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Gissing the ‘Omarian’: *Fin de Siècle* Cult of *Omar Khayyám* and Gissing’s *Born in Exile* (1892)

Ayaka Komiya

The year 1859 was made memorable in English literary history by the publication of three books—Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Samuel Smile’s *Self-Help*, and Edward FitzGerald’s *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. Although each of these three books is important in its own way, it is FitzGerald’s *Omar Khayyám* that bears the most importance to a study of George Gissing (1857-1903). Probably due to its extraordinary popularity, something that continues to this day, *Omar Khayyám* appears to have failed to attract attention as a serious work of art. However, its effect on contemporary literature was immense—so much so that its neglect is quite unwarranted. It is my aim here to remedy the present situation, at least in part, and to shed a new light on Gissing study by looking at the influence of *Omar Khayyám* on his works.

Owing to FitzGerald’s eccentricity, which made him take ‘more pains to avoid fame than others do to seek it’ (Wright ix), his translation of the 11th century Persian poet, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, had a very uncertain start. The anonymously published booklet was printed on such a small scale that it hardly called any attention to itself at the time of publication. It seemed that it was doomed to enter oblivion. However, its fate changed when it was rescued from the penny box in front of a second-hand bookshop, and found its way into the hands of D. G. Rossetti and A. C.

Swinburne two years later. Through them, *Omar Khayyám* was introduced to the other Pre-Raphaelites, who responded with enthusiasm. Before long, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, George Meredith, and John Ruskin had all turned into admirers of the *Omar.*[1] FitzGerald revised and published four editions during his lifetime, but the scarcity of the book limited readership to a small intellectual circle in London. It was after the publication of the fifth and final revised edition, in *The Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald,* in 1889, six years after FitzGerald's death, that the number of admirers soared. In the 1890s, the popularity of *Omar Khayyám* became something of a phenomenon, as an article by Paul Elmer More in 1899 indicates:

> There was a story current not long ago of a London editor who was rash enough to wager that no paragraph on Kipling or FitzGerald should appear in his journal during a stated period,—and, needless to add, he lost the bet in the very next issue. This endless flux of gossip about two chosen names, with here and there a word of serious criticism smuggled in, is indeed one of the curiosities of our modern literary magazines[.]
>
> (More 104)[2]

The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám is not a translation in the strict sense of the word. FitzGerald took pains over its translation, 'though certainly not to be literal'(FitzGerald, 1902, 2: 100). It is rather, to quote Charles Eliot Norton, 'a re-representation of the ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own'(575), or, to quote Frank Kermode, an 'allusion to the *Rubáiyát*'(56). In any case, the melancholic note of this Persian-English poem struck a chord with the late Victorians. *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* was, indeed, a '*fin de siècle* poem born before its time'

(Page 152).

It is probable that anyone that lived in the literary world of *fin de siècle* England would find it difficult to be totally indifferent to this cult. In fact, many explicitly indicated their approval—or disapproval, in some cases—of *Omar Khayyám* and Edward FitzGerald. For example, A. C. Swinburne, who was one of the earliest admirers of *Omar Khayyám*, was inspired to sing 'Laus Veneris'; Robert Browning's 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' reveals his explicit disapproval of the Omarian philosophy of life; Rudyard Kipling's 'The Rupaiyat of Omar Kal'vin' is an obvious example of his borrowing from Omar, and 'Exile's Line' (1890) also uses Omarian structure; stanzas in 'A Shropshire Lad' by A. E. Housman show that they were written for those who were familiar with *Omar Khayyám*; and Ezra Pound was so enamoured of the poem that he named his son 'Omar Shakespeare Pound'.[3]

George Gissing, who lived and wrote in *fin de siècle* England, was by no means unaffected by this literary cult. In fact, he was one of the 59 members of the Omar Khayyám Club, which had been founded in 1892.[4] That he was a member of this club indicates that Gissing was an 'Omarian', and shared a common interest in *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. The significance of his membership of the Omar Khayyám Club increases when one considers that he was not at all a 'club animal'. On the contrary, he would decline invitations to join other literary clubs, saying:

> The Omar is the only club I belong to, of any kind.[5]

Moreover, his letters show that he made a point of coming to London to attend the Omar dinner even after 1897, when he moved from London to Devon for the sake of his health:

> One gathering, & one only, shall I attend this summer; that is the Omar dinner at Marlow on July 10th, to which I feel bound to go—else why am I a member? I see nobody & go nowhere.[6]

George Gissing was indeed a proud Omarian. And he seems to have been articulate about his love of this poem. Sometimes this became the common topic with someone whom he had just met;[7] sometimes he was asked about the new edition of *Omar*.[8] And he recommended it to others as among the best of English literature. To his third, French 'wife' he wrote:

> [R]egarded as an English poem, FitzGerald's Omar is wonderful. Tennyson spoke of it with the highest admiration, & Swinburne places FitzGerald high among poets.[9]

He also told her not 'to forget to inquire about old FitzGerald' when, in 1898, she visited Woodbridge, where FitzGerald used to live.[10] These letters and diary records of Gissing show that he was a great admirer of *Omar Khayyám*. However, his admiration for the poem and its translator have hitherto had hardly any attention. Yet, this aspect of the novelist is very important, as it places him in the decadent atmosphere of *fin de siècle* England.

The Gissing novel in which his first reaction to FitzGerald appears is *Born in Exile*, which was publishd in 1892. The idea of this novel was conceived in late 1890. On 8 December 1890, Gissing wrote to his sister Ellen that he had begun 'to plan [his] next', which was to become *Born in Exile*.[11] Just a week after this letter, Gissing records in his diary for the first time of his reading of FitzGerald:

> Went to Museum at 12, and stayed till 6.30. Read [Edward] Fitzgerald's Letters.[12]

'FitzGerald's letters' here refers to *The Letters and the Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*, which had been published in the previous year. It seems that Gissing was greatly influenced by his reading of it.

The Letters and the Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald was a book that had become something of a topic then for several reasons. Firstly, people were genuinely interested to learn about the private life of the translator of *Omar Khayyám*, who had led a reclusive life and of whom little was known. People were fascinated by those affectionate letters he wrote to his intimate friends, such famous people as Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, and Fanny Kemble. Secondly, *The Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald* included the fifth and final edition of *Omar Khayyám*, which FitzGerald himself had revised and entrusted to his friend, William Aldis Wright.[13] Until then, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* was 'scarcely less rare and not whit less interesting to the collector'(Gosse 79). The publication of the *Letters and Literary Remains* enabled more people to gain access to this much sought-after poem. Thirdly, the *Letters* had attracted particular attention after July 1889, as Robert Browning, who had already shown his disdain for the Omarian view of life in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', published a very harsh poem against FitzGerald, one of whose letters had expressed a dislike for the late Mrs. Browning.[14] These, and a number of reviews that followed, all contributed to its popularity. FitzGerald's letters soon came to be known as 'among the best in the world.'[15]

That Gissing was influenced by his reading of *The Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald* can be inferred from a number of points, both structural and thematic, in *Born in Exile*. For example, the frequent

letters that the characters exchange in *Born in Exile* seem to be a direct influence from FitzGerald's *Letters*. Just as FitzGerald, whose friendship relied mainly on written correspondence, Peak stays in touch with friends by letter. Peak writes to Earwaker and entrusts to him an article that attacked the hypocrisy of the Church; the news of his death comes to Earwaker by mail as well. Sidwell, too, reveals her inner growth in her letters to Peak.

Apart from these letters, an outward influence from FitzGerald can be seen, for example, in Chapter one of Part the second, where Gissing has the emancipated woman, Marcella Moxey, reading Hafiz:

> 'What are you [Marcella] reading?' Peak asked abruptly, but in a voice of more conventional note.
> 'Still Hafiz.' (*Born* 93)

Hafiz is a fourteenth-century Persian Poet, whose name is familiar especially to the readers of Fitzgerald's letters. FitzGerald mentions Hafiz a number of times in his letters, as he had translated Hafiz before Omar Khayyám.[16]

It is worthy to note that Gissing has Marcella reading Hafiz, and not *Omar Khayyám*. This is perhaps reasonable when one consider that Gissing was an Omarian, and an admirer of FitzGerald. Before FitzGerald knew Omar Khayyám, he had thought Hafiz 'the most *Persian* . . . of the Persians', and the 'best Musician of words'.[17] However, he then became acquainted with the poems of Omar Khayyám, whom he thought 'from the first the most remarkable of the Persian Poets.'[18] The philosophy of Omar Khayyám also had more immediate relevance to FitzGerald. He came to identify himself with Omar Khayyám, and called Omar Khayyám 'my Omar'.[19] The works of Omar Khayyám was introduced to FitzGerald by E. B. Cowell, a scholar of Oriental studies, but he thought that he appreciated

Omar Khayyám much better than the over-serious Cowell did. FitzGerald wrote to Cowell:

> But in truth I take old Omar rather more as my property than yours: he and I are more akin, are we not? You see all [his] Beauty, but you don't feel with him in some respects as I do.[20] (My underline)

Then, how about Marcella Moxey in *Born in Exile*? Would she "feel with" Omar Khayyám? FitzGerald, with his aversion to emancipated women, would certainly not think so. 'She and her Sex had better mind the Kitchen and their Children and perhaps the Poor,' he had once written in his letter about Elizabeth Browning. Gissing describes Marcella Moxey as a 'bitterly emancipated,' and 'incomplete woman,' who 'has not a single feminine charm.' (*Born* 96) Living in London in the mid-1880s, it would be natural for an emancipated woman to be reading something oriental—but, not *Omar Khayyám*.

Another aspect of the novel which is likely to have been inspired by FitzGerald's *Letters* is the use of geology. In *Born in Exile*, geology is pursued by a number of characters. Mr. Warricombe's lifelong love for the science led him to name his son after the great Victorian geologist William Buckland; Buckland Warricombe himself showed a hereditary interest and aptitude for geology; and Godwin Peak, who shared the first prize in a geology test with Buckland, goes on a holiday with his 'geological hammer, azimuth compass, clinometer, miniature microscope'(*Born* 120). These references to geology in *Born in Exile* seem to be resulted from the influence of the Edward FitzGerald's letters.

Geology was a new field of science that emerged during the eighteenth century. It had a great impact on the Victorian concept of time by revealing

the immeasurability of time and the slowness of geological change.[21] But it was in the mid-nineteenth century—in FitzGerald's day rather than Gissing's—that Geology was stirring attention. In one of his celebrated letters, written in 1847, FitzGerald talks about the wonder of geology:

> [T]he history of the World, the infinitudes of Space and Time! I never take up a book of Geology or Astronomy but this strikes me. . . . So that, as Lyell says, the Geologist looking at Niagara forgets even the roar of its waters in the contemplation of the awful processes of time that it suggests. It is not only that this vision of Time must wither the Poet's hope of immortality; but it is in itself more wonderful than all the conceptions of Dante and Milton.[22]

This particular letter of FitzGerald is famous as the one that gave Tennyson the inspiration to compose 'Parnassus' (1889), in which he names geology and astronomy as 'terrible Muses' (Warren 136-38). Now, let us compare this passage from FitzGerald's letter with a passage from a letter Godwin Peak writes in *Born in Exile*:

> Last Saturday evening I took train, got away into the hills, and spent the Sunday Geologising. And a curious experience befell me,—one I had long, long ago, in the Whitelaw days. Sitting down before some interesting strata, <u>I lost myself in something like nirvana, grew so subject to the idea of vastness in geological time that all human desires and purposes shrivelled to ridiculous unimportance</u>. Awaking for a minute, I tried to realise the passion which not long ago rent and racked me, but I was flatly incapable of understanding it. (My underline. *Born* 370)

Peak's 'vision of Time' is similar to FitzGerald's astonishment at the 'infinitudes of Space and Time'. Whereas for FitzGerald it withered 'the Poet's hope of immortality', Godwin's desire is 'shrivelled to ridiculous unimportance.' These similarities suggest that Gissing's use of geology in *Born in Exile* was an influence from FitzGerald's letters. In fact, it is on 24 December 1890—only 9 days after Gissing had read FitzGerald's *Letters and Literary Remains*—that he started 'Reading up geological matters for new book.'[23]

Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald, which included *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, seems to have had an influence on the theme of *Born in Exile* as well. The keynote of both *Born in Exile* and *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* is the deep sense of mortality. FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám* repeats how short a human lifetime is: 'The Bird of Time has but a little way / To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing'(Q. 7);[24] and that 'one thing is certain, that Life flies . . . The Flower that once has blown for ever dies'(Q. 26). In *Born in Exile*, too, the passing of time is significantly oppressive. Gissing underlines this theme using a number of Latin quotations. For example, Chapter 3 in 'Part the Second' begins with a quotation Godwin reads beneath the clock in Exeter Cathedral: '*Pereunt et imputantur.*' The part quotation is from Martial's *Epigrammata*, which in full would be translated as 'And he feels the good days are fleeing and passing away, our days that perish and are scored to our account' (*Born* 116). This quotation appears repeatedly in a number of other places in the novel, reminding the readers of the passing of time.

Related to the theme of the passing of time is a lament for lost youth. Indeed, in *Born in Exile* there appear so many lamentations on lost youth that this novel may be called a 'novel of lost youth', as opposed to the 'novel of youth' of a *Bildungsroman*. For example, Godwin cries out, '*O mihi*

præteritos referat si Jupiter annos!', reflecting the years he had spent in struggle and toil, postponing the enjoyment of life.[25] Christian Moxey, Godwin's friend, also laments the ten years of youth he had wasted waiting for his ideal love to be requited:

> But the years that I [Christian] have lost! The irrecoverable years!
>
> (*Born* 389)

Sidwell, too, talks of the end of her youth with resignation:

> Yesterday was my birthday; I was twenty-eight. At this age, it is wisdom in a woman to remind herself that youth is over. (*Born* 383)

In *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, too, there are quatrains on youth. For example, in quatrain 72, he sings:

> Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
> That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
> The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
> Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Thus, the passing of time and the wasting of youth are the central themes of both *Born in Exile* and *Omar Khayyám*.

To be aware of time that is ruthlessly passing, and of youth that is being wasted, is very depressing. It adds a melancholy note to these works. However, as FitzGerald writes in one of his letters, *Omar Khayyám* offers 'his kind of consolation for all these Things.'[26] That is the philosophy of *carpe diem*—the philosophy that announces that 'To-day is ours.'[27] Thus, Omar has the strength to say, 'Why fret about them [TOMORROW and

YESTERDAY] if TO-DAY be sweet!'(Q. 37) However, *Born in Exile* is different from *Omar Khayyám* in that it is not the story of a hero who follows the Omarian *carpe diem* philosophy. On the contrary, Gissing denies it, and searches for a new principle for life.

It is necessary to consider the situation in which Gissing became interested in *Omar Khayyám* in order to see the distorted reaction towards the *Rubáiyát* revealed in the replacement of the Omarian *carpe diem* philosophy in *Born in Exile*. The period when he read FitzGerald's Letters and *Omar Khayyám*, and when he began writing *Born in Exile*, coincides with the most solitary period of his life. Gissing's letters to his family at this time record many confessions regarding his feelings of loneliness. In March 1890, for example, he wrote to his brother Algernon:

> London is too solitary for me; I can stand it no longer.[28]

He then left London and escaped northwards to his family home in Wakefield. However, the move did not bring about a change in his mood. He could not find solace back home, and his letters still abounded with bitterness about his life of solitude.[29]

At the root of this sense of solitude was his despair over his aspirations to belong to intellectual society. Ever since he had been arrested and had thereby forfeited his future of becoming a classical scholar, the imperfection of his education had been a sore spot for him. He felt that this was what had held him back from associating with 'better' people. In order to overcome this sense of inferiority, he had desperately studied the classics to acquire gentleman's knowledge. In the early 1880s, when he was living meagrely in the slums with his alcoholic wife, he was often 'reading nothing but Greek and Latin'.[30] These continuous efforts gradually brought him confidence,

and, by 1887, he was able to say that he should 'very soon have as tolerable a command of Greek as anyone who is not a professed scholar.'[31] When the sales of his novels turned out to be enough to realise his dream of visiting the cradles of the classics, he went on a trip to Rome in 1888, and to Greece in 1889. These trips were important, as they were to complement his classical education. Therefore, after he had seen these countries, he no longer felt inferior to any educated man:

> My life is richer a thousand times—aye, a million times,—than six months ago. Now I can talk with any man as an equal, for I am no longer ignorant of the best things the world contains.[32]

Now that he had seen Greece and Italy, he had every confidence that a new life with new society would begin. His knowledge of the classics would enable him to be on equal terms with anyone. Nevertheless, he soon realised that there was to be no change whatsoever in his situation. Life was still work and toil, and no new society opened up for him. He was still an outcast from the society he wished to join. The solitude he felt was much more intense than before he went on the trips, because he now knew that nothing would make him equal to higher society. No matter what he did, it would be in vain. His desperate remedy for his solitude was to marry someone. Thus, his second marriage to Edith Underwood took place in 1891. However, his marriage to this uneducated working class woman was to deprive him forever of his chance of getting true companionship of his intellectual equal. Of this marriage, he writes:

> I had to choose between this step & mooning misery. One cannot live, as I have done, month after month without exchange of a word

> with any friendly mortal, & yet keep a brain equal to literary endeavour. . . . Whether the solitude of two will eventually be more endurable than that of one, I cannot foresee. But I shall never again meet with educated people, so that I must perforce live in silence & be very grateful for the mute companionship that is granted me. [33]

It was during this period that Gissing was initiated into the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. What Omar sang of—the impermanence of life, the futility of man's ambition, the lesson of enjoying the here and now—all came to him with a pang. Moreover, Gissing realised that the Omarian consolation for our transitory existence meant nothing to him. 'Wine! Wine! Wine! *Red* Wine!'(Q. 6) 'While you live Drink!'(Q. 34), sings Omar Khayyám. But Gissing had no one to drink with. To be made aware that life slips away so fast, and that he was not to be able to seize the day, made Gissing feel terribly frustrated. His painful recognition that he was unable to live out the philosophy of Omar is expressed in one of his letters to a German friend, Eduard Bertz:

> I want to drink wine, to talk & laugh, to feel that I am living, & not only a machine for producing volumes.[34]

To drink wine, to talk, and to laugh—that was all he wanted to feel alive. *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* made him realise that he was not—and will never be—'living' life. The dilemma between the wish to enjoy life and the awareness of its impossibility was so acute that he had to give vent to it in his art. Thus, in *Born in Exile*, Gissing created Godwin Peak, of whom he asserts, 'Peak is myself—one phase of myself.'[35] He then had his alterego transcend the *carpe diem* philosophy.

There is one instance in *Born in Exile* where Peak tries to put *carpe diem* into practice. As if to fling off 'the garment of repentance'(Q. 7) he drinks strong liquor with his co-students after his failure on Prize Day. And in drunkenness, he declares his determination to 'live' and enjoy life:

> Books and that kind of things are all very well in their way, but one must live; he had wasted too much of his youth in solitude.
>
> (My underline. *Born* 45)

However, the Omarian *carpe diem* philosophy turns out to be only a temporary solution. The morning after his 'spasmodic debauch' brings him remorse. Godwin realises that he did not even have the money he needed to live another day. For someone like Godwin—and Gissing, he seems to suggest—who has no social status, no home, and no money, drink would only mean ruin, not living life:

> [H]e perceived very clearly how easy it would be for him to lapse by degrees of weakened will into a ruinous dissoluteness. Anything of that kind would mean, of course, the abandonment of his ambitions. . . . By birth, by station, he was of no account; if he chose to sink, no influential voice would deplore his falling off or remind him of what he owed to himself. . . . Godwin Peak must make his own career, and that he would hardly do save by efforts greater than the ordinary man can put forth.
>
> (*Born* 47)

Our exiled hero, Godwin, is not allowed to drink and make merry. If he wanted to continue his life, he had first to turn away from the philosophy of

carpe diem.

As the *carpe diem* philosophy turns out to be utterly impractical, Godwin must go on to find a way to release himself from the distress he feels when he considers his wasted youth. And here, his 'vision of time' comes in. In *Born in Exile*, every time Godwin's ambition is stultified, he experiences a geological epiphany, such as this one:

> Then a strange fit of brooding came over him. Escaping from the influences of personality, his imagination wrought back through eras of geologic time, held him in a vision of the infinitely remote, shrivelled into insignificance all but the one fact of inconceivable duration. (*Born* 47)

This instance of geological fit occurs on his way home after his defeat on Prize Day, and the night of debauchery that followed. A juxtaposition of his life with the infinitude of geological time makes him realise how ridiculous it was to have any ambitions in the first place. And this makes it possible to look at his failures with detached calmness.

Then, he converts *carpe diem* to a different version of hedonism that is more accessible to him. In a conversation with his friend Malkin later in the story, Godwin speaks of his principle for life:

> 'But we have to live our lives, and I [Malkin] suppose we must direct ourselves by some conscious principle. . . . How, then, are we to be guided? What do you [Godwin] set before yourself?'
>
> 'To get through life with as much satisfaction and as little pain as possible.'
>
> 'You are a hedonist, then. Well and good! Then that is your

> conscious principle'—
>
> 'No, it isn't.'
>
> 'How am I to understand you?'
>
> 'By recognising that a man's intellectual and moral principles as likely as not tend to anything but his happiness.' (*Born* 153-54)

This new hedonism that Godwin had reached is not the active searching for happiness in the TO-DAY. It aims at a satisfaction through the avoidance of pain. And, as he later realises, this satisfaction in life can be sublimated to joy:

> It belongs to the pathos of human nature that only in looking back can one appreciate the true value of those long tracts of monotonous ease which, when we are living through them, seem of no account save in relation to past or future; only at a distance do we perceive that the exemption from painful shock was in itself a happiness, to be rated highly in comparison with most of those disturbances known as moments of joy. (My underline. *Born* 204)

Whereas a hedonist in general would preach the importance of the exquisite moments of the present, Gissing—and his alterego, Godwin—cannot enjoy those moments. They must renounce them as 'disturbances' and find solace in past calms. The 'seize the day' philosophy of Omar is thus transformed into 'seize the past'. This sublimation of 'monotonous ease' as a force to compensate for present agony is quite unique to Gissing.

To conclude, although FitzGerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* has been treated as not being worthy of academic attention, the cult that revolved around it at the turn of the century was so extraordinary

that it merits serious consideration. The 'Omarian' aspect of Gissing has likewise been ignored, but it was a significant influence on his life and works. The present analysis of *Born in Exile* has shown that this novel was written in reaction to *The Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*, and to *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. To be sure, Gissing was fascinated by this Persian poet and his English counterpart. However, his admiration was mingled with frustration and distress, as he was reminded that he was never to make merry with his intellectual equals. Thus, despite having similar tone and theme to *Omar Khayyám*, *Born in Exile* offers a solution quite different from the typically Omarian *carpe diem* philosophy, a solution involving the teaching of 'seize the past'— a principle of life that is offered for exiles.

Notes

1. Ruskin was so moved when he read *Omar Khayyám* in September 1863 that he wrote a letter to the then-unidentified 'Translator of Omar Khayyám' and entrusted it to Mrs. Burne-Jones. The letter finally reached FitzGerald in 1873, after being handed to Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard University, who discovered the name of the translator in his talk with Thomas Carlyle, who was a close friend of FitzGerald's.
2. This essay was written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1899, when 'both Kipling and FitzGerald were at their apogee.'
3. In *Eliot Possessed*, D'Ambrosio points to the likelihood of these reactions to the *Rubáiyát* to have led Eliot to have an interest in this poem.
4. The number of members, 59, was decided after the year 1859, when FitzGerald first published *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. See Clodd, 11.
5. Gissing, 'To H. G. Wells,' 8 December 1896, *Letters*, 6: 207.
6. Gissing, 'To William Morris Colles,' 30 June 1897, *Letters*, 6: 308.
7. See, for instance, his diary entry on 22 November 1897. Gissing, *Diary*, 460.
8. See his letter of 1 August 1898 to his friend Henry Hick. Gissing, *Letters*, 7: 126.
9. Gissing, 'To Gabrielle Fleury,' 20 March 1902, *Letters*, 9: 363.

10. Gissing, 'To Gabrielle Fleury,' 10 July 1898, *Letters*, 7: 115.
11. Gissing, 'To Ellen,' 8 December 1890, *Letters*, 4: 249.
12. Gissing's diary for December 15 1890, *Diary*, 232.
13. For Wright's disagreement with Bernard Quaritch, the original printer of the earlier editions, see Freeman, 60-75.
14. In 1861, FitzGerald had written, 'Mrs Browning's death is rather a relief to me, I must say: no more Aurora Leighs, thank God!' FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1889), 280-81. William Aldis Wright omitted this letter from later editions. Browning immediately retaliated to this with a poem: 'I chanced upon a new book yesterday: / I opened it, and, where my finger lay / 'Twixt page and uncut page, these words I read / —Some six or seven at most—and learned thereby / That you, Fitzgerald, whom by ear and eye / She never knew, "thanked God my wife was dead." / Ay, dead! And were yourself alive, good Fitz, / How to return you thanks would task my wits: / Kicking you seems the common lot of curs— / While more appropriate greeting lends you grace: / Surely to spit there glorifies your face— Spitting—from lips once sanctified by Hers.' Browning, 66.
15. 'FitzGerald Sans Omar,' *Academy* (1900): 75-76.
16. He had published a translation of Hafiz's *Salaman and Absal* in 1885.
17. FitzGerald, To E. B. Cowell, 12 March 1857, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 61.
18. FitzGerald, To E. B. Cowell, 7 December. 1961, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 132.
19. FitzGerald, 'To E. B. Cowell,' 3 September 1858, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 91.
20. FitzGerald, 'To E. B. Cowell,' 8 December. 1857, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 89.
21. For the influence of geology on Victorian society, see, for instance, Dean, 111-36; Gilmour, 25-26; Toulmin and Goodfield, 172-207.
22. FitzGerald, 'To E. B. Cowell,' [1847], *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 1: 262.
23. Gissing, *Diary*, 233.
24. The quatrains quoted are from the first edition of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 7: 17-32.

25. The Latin quotation, which means, 'If only Jupiter would bring me back lost years!', is from Virgil's *Aeneid*, VIII, 560. It was one of Gissing's favourite quotations, and it is also quoted in 'Winter XVI' in *Henry Ryecroft* 263.
26. FitzGerald, 'To E. B. Cowell,' April 27 [1859], *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 99. See also 2: 75.
27. FitzGerald, 'To E. B. Cowell,' 12 March 1857, *Letters and Literary Remains* (1902), 2: 62.
28. Gissing, 'To Algernon,' 16 March 1890, *Letters*, 4: 202.
29. See, for instance, Gissing, 'To Ellen,' 9 August 1890, *Letters*, 4: 231.
30. Gissing, 'To Ellen,' 17 July 1882, *Letters*, 2: 95.
31. Gissing, 'To Algernon,' 13 June 1887, *Letters*, 3: 124.
32. Gissing, 'To Ellen,' 3 December 1888, *Letters*, 3: 331-2.
33. Gissing, 'To Mrs. Frederic Harrison,' 21 April 1891, *Letters*, 4: 285.
34. Gissing, 'To Eduard Bertz,' 22 June 1890, *Letters*, 4: 226.
35. Gissing, 'To Eduard Bertz,' 20 May 1892, *Letters*, 5: 36.

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