and over full of characters and detail.”

Clearly the author failed to realize the eminent merits of *The Whirlpool*. Where Andrew Lang and James Payn proclaimed in print “the advent of a writer of unusual powers” in 1886 is unknown. The accuracy of this statement, especially as regards Lang, is doubtful.

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E. A. V., “The World of Letters,” *The Champion* (Melbourne), 29 May 1897, p. 2. A negative review of *The Whirlpool*, with no mention of publisher, it being likely, however, that the edition issued by George Bell and Sons in their Indian and Colonial Library was by then available in Australian bookshops.

“I have already expressed the hope and belief,” wrote E. A. V., “that one day George Gissing will write a really fine work of fiction – a big epoch-making book worthy of his promise. A new work from his pen is to hand, but it is not in *The Whirlpool* that we can discern the immediate realization of that hope. Here we have Gissing in the unexpected and undesirable character of a disciple of Zola, whereas Gissing is strong enough to be a prophet himself, if only he can hit upon his true *métier*.” It was conceded by the reviewer that much of the force and directness which made Gissing “famous in the days of *New Grub Street*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, etc.” was to be found in *The Whirlpool*, but that he had “allowed the influence of Zola’s effective but somewhat rough-and-ready method of construction to distract him from that power of individual characterization which had, in those earlier books of his, given promise of such fine accomplishment.” Evidence of the critic’s lack of familiarity with Gissing’s recent work is made clear by the next few words: “It may be that he has found the portrayal of middle-class character less intimate and sympathetic than the working-class, who have hitherto appealed to him most strongly. His sustained snarl, too, at womankind, whom he appears to believe are invariably fools, wantons, sneaks, and nagging sluts, is unworthy of a student of humanity of Mr. Gissing’s calibre, and is the chief blemish of this particular book. It appears as a *Saturday Reviewer* has put it, that ‘if he is ever to write the big book, his

likeliest chance is to go back again to the world where men work for a living and women do not pay calls.” The “*Saturday Reviewer*” (see number for 10 April 1897, p. 363) was Harold Frederic, the London correspondent of the *New York Times*, whose own next novel, *The Market Place* (1898), would be worth comparing with *The Whirlpool*.

Anon., “Current Literature,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 1887, p. 4. A hostile review of *The Whirlpool*. “Mr. Gissing is faithful to his patient realism of detail and his general grimness, in the new book now included in Heinemann’s Colonial Library, *The Whirlpool*. Morton, Rolfe himself, and one or two others of this gallery partly relieve it; but as a whole the people and the various frustrations and calamities that make up their lives end by saddening the reader. Life on those terms is not worth living, and the absence of the tender, the pathetic, in a word, of the sentiment of life, is a profound drawback to Mr. Gissing’s talent.” The gross unfairness of this review makes one wonder whether the reviewer had read the novel on which he passed such an inept judgment. At all events his failure to give the publisher’s name correctly is an index to unpleasant carelessness.

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *Canterbury Times* (Christchurch, N.Z.), 24 June 1897, p. 45. Same paragraph as in the *Melbourne Age* for 29 May 1897, p. 14.

C. Wilson, “Literary Notes: With Paper-Knife and Pen,” *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 15 July 1897, p. 12. A long review which, while acknowledging Gissing’s standard as an artist, deplores his pessimism. “Mr. George Gissing’s ability as a writer of novels no one can

question who has read ‘[The] Unclassed,’ New Grub Street,’ and his latest novel ‘The Whirlpool’ (Bell’s Colonial Library), well sustains his reputation. It is a misfortune, however, that Mr. Gissing should so persistently adopt such a morbid point of view that he should see life only in its greyer, sadder tones [ . . . ] ‘The Whirlpool’ [ . . . ] contains some exceedingly well drawn characters, notably amongst the women. Alma is a really charming heroine, and the story of her death comes as a rude shock to the reader, who is beginning to hope that she has much happier times in store. Mrs. Carnaby, selfish, vicious, vindictive, yet with a worldly cleverness which imposes upon many good men and women, though not upon Alma, is admirably drawn. It may be ‘art,’ it may be ‘realism,’ it may be according to the canons of the school of novelists who pride themselves upon telling ‘the truth’ as to life, however ugly it may be, to leave Mrs. Carnaby, the adulteress, at the end of the story, successful and undetected in her vice, and that poor Alma, the virtuous woman, her righteous denouncer, should die, but for our own part we prefer a happier if more conventional ending.”

Anon., “Literature: New Novels,” *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 17 July 1897, p. 152. Another review of the colonial edition which praised the book but regretted that Gissing should restrict himself “to delineating the shadier sides of human nature, the result being that the view he gives us of it is incomplete and one-sided.” This judgment is preceded and followed by high praise: “Hardly any novelist of the day has so nearly reached the highest level in fiction as Mr. George Gissing. In delineation of character he is not surpassed by any contemporary, and his pictures of certain phases of society are admirable for truthfulness and reality. [ . . . ] ‘The Whirlpool’ is one of the most absorbing and truthful works of fiction that has appeared for a

good while, and only just misses being a really great novel.”

Anon., “Literature: New Novels,” *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 6 November 1897, p. 1025. In a review of Algernon Gissing’s *The Scholar of Bygate*, one of his best and most successful novels (Hutchinson & Co.), the following comparison is made between the two brothers’ work: “Here and there the book reminds us of the writer’s more famous brother, but the termination of the story is less unconventional, though, perhaps, for that reason more pleasing to the majority of readers than the endings of most of the novels by the author of ‘The Whirlpool.’”

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *The Age* (Melbourne), 8 January 1898, p. 14. A positive review of the Lawrence & Bullen edition of *Human Odds and Ends* by the newspaper’s London correspondent, dated 3 December. He thought there was some of Gissing’s finest work in the volume. “No one can paint the drudgery, the monotony, the quiet suppressed suffering and the intense pathos of life in the miles of mean streets of South and East London better than this writer.” In five stories, the reviewer thought, Gissing touches high water mark – “Comrades in Arms,” “An Inspiration,” “In Honour Bound,” “The Day of Silence” and “Our Mr. Jupp.” But he deplored the presence of “some very trivial paltry tales” at the end of the book, that is sketches commissioned by C. K. Shorter for the *Sketch*.

Anon., “English Literary Notes,” *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 January 1898, p. 6. Another review of the English edition of *Human Odds and Ends*, also said to be written by the London correspondent of the newspaper and dated 14 December 1897. The text is identical with that

of the previous item.

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *Canterbury Times* (Christchurch, N.Z.), 27 January 1898, p. 49. Again the same review as that which appeared in *The Age*.

Anon., “Literary Notes,” *The Age* (Melbourne), 5 February 1898, p. 15. A note from the newspaper’s special correspondent, dated “London, 24th December,” to announce that Gissing’s next novel will deal with the lives of “commercial,” and is to be called *The Town Traveller*.

Anon., “Current Literature,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1898, p. 4. A few lines on *Human Odds and Ends* in Bell’s Indian and Colonial Library, “short stories and sketches, mainly of that Nether World of London he knows so well and describes so pitilessly.” They were intended for readers who could “bear the somewhat suffocating air of misery.”

C. W[ilson], “Books and Bookmen,” *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 5 May 1898, p. 12. An enthusiastic review of *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (Blackie), praising Gissing’s “vigorous championing” of his subject. Wilson strongly recommended the book “to all who love their Dickens and can delight in a well-argued, truly sympathetic study of the great novelist’s best characteristics.”

C. W[ilson], “Books and Bookmen,” *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 19 May 1898, p. 10. Wilson

quotes at length from Gissing's "excellent little monograph" which he had reviewed two weeks before. The passage concerns Mrs. Gamp ("The Mrs. Gamp of our novel [. . .] unclean utterance").

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Anon., "Current Literature," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 25 June 1898, p. 4. A favourable review of *Charles Dickens*, with some reservations. The book "contains a good deal that is new, about a somewhat hackneyed subject, with much that is surprising," notably Gissing's denial that Dickens was a caricaturist. The reviewer quotes from the passage on Mrs. Gamp, finds it ingenious, but perhaps hardly satisfying, because it confounds the real with the ideal. Yet, "Mr. Gissing's criticism is acute, and his study of the master most profound."

Anon., "Fiction of the Day," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 26 November 1898, p. 4. A review of *The Town Traveller* in Methuen's Colonial Library. "Despite his great powers and his close observation of life, Gissing has missed the big success at one time predicted for him, owing to his deep-seated pessimism, but it is pleasant to note that in this last tale he takes a new departure, writing in a far more cheerful mood than is his wont."

Anon., "Literary Notes: Books and Bookmen," *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 8 December 1898, p. 13. Another (shorter) review of *The Town Traveller* in Methuen's Colonial Library. "Mr. Gissing has relinquished his old pessimistic style and gives us a study of suburban Cockneydom, which is highly amusing. Traces of Dickens' influence are most marked."

Anon., "New Novels," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 10 December 1898, p. 1337. An appreciative review of the English edition of *The Town Traveller*. The critic rejoices that the story "is far less dismal and pessimistic in tone than his previous novels, although the characters are, as usual, vulgar and commonplace." After a brief description of such major figures as Gammon,

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Polly Sparkes and Christopher Parish, a more tepid note is sounded: "Mr. Greenacre and Lord Polperro are less satisfactory, the mystery in which they are concerned narrowly escaping being melodramatic." Still, all in all, the reviewer expressed his great satisfaction: "'The Town Traveller' has not the wide range of interests and characters that mark 'The Whirlpool' and some others of Mr. Gissing's novels, but it is a clever and humorous picture of lower middle class life in London, in the delineation of which Mr. Gissing has no living superior."

Anon., "Current Literature," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1898, p. 4. Another appreciative review of the English edition of *The Town Traveller*, with unambiguous approval of Gissing's new-born optimism. "Mr. Gammon is a rich feast, he is worthy of George Meredith. The good nature, the humour, the placidity, the courage and resource of this most commercial man spread an irresistible air of life and gaiety over the pages which contain the tracking of the ci-devant Clover, now Lord Polperro. [. . .] In revenge for all the entertainment Mr. Gissing makes his story end in frustration; that is his sad way. The promise of the Town Traveller is the finest thing about it, and that a Gissing has at last come out of the fearful greyness and despair of lower middle-class London."

Anon., "Literature: Books and their Makers," *Sydney Mail*, 17 December 1898, p. 1457. A positive review of the colonial edition of *The Town Traveller* published by Methuen, but the analysis

leaves out of account Polly, Christopher Parish and Greenacre. "The bearing of the commercial man through all [the] troubles affords abundant entertainment."

Anon., "Literary Gossip," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1899, p 4. "Mr. George Gissing has

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just finished a new novel. It is in some ways a new departure for Mr. Gissing. According to the *Bookman*, it deals with the upper middle classes, and is distinctly optimistic, with a charming love story ending happily. Incidentally it treats of some of the bigger public problems that are clamant at this moment." The novel in question was *The Crown of Life* which had been completed in mid-January and the paragraph referred to by the *Herald* had appeared in the London *Bookman* for February 1899 ("News Notes," p. 127).

Anon., "Literary Notes," *The Mercury* (Hobart), 5 July 1899, page unknown. "Mr. George Gissing, having completed his new novel, has left England for Switzerland, where he intends to stay for some time."

Anon., "Chitchat," *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 29 July 1899, p. 219. A paragraph describing the forthcoming Rochester Edition of those novels of Dickens which had passed out of copyright. "Mr. George Gissing, whose critical study of Dickens is both sympathetic and acute, has written an introduction to each of the books."

Anon., "[*The Crown of Life*]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), October 1899, p. 43. A paragraph on the well-known anecdote about the manuscript of the novel, soon to be published "after the success of *The Whirlpool*." "His ill-luck sticks to him. A revised copy of the manuscript [. . .] was sent to America by the 'Paris,' which ran on the rocks. This caused several weeks delay as the novel is to be published simultaneously on both sides of 'the herring pond.'"

Anon., "Current Literature," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 1899, p. 4. A laudatory review

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of *The Crown of Life* in Methuen's Colonial Library. In the reviewer's opinion the novel marks a new stage in the work of the artist, who commands a larger view than in those early novels in which he was "disposed to dwell too long and too lingeringly on the sordid details of life." His eyes have been opened to the beauties of the world. An account of the plot of this "fine story" is given and the reviewer concludes with an optimistic prediction: "*The Crown of Life* will take its place among the most notable of the later novels of the nineteenth century."

Anon., "Literature in 1899," *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 4 January 1900, p. 35. "For once Mr. George Gissing was not pessimistic, and made a happy new departure with *The Town Traveller*, a very humorous study of Suburbia, with quite a pleasant Dickens flavour about it."

[H. H. Champion], "[*The Crown of Life*]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), January 1900, p. 2. Champion closed the book with his "old conviction confirmed and strengthened, that Gissing will be read more by the next generation than he is by this." His books "are literature in its best sense, a reflex of their time produced by a master hand. *The Crown of Life* is another step forward and will increase Gissing's reputation." Champion then reviewed the main themes of

the book, and described the personality of Piers Otway. He did not keep his promise to discuss the book again. He sent a copy of the journal to Gissing, whose opinion Gabrielle Fleury reflected in an undated letter to Clara Collet. See *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 359-61.

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 1 February 1900, p. 65. A paragraph about *The Crown of Life*, not a review. The story is "a modern romance, with a strong love interest, and

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the happenings and the aims of the day are discussed with Mr. Gissing's usual boldness and insight."

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 8 March 1900, p. 57. Only a quotation from the *Saturday Review* about *The Crown of Life* (2 December 1899, p. 712) in which the typical Gissing reader is defined temperamentally.

Anon., "Literary Notes from England," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 17 March 1900, p. 10. A paragraph "From our Special Correspondent," dated London, 19 January 1900, about the Rochester Edition of Dickens's works, and about *Pickwick* in particular. "The notes are largely, though not wholly, topographical. If the pictorial work is in capable hands, this is still more true of the editorial. Mr. Gissing writes prefaces, critical and bibliographical, and Mr. F. G. Kitton writes notes. Both men know their subject; both are refreshingly brief, and tell the reader just as much and not more than he wants to know."

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 31 May 1900, p. 60. Announces the publication of Gissing's "record of a journey in Italy" and observes that the author has latterly added considerably to his range with his Dickens criticism.

Anon., "[Humplebee]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), May 1900, p. 60. A paragraph about Gissing's short story, "Humplebee," in the March number of the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, edited by Lady Randolph Churchill. The journalist ironically observes that Gissing in this number is among aristocrats such as Lady Dorothy Nevill (whom, by the way, he once declined to visit after the Osborne Jay affair) and concludes that he feels tempted to quote Scapin – "What the devil is he doing in this galley?"

Anon., "[Outsiders]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), July, 1900, p. 82. "Mr. Robert W. Chambers is

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at his best in *Outsiders* (F. A. Stokes Co., New York); it is excellent reading. It does for New York what George Gissing's *The Unclassed* and *New Grub Street* did for London. It is not so great an achievement as *The Unclassed*, – but then how very, very few novels of this generation do reach the level of that work?"

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 6 March 1901, p. 68. A paragraph about Gissing's Introduction to *Bleak House*, objecting to his comment on the manner in which Esther Summerson's narrative is introduced and treated in the novel.

Anon., "Literature: Books up to date: Fiction," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 7 September 1901, p. 6.

A review of the colonial edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan* published by George Bell and Sons, half of which is devoted to the Reverend Lashmar's thoughts on the newspaper article he has been reading early in the story, an article which its author might have written with Dyce in mind. The reviewer apparently misunderstood much of Gissing's message and of his use of Jean Izoulet's book. "In *Our Friend the Charlatan*, George Gissing is distinctly tiresome in considerable patches because he seems to believe in himself as a preacher of social reform.[ . . . ] [The story] is too thinly spread out. But as a study of the game as played by some professional political reformers, the book is clever."

Anon., "Current Literature: Some Stories," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 1901, p. 4. Another short review of the colonial edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan*, concentrating on Dyce Lashmar's misadventures, emotional and sentimental. The story is said to be "an interesting study of a curious personality [...] told with all the force and power which readers associate with Mr. Gissing's name."

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[H. H. Champion], "[*Our Friend the Charlatan*]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), September 1901, p. 98. An enthusiastic review of an unspecified edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan*, combined with an overall appreciation of Gissing's works. "It is very rarely indeed that we find half-a-dozen really fine character studies in one novel, and that a novel, too, marked by much discriminating satire, and humour, and a literary finish very uncommon in these days of hurried workmanship. Yet that is the case with a book I have just read. And when to all this is added a quite exceptional knowledge of certain phases of human nature, the reader will expect to hear of a book by one of our greatest, Meredith or Hardy or Mrs. Ward. The book in question is 'Our Friend the Charlatan,' by George Gissing."

Then Champion turns to his friend's work in general: "No other novelist has so well depicted the social characteristics of the age in which we live, held up a mirror to the time. This quality alone would render his work valuable, but it has other high qualities. His characters are all true to type, are real living human beings, and not the marionettes of a puppet show. He has command of a literary style which is in itself a distinction. And yet he has been comparatively neglected by the great mass of the reading public. To me this is somewhat of a puzzle, for several of his novels have, in addition to the qualities I have mentioned, plots and situations of such absorbing interest that their popularity with that great body of readers, who look to plot and situations alone for attraction, would seem assured. If any reader doubts this, let him put on his list of books to be read the following three of Gissing's novels, written respectively at the beginning, middle, and during the latter period of his career, 'The Unclassed,' 'The Emancipated,' and 'The Whirlpool.' I have no fear of the

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result. He will thank me for the advice."

The third paragraph is devoted to the novel under review: "Its principal feature is the relentless dissection of the principal character, a literary and political egotist; in this it may be compared to Robert Grant's 'Unleavened Bread,' Meredith's 'Egoist,' and Thackeray's 'Barry Lyndon.' The story is well conceived and successfully carried out, compelling the reader's attention to the end, for how it will terminate cannot easily be guessed until the final chapters are reached. I have only one fault to find with 'The Charlatan,' if fault it really be, viz., that there is not more than one of the characters that really commands the reader's

sympathies, much as they may excite his interest.”

Anon., “Literature: New Novels,” *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 5 October 1901, p. 781. A long review of the colonial edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan* mainly devoted to the major events in the story, “a powerful and realistic study of character,” in which Gissing “shows his usual profound knowledge of the weaker and baser side of human nature.” The critic thinks *Our Friend the Charlatan* is the most striking novel he has written since *The Whirlpool*.

Anon., “The Novel of the Year!”, *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), January 1902, p. 147. A satirical poem from *Munsey’s Magazine*, in which Gissing is mentioned along with other contemporary writers. The last two lines of the third stanza read:

“With confusion we are smitten, for we find that each has written,  
‘Undoubtedly the novel of the year.’”

[H. H. Champion], “[Letter to the proprietor of *The Book Lover*],” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1

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March 1902, p. 171. Champion quotes from a letter Gissing had written to him on 11 January 1902. The original letter still has to be traced, the passage he prints (“Your voice comes to me [. . .] some service”) may be read in the January 1972 number of the *Gissing Newsletter* (“Three Letters from Gissing to H. H. Champion,” pp. 12-15). Champion did not mention Gissing’s name, he was content to say that he had received the letter “from one of the foremost English novelists, whom I should be inclined to rank along with Meredith and Hardy in a class by themselves.” However, as he mentioned Gissing by name also in connection with Meredith and Hardy in his review of *Our Friend the Charlatan* (see above), some readers must have read between the lines. Perhaps all the more easily as on the next page (172) of this same number for 1 March 1902 he gave personal news of Gissing which doubtless came from the same untraced original letter:

“I regret to learn that the health of Mr. George Gissing is such as to prevent his living in England during the winter season. He had a bad breakdown last October, but is now better, and staying at Arcachon in the South of France. He has some important literary work in hand in addition to a new novel. It is encouraging to notice that there is a growing demand for his books, and a tendency on the part of the critics to treat his writings with more respect than formerly. He has never ‘split his life among the cliques,’ and has always kept himself free from what someone called ‘the thunder of the rolling logs.’ This possibly accounts for the scant justice done to his earlier works. For myself, I have always ranked him high among the writers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.” Champion was to quote again from this letter in the *Book Lover* for 1 February 1904 and February 1913.

[H. H. Champion], “[‘An Author at Grass’],” *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 August 1902, p. 233.

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Two paragraphs of commentary on the first instalment of “An Author at Grass” in the May number of the *Fortnightly Review*. With mock hesitation Champion wrote: “My own impression is (of course I may be wrong) that there never was any Henry Ryecroft, and that the extracts are Mr. Gissing’s own work.” He added that they reminded him of some of Lamb’s essays.



Anon., "Literature: Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 29 November 1902, p. 1299. An announcement of the publication of Forster's *Life of Dickens*, abridged and revised by Gissing. The paragraph is similar to that which was widely circulated among English editors about the same time. The work, the publisher claimed, had been undertaken in the belief that great biographies are too often "taken as read." Gissing "retained as much autobiographic matter as possible, made a little rearrangement and a few corrections, and sometimes substituted remarks of his own for Forster's critical comments." Some reviewers were to disapprove of such a procedure.

[H. H. Champion], "[Forster's *Life of Dickens*]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 December 1902, p. 285. A review of Gissing's revised and abridged edition of Forster's *Life of Dickens*. Champion quotes the first paragraph of the editor's preface and praises his work.

Anon., "Literary Gossip," *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 17 December 1902, p. 29. The book has been largely ordered by booksellers. "One's literary instinct a little revolts against this kind of abridgment; but at any rate the fact is clear that the general public are ready for it. Forster's *Life of Dickens*, as a matter of fact, was so poor a book that Mr. Gissing might very well have written a much better biography himself, and his editing of 'Forster' will probably

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improve it."

Anon., "Literary and Art Notes," *Tasmanian Mail* (Hobart), 20 December 1902, p. 5. An account of Gissing's intentions as editor of Forster's *Life of Dickens*, as communicated by Chapman & Hall to the press, not a review.

Anon., "Literature: Literary Notes," *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 20 December 1902, p. 1486. A review of Forster's *Life of Dickens* abridged and revised by "one of Dickens's sincere and judicious admirers." The new work is a welcome substitution for the old one. The most part of the review consists in a long quotation from the *Literary World* which printed part of a letter Dickens wrote to Forster on finishing "The Chimes."

[H. H. Champion], "Comments," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 April 1903, pp. 325-26. A review of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Constable's Colonial Edition). To Champion this is "a piece of writing which represents the soul of a man and allows him to go free under the open sun." He sums up the fictitious account of Ryecroft's life given in the "admirably written preface," and points out the resemblances between Gissing and his *alter ego*: "The ages are sufficiently close; the indifference to literary fame, so complete and late in arriving; the dislike to 'men of letters' of recent date; the detestation of the 'penny dreadfuls' of recent literature; the great love of nature – all are Gissing and Gissing only." In the next paragraph, Champion relates how he became acquainted with Gissing as a writer through James Leigh Joynes, "an Eton master who threw up his appointment to come up to London as a journalist." Joynes made him read *The Unclassed*, a book which Champion never missed an opportunity to praise, much as Allan Noble Monkhouse repeatedly wrote admiringly of *The*

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*Town Traveller*. A paragraph on the style of *Henry Ryecroft* concludes the review.

Anon., "Literary and Art Notes," *Tasmanian Mail* (Hobart), 11 April 1903, p. 5. A paragraph echoing Robert Buchanan's and Gissing's warnings to aspirants after literary glory (*Henry Ryecroft*, Spring XVIII).

Anon., "Fiction," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 18 April 1903, p. 4. A review of Constable's edition of *Henry Ryecroft* which begins with an abstract of the preface, goes on with an attack upon the presence of an index in such a book, and ends on a quieter note: "There is a great deal of pleasant reading in this book; and pervading it the sigh of personal satisfaction of one who has found peace. There is also much intimate depiction of the changes that come with the seasons in Devonshire, such as Blackmore revelled in. As a book of the meditative kind it ranks fairly high."

Anon., "Literature: Books we Read," *Sydney Mail*, 22 April 1903, p. 1012. A substantial review, ending with a quotation on poverty (Spring V), which shows no implicit recognition that Ryecroft is a fictional character. Although a rare instance of critical myopia, this review is by no means an exception.

Anon., "Literature: Notes and Reviews," *West Australian* (Perth), 25 April 1903, p. 11. A long review of *Henry Ryecroft*, the last four paragraphs being quotations on conscription, the reading habits of the English, cookery and the Stoics. The following passage testifies that the reviewer was mystified by the preface: "Mr. Gissing has for some years been straying away from the pessimistic fiction that made his name, and this book, consisting of articles on various subjects threaded into a series of recollections of a man of letters never very

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successful, and brayed in the mortar of literary London till raised to comfort by a legacy, is a further step. The book has an attractiveness of its own, and contains many most suggestive comments on present-day tendencies. Many of the articles have already seen the light in newspapers and periodicals. Their range is wide – as wide as England. [. . .] The book is well worth reading, though perhaps it is not worth keeping for reference or for re-reading."

Anon., "Books and Magazines," *Western Mail* (Perth), 25 April 1903, p. 50. Same review as the previous one.

Anon., "[Henry Ryecroft]," *The Book Lover* (Melbourne), 1 May 1903, p. 339. A paragraph, very likely compiled by H. H. Champion, on *Henry Ryecroft*. The first and last paragraphs of the "long and highly appreciative review" of the book in the *Academy* of 7 March are quoted approvingly. See item 157 in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*.

Anon., "Books and Men," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 2 May 1903, p. 5. A notice of the English edition of *Henry Ryecroft*, "a study in psychology [. . .] under the guise of a biography.[. . .] It is a very clever book, though a gloomy one."

Anon., "Publications Received," *Brisbane Courier*, 9 May 1903, p. 13. A review of the English edition of *Henry Ryecroft* which, after a few words on Gissing's significance in contemporary fiction, analyses the preface and the structure of the book. The reviewer praises this "volume of very beautiful work," the chapters which make "one think of Thoreau

in the picturesqueness of their philosophy, of Robert Buchanan in the beauty and strength of the language, and of John Ruskin (in his less exaggerated attitudes) for nobility of idea.”

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W. L. Courtney’s review of the book in the London *Daily Telegraph* (4 February 1903), under the Swinburnian phrase “Oh, golden book of spirit and of sense,” is warmly approved and the volume strongly recommended to Queensland readers.

Anon., “Publications Received,” *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 9 May 1903, p. 19. Same review as the previous one.

Anon., “Reviews of Books,” *The Register* (Adelaide), 9 May 1903, p. 10. A review of the English edition of *Henry Ryecroft* beginning with the reassuring remark that “English reviewers are almost unanimous in setting down these musings and moralizings as really the private papers of George Gissing.” To the critic, this is a book far less gloomy and pessimistic than the author’s earlier works. Ryecroft is quoted on poverty, Devonshire in Spring and self-righteousness. He stresses the great variety of subjects discussed and approves of the presence of an index. “On British characteristics the writer is as emphatic as Emerson. [. . .] The book is emphatically one to be bought, and to be reread by those who can appreciate good prose and an excellent presentment of diversified thought.”

Anon., “Literature: The Book of the Week,” *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 16 May 1903, p. 6. A very long review of *Henry Ryecroft* with copious quotations on the people, on conscription, on intellectual capacities and moral values, on the artistic slips made by such writers as Scott, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Thackeray, on religion. *Henry Ryecroft*, like the novels, is written in the minor key. “A writer is, of course, at liberty to place his thoughts in any setting he chooses, but Mr. Gissing would have shown more frankness had he given his commonplace-book to the world under his own, instead of a borrowed, name, and certainly his observations and reflections do not acquire any additional piquancy from this pretended

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coyness to acknowledge their paternity. The public, however, cannot be indifferent to what a novelist, so famous as Mr. Gissing, has to say on such matters as the prospects of modern civilisation, and the movement towards democracy, history, poetry, criticism, etc., even though his remarks may have a stronger coloring of pessimism and even of criticism than we could have wished. For one thing, his work throws some light on a type of character which has not, perhaps, received the attention its frequency merits – the man whose impulses are generous, whose nature is sympathetic, who feels keenly the wrongs of the poor, but who, nevertheless, views with something like dread the advance of democracy. His talk and bearing seem the talk and bearing of a Radical. Bring him down to the concrete, and he votes Tory always.”

The reviewer goes on to note Gissing’s condemnation of violence, his curious definition of art (which scarcely applies to poetry or at least not to such a poem as “The City of Dreadful Night”) and his view of the finality of the world.

Anon., “The Diary of a Thinker,” *The Age* (Melbourne), 16 May 1903, p. 4. Another long review of *Henry Ryecroft*, possibly the colonial edition available in Melbourne from Melville and Mullen, Ryecroft’s “experiences are the common lot of hundreds of educated men and

women in London, Paris and almost every large capital in Europe; but we rarely find them described with so much genuine insight and with such accuracy of detail." The reviewer wisely concedes that it is not material to inquire how far the book is autobiographical and how far it is imaginative. "It may be as introspective and as individual as *Journal Intime* of Amiel, as the *Religio Medici* of Sir Thomas Browne, or as so many of the essays of Montaigne and Charles Lamb; or it may belong to the same class of books as *The Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*, by Ugo Foscolo; or *The New Phaedo* of Bulwer Lytton, in which the

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writers have interwoven so many of their own thoughts and feeling with those of their fictitious personages. In any case *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is a piece of choice literature, besides being what may be called a delicate and skilful demonstration in mental and moral anatomy."

Anon., "Literary Notes," *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 20 May 1903, p. 69. A ten-line paragraph about Gissing's career. The date of his birth and the title of his first novel are given erroneously.

Anon., "Literary Notes: Is it Biographical?," *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 17 June 1903, p. 20. A lengthy review of *Henry Ryecroft* which mainly consists in a paraphrase of the preface and of some episodes of Ryecroft's life. Only towards the end does the reviewer write as though he had realized that Ryecroft is a product of Gissing's imagination. "The sustained excellence of the language will delight Mr. Gissing's admirers and will give pleasure to the many who do not know him. The volume has a cultured healthy tone and one is reminded of the *Essays of Elia*, in the perusal of the volume, and this ought to secure for it a wide popularity among thoughtful, cultured and literary men and women."

Anon., "Obituary: Mr George Gissing," *West Australian* (Perth), 30 December 1903, p. 5. A short announcement of Gissing's death followed by a mention of his having written many novels, a critical essay (*sic*) and the introduction (*sic*) to the Rochester edition of Dickens. All the obituaries in the Australian and New Zealand press were to contain factual errors. Obituarists did not seem to have much more information at hand than the entries in *Who's Who* and possibly *Men of the Time*. As Gissing had chosen not to include *Workers in the Dawn* in the list of his publications, this novel was rarely mentioned.

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Anon., "Obituary: George Gissing, Novelist." *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 December 1903, p. 5. Mentions nine of his novels and his work on Dickens, adding that *Henry Ryecroft* was issued anonymously.

Anon., "Mr. George Gissing," *Morning Herald* (Perth), 30 December 1903, p. 5. An announcement of his death followed by a list of eleven of his novels in chronological order from *The Unclassed* to *The Town Traveller*.

Anon., "Obituary: Mr. Algernon Gissing," *The Examiner* (Launceston), 30 December 1903, p. 5. The details supplied were transcribed from the *Who's Who* entry on Gissing's brother.

Anon., "Obituary: Mr. Gissing, the Novelist," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 December 1903, p. 5.

This newspaper revealed its embarrassment owing to the ambiguity of the telegram it had received: "There are two Mr. Gissings who are well known as novelists. They are brothers, the elder, Mr. George Gissing, being 46 years of age, and Mr. Algernon Gissing three years his junior."

Anon., "Obituaries: Mr. George Gissing," *The Age* (Melbourne), 30 December 1903, p. 5. Mentions four novels of the mid-1880s and another five from *Eve's Ransom* to *Our Friend the Charlatan*. "He was a keenly thoughtful and analytic writer, though not universally popular."

Anon., "Death of a Novelist: Mr. George Gissing," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 30 December 1903, p. 5. "Mr. Gissing wrote a number of novels describing the life of the middle and lower classes, all marked by unflinching realism and a somewhat pessimistic tone." Eleven titles, ranging

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from 1884 to 1901, are listed.

Anon., "Obituary: Mr. George Gissing," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 1903, p. 7. Mentions *Henry Ryecroft* and observes that "a melancholy interest attaches to the papers, inasmuch as the death of Ryecroft in middle age seems to be but the foresight of the author of his own death." A list of seven titles, from *The Unclassed* to *Our Friend the Charlatan*, is supplied.

Anon., "Obituary: A Popular Novelist," *The Register* (Adelaide), 30 December 1903, p. 5. Five lines on "the well-known novelist and essayist," whose literary career is said to have begun in 1884.

Anon., "Obituary," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 30 December 1903, p. 5. A short announcement. Gissing was "the author of many works of a notable character."

Anon., "Obituary: Death of Mr. George Gissing," *Brisbane Courier*, 30 December 1903, p. 5. Only the shortest announcement possible.

Anon., "Death of an Author," *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland), 31 December 1903, p. 5. Again the briefest of announcements.

Anon., "Obituary," *The Mercury* (Hobart), 31 December 1903, p. 5. A very short obituary obviously based on the *Who's Who* entry. Seven works of fiction are mentioned, from *The Unclassed* to *Human Odds and Ends* as well as the Dickens criticism.

Anon., "Obituary: Mr. George Gissing," *The Examiner* (Launceston), 31 December 1903, p. 5. Corrects the mistaken statement of the previous day and offers a mere transcription of the *Who's Who* entry on George.

(to be continued)

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### Book Review

Pierre Coustillas and Patrick Bridgwater, *George Gissing at Work: A Study of His Notebook 'Extracts from My Reading,'* Greensboro: ELT Press, 1988. (Number Two in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series.)

The publication of George Gissing's private papers "Extracts from My Reading" in this substantial volume is an important contribution not only to Gissing studies, but to late nineteenth century scholarship generally. The authors have provided an extensive commentary on the 172 quotations which the novelist transcribed from his reading between 1880-1895, drawing upon a wealth of bibliographical material to date the entries and explain their significance for the writer's life and work.

In keeping his notebook, Gissing followed the example of his father, Thomas Waller Gissing, whose own commonplace book is currently in private hands. The custom of transcribing quotations from one's reading has of course been common among bookmen of all periods. For the humanist reader, literature provides a unique record of enduring human values in which one is drawn to converse with the great writers of other ages and countries, and where, in Matthew Arnold's robust formulation, we can discover "the best that is known and thought in the world." It will come as no surprise to readers of Gissing's novels that Arnold himself should appear in these "Extracts" as the prophet of culture. Yet the feeling of moral superiority to the general culture that characterises the Arnoldian ideal of reading and self-cultivation alerts us to the specifically Victorian strain in Gissing's humanism, and its difference to, say, the earlier Georgian classical ideal of sociability and shared values. These quotations may, for example, have the appearance of general maxims and truisms, but their significance is in the end wholly personal. They were never intended for publication. Paradoxically, it is precisely their status as private papers that constitutes their value

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and interest for the contemporary reader. Coustillas' and Bridgwater's study must be seen as part of a renewed interest in late Victorian writers generally as their personal papers are made increasingly accessible. In the "Introduction" to the present volume, Gissing's "Extracts" are illuminatingly compared to Hardy's *Literary Notebooks*, which also contain extracts from his reading. The editors note, however, that Gissing does not appear to have transcribed these apophthegms primarily for use in his fiction. Of the 172 quotations, only 22 would seem to have found their way directly into his books. Thus the notebook has a more general significance as evidence of his reading and culture, and a guide to his intellectual development during the years of his literary apprenticeship from 1880-1885 when most of the quotations were transcribed. It is also an important document biographically, to be placed alongside other evidence of Gissing's life in those years for which, regrettably, there is no diary, Gissing himself having destroyed it in order to put behind him the sordid miseries of his first unhappy marriage.

It is not a new Gissing that emerges from these quotations and notes, but a Gissing whose moral and literary dimensions can be seen with greater clarity. Many of the authors and headings are those one might have predicted. Carlyle, for instance, features prominently as the passionate prophet of the "Aristocracy of the Wisest" and the scourge of charlatanism and sham culture. Yet even here the "Extracts" compel us to recognise the extent to which Carlyle influenced not only Gissing's social thinking, but his style. Criticism has tended to view Gissing as a writer of weighty, naturalistic prose; one hopes that these "Extracts" will now direct greater attention to the Carlylean element that shapes Gissing's authorial interventions, and the impassioned pleadings of his early intellectual protagonists. Indeed it is here that I feel Coustillas and Bridgwater to some extent

underestimate Gissing's aesthetic motivation in transcribing these extracts, although it must be said that they do in fact acknowledge his acute sensitivity to language. For if anything can be said to link these entries, it is their concern for the shape or form of a feeling, for that sense of visual existence which Carlyle noticed as one of Goethe's chief gifts. Significantly Goethe himself is quoted in these "Extracts" more frequently than any other single author, although in acknowledging the quotable nature of Goethe's works, one nevertheless shares the surprise of the editors at seeing Goethe "swamp the authors who were known to rank among his favourites." It is clear, in the light of these "Extracts," that the influence of the German sage on the young Gissing will now have to be critically reassessed.

More predictably, we have Wordsworth and Coleridge on poetry and imagination; these extracts, together with quotations from Ruskin and Pater, whose influence can be strongly felt in Gissing's novels of the mid-eighties, confirm Gissing's passionate faith in the educative power of art and literature. As one might have expected, we also discover mottoes on love, death and the human lot from Gissing's cherished classical authors. There are elements here of stoicism and epicureanism that one is already familiar with from Gissing's writings, notably *Ryecroft*. Yet the impression here is not of an escapist desire "to dwell among the classic ghosts" whom one associates with those weakly passive heroes of Gissing's fiction such as Reardon of *New Grub Street*, and which H. G. Wells, in his *Autobiography*, identified dismissively as the basis of Gissing's own education. The extract on "The Study of the Ancients" which Gissing quotes from Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* (Extract 60) would seem to be a more apposite description of Gissing's classicism here: "People always talk of the study of the ancients; but what does that mean, if not: turn your attention to the real world, and try to express it – for that is what the ancients

did in their time." The maxim on "Poverty" transcribed from Juvenal's Third Satire, for instance –

Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat  
Res angusta domi.  
(It is never an easy matter for a man to rise  
when poverty stands in the way of his merits) –

expresses indignantly the cruel inequalities of Gissing's own society, which is the subject of much of his fiction, and the bitter reality of his personal struggles.

There are some surprises – the complete absence of Schopenhauer, for instance, and the appearance of the eighteenth-century French wit, Nicolas-Sébastien Chamfort, whose inclusion here adds to our understanding of Gissing's enjoyment of verbal humour. There are also wholly unexpected delights, such as the printing of a hitherto unpublished sonnet on "Carlyle's Statue" which Gissing wrote in 1883 while living close to the writer's former home in Chelsea. But perhaps one of the most significant effects of the "Extracts" as a whole is to remind us of Gissing's frankly combative, unconventional views on art and morality. It is a side of Gissing that has often been understressed in critical studies which emphasize the conservative basis of Gissing's social pessimism and retreat to inner selfhood. Quotations from Buckle and Turgot under the headings "Aggressive Thinkers" and "The Enemies of Truth" remind us of the youthful radicalism that inspired his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*. One could argue that these sentiments really belong to Gissing's early Comtist phase, before his attachment to Schopenhauerian ideals; but this would be to ignore Gissing's continuing refusal of convention in his life and in his art. The youthful

champion of artistic freedom, who took sides with Moore in the censorship debate of 1884, remained throughout his life a revolutionary artist who did much to challenge the inhibiting pressures of Victorian public taste. There is a certain poignancy for the contemporary reader in those extracts advocating a defiance of convention – notably the quotation on “Good and Evil” from

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Shelley’s translation of Plato’s *Banquet*, which would seem to express nakedly Gissing’s own tormented self-justification for transgression in the period of his struggle for a place in the world, following his expulsion from Owens College. Such extracts also throw light upon Gissing’s representation of intellectual revolt in novels such as *The Unclassed* and *Born in Exile*. It is clearly a liberating indifference to society’s law that prompts his quotation of Alfred de Musset’s bohemian apology for love:

Aimer est le grand point; qu’importe la maîtresse?  
Qu’importe le flacon pourvu qu’on ait l’ivresse?

It must be said that England was not without her equivalent voices, many of them influenced by Baudelaire and the French Parnassians. Gissing himself was part of that greater artistic frankness furthered by Swinburne, Wilde, Symons, Dowson and the exoticism of the *Yellow Book*. If Gissing, like Hardy, failed to match the openness of the poets of the period, this must be attributed not to conservatism or failure of will, but to the inherent restrictions of the more popular novel form.

What has never been in doubt, but is here gloriously confirmed, is the range and depth of Gissing’s culture and his distinction as a linguist. The “Extracts” are reproduced in six languages, including English, although for non-English quotations, the editors have helpfully provided simple, unobtrusive translations. The variation in the size and quality of the Greek transcriptions may offend the purist, but in other respects the book is worthy of its contents. Whether the study is used as a key to Gissing’s fiction, a biographical tool or a guide to Gissing’s culture and reading, it is likely to have a significant impact on Gissing studies in the future. To a large extent this is due to the assiduous and illuminating commentary which does not merely set out to date the entries, but creates an impressive and suggestive network of new connections and ideas about Gissing’s life and work. There are new links made between Gissing and other writers – Hawthorne and Landor, for instance – that will undoubtedly influence future criticism. More generally, the frequent references

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to unpublished material, particularly letters, encourage one to hope that a collected letters may soon be undertaken. Yet the final influence of this study may well lie in our recognition that Gissing’s reputation as a major force in Victorian literature will come about not by critical affirmations, but by patient and sturdy scholarship of the present kind, – John Sloan, Balliol College, Oxford.

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#### Notes and News

How many readers of George Gissing are aware that his nephew Roland (1895-1967) made for himself a solid reputation as an artist in his country of adoption, Canada? Those of us whose shelves are sagging under the weight of George’s three-volume editions and who have succeeded in laying hands on Algernon’s novels and topographical guides as well as on Ellen’s two little books and



Alfred's study of Holman Hunt, will soon have an opportunity to welcome a new volume on yet another member of the family. *Roland Gissing: The Peoples' Painter*, by Max Foran and Nonie Houlton, was published in December by University of Calgary Press (2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4) at \$34.95 (price in US dollars outside Canada). The book is an album with illustrations of Roland Gissing's work ranging from the days when he arrived in Canada at the age of eighteen to the last few years of his life. For many years he was the only artist living and working in the Alberta Rockies. His name is synonymous with paintings of mountains, lakes, old derricks and haystacks. Nonie Houlton is Roland Gissing's stepdaughter; she has recently moved from Scottsdale, Arizona to Calgary. Max Foran, B.Ed., M.A., Ph.D., is a well-known

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Calgary author and historian of Australian origin. He is Principal of Midnapore School in Calgary. The advance dust-jacket of the book shows an excellent specimen of Roland Gissing's art – a mountain landscape – with a portrait of the artist on the back. The book will be reviewed at length later this year.

As a footnote to M. D. Allen's article on some Charles Lamb echoes in *Born in Exile*, it may be noted that Gissing may have had John Forster's biography of Goldsmith in mind when he described the relationship between Malkin and the Jacox family. Goldsmith was introduced by Reynolds to Mary Horneck, his "Jessamy bride," and her family when Mary was fourteen, and he accompanied Mrs. Horneck, Mary and Mary's sister ("Little Comedy") to Paris in 1770. Now Malkin goes with Mrs. Jacox and her daughters Bella (who is also fourteen) and Lily, not to Paris, but to Dieppe, Rouen and Orléans. The parallel could admittedly be more striking, but some aspects of Malkin's ludicrous adventures are probably too close to some facts in Goldsmith's life to be purely accidental. Gissing was familiar with Forster's biography of the eighteenth-century poet and novelist. The few Goldsmith entries in his diary speak for themselves. In August 1888 he took *The Vicar of Wakefield* when he went on holiday with his relatives to Seascale; on 19 May 1889 we find him reading Forster's biography, on 14 July 1889 Goldsmith's "Traveller", and on 22 February 1891, that is when he was writing *Born in Exile*, he noted 'that he "dawdled over Forster's Goldsmith." He was to reread the latter book in July 1902.

Martha Vogeler was probably justified in expressing her surprise at not finding any mention in "Gissing and the Shakspeare Scholarship" (*Newsletter*, July, 1988) that C. H. Herford was a Positivist. As she shows in her recent book, *Frederic Harrison: The Vocations of a Positivist*,

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Herford was the leader of a Positivist group founded in Manchester in 1884 and he may well have discussed Gissing with Harrison when the latter gave a lecture in Manchester that year. They were to meet on other occasions.

Some day a list of novels in which Gissing is mentioned will have to be compiled. One of the earliest examples occurs in *The Wheels of Chance*, a social romance by H. G. Wells. The latest, kindly mentioned by Lyn Donovan in recent correspondence, is *Glittering Images*, by Susan Howatch (Fontana/Collins, 1988). A character remarks on p.56: "It was like a novel by Gissing about the ghastliness of genteel poverty."

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### Recent Publications

Reviews, articles, etc.

Thomas Karr Richards, "Literature, English," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 47, No. 6, December 1986, p. 2171A. An abstract of his dissertation entitled "Large Promises: A Literary History of English Advertising, 1887-1914." *In the Year of Jubilee* is one of the author's sources.

Tom Gibbons, "Reviews and Responses," *Journal of Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, No. 67, May 1987, pp. 150-53. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*.

Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot*, Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1987. Quotes Gissing's anti-Ruskinian views as expressed in *The Odd Women*, p. 239.

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James O. Hoge, *Library Reviewing*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987. Angus Easson, who reviewed Gissing's diary shortly after publication, mentions Gissing several times in his essay, "Reviewing Editions: Letters, Journals, Diaries."

Charles Burkhart, "Book Reviews," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 31 (1988), No. 3, pp. 326-29. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*. Other references of interest will be found in the review by Michael Cave of Harold Orel's anthology of Victorian short stories as well as in Dennis Shruballs's article, "Updating W. H. Hudson Bibliography, II: Correspondence and Books" (Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 437-44).

John Halperin, "Book Reviews," *Modern Philology*, Vol. 86, No. 1, August 1988, pp. 108-09. Review of *The Paradox of Gissing*.

Gerd Schultz, "Zeilengeld – schwer zu verdienen" and "Armen Poeten in London," *Börsenblatt*, Vol. 77, 27 September 1988, pp. 2771 and 2784-85. Review of the German translation of *New Grub Street*, with William Rothenstein's drawing of Gissing (1897) and one of the photographs of him taken by Elliott and Fry (1901).

Francesco Badolato, "La morte cristiana in d'Annunzio, Pater e Gissing," *Il Corriere di Roma*, 20 November 1988, p. 3.

William B. Todd and Ann Bowden, *Tauchnitz International Editions in English 1841-1955, A Bibliographical History*, New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1988, *Demos* and *New Grub Street* are duly listed on pp. 361 and 403, with interesting bibliographical details.

David C. Sutton (ed.), *Location Register of Twentieth-Century English Literary Manuscripts and*

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*Letters*, 2 vols., London: The British Library, 1988. For a descriptive analysis of this important reference book, see Alan Bell's review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 21-27 September 1988, p. 1185.

