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Seyed-Gohrab, A.A.

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The Great 'Umar Khayyām

A.A. Seyed-Gohrab (ed.)

IRANIAN
SERIES

THE GREAT 'UMAR KHAYYĀM

A GLOBAL RECEPTION OF THE RUBĀIYĀT

A.A. Seyed-Gohrab (ed.)



The Great ‘Umar Khayyām

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Leiden University Press

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In fond memory of Alexander H. Morton

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The Khayyām conference opened with an extraordinary performance from Het Nederlands Kamerkoor (Dutch chamber orchestra), singing a wide range of classical Western and Persian compositions based on the quatrains of Khayyām. This impressive opening had an effect that continued in the following days, especially because of the fruitful cooperation with the musicologist Professor Rokus de Groot (University of Amsterdam).

The term *Rubáiyát* is used in the title of this book as a homage to Edward FitzGerald, although properly speaking it refers to all the Persian quatrains attributed to Khayyām. While Khayyām’s quatrains were introduced to a number of literary traditions through FitzGerald’s adaptation, his work was not the only channel of transmission.

Thanks are also due to my colleagues who have always been supporting in many ways. I would particularly like to thank my student assistant Amin Ghodrätzadeh who meticulously read the entire manuscript and generated an index.

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Asghar Seyed-Gohrab
Leiden, 2012

Khayyām's Universal Appeal: Man, Wine, and the Hereafter in the Quatrains

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab
Leiden University

The success of 'Umar Khayyām's quatrains owes much to the English poet Edward FitzGerald (1809-83), whose English adaptations transmitted the Persian spirit and sentiments to English poetry.¹ Drawing on the new morality and scepticism that he found in the quatrains, FitzGerald revolted against Victorian ethics. FitzGerald was not the first English poet to render Khayyām, but his adaptation ensured their unmatched worldwide popularity.² FitzGerald's interest in Khayyām's quatrains started with E.B. Cowell, a Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, who discovered a fifteenth-century manuscript from the Ouseley collection, containing 158 quatrains, at the Bodleian Library in Oxford in 1856.

The first edition (1859), entitled *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, the astronomer-poet of Persia*, contained 75 quatrains and was printed anonymously in only 250 copies, 40 of which were taken by FitzGerald himself. The books were sent to Bernard Quaritch's bookshop. It was not popular, until 1861, when Whitley Stokes and John Ormsby discovered it. Stokes returned to the bookshop and purchased copies of the *Rubáiyát* for his friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who in turn introduced the book to the Pre-Raphaelite artists. Because of the popularity of the *Rubáiyát* with the Pre-Raphaelites, FitzGerald prepared a second edition with an additional 35 quatrains, which was published in 1868. The *Rubáiyát* ran to a third edition in 1872 and a fourth in 1879. The fifth edition appeared posthumously in 1889. At the end of the nineteenth century, the quatrains were translated into major European languages and a literary cult was born. FitzGerald's adaptation of the quatrains became immensely successful and some 310 editions have sold millions of copies around the world.³

'Umar Khayyām lived some nine hundred years ago in Persia. He was born in 18 May 1048 in Neyshāpūr, a flourishing city in the province of Khurāsān, and died on 4 December 1131. His fame in Persia did not originally rest on his poetry but rather on his scientific merits. He was first of all known as an astronomer, mathematician and philosopher. The early Persian and Arabic sources do not refer to his poetry, only to his scientific qualifications.

In his 'mirror for princes' book *Chahār-maqāla* ('Four Discourses,' written 1112), Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī mentions several anecdotes relating to Khayyām as an astronomer, in his chapter on Astronomy. In 1074, Sultan Malik Shāh invited Khayyām to reform the Persian solar calendar. He needed to measure the length of the solar year more accurately, by building an observatory. This calendar is still used in Persian speaking countries. It was at this observatory that Khayyām prepared his *Zīj-i Malik-Shāhī* ('Astronomical tables for Malik Shāh'). In connection to calendar reform, another work *Nowrūz-nāma* ('Book of the New Year') is attributed to Khayyām but the attribution is not without problems. Similar accounts of his scientific merits are told by al-Khāzinī (1121) and al-Beyhaqī (1154). In these early reports, fact and fiction are already mixed. The historian Rashīd al-Dīn tells the famous story of the three school-friends who promised each other that if one of them were to achieve a high position, he would support the other two. The story is a mere legend because these three friends, Khayyām, Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ, and Niẓām al-Mulk, could not have lived in the same period.⁴

Khayyām was known in Persia as a minor poet but a major scientist, but the worldwide recognition of the *Rubāiyāt*, increased his popularity as a poet in Persia. Khayyām was first mentioned as a poet in Persian literary history in 1176, in 'Imād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī's *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*. This mentions Khayyām as a poet from Khurāsān who writes in Arabic. Al-Shahrazūrī also refers to Khayyām in his *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ* (c.1214), pointing to Khayyām's bad-tempered behaviour and phenomenal memory.⁵ In his *Tārīkh al-hukamā* (written between 624-646), Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Qiftī refers to Khayyām as a scientist who had deviant ideas about religion: his poems were like serpents for the Sharia. In 1139, Aḥmad Sam'ānī quotes a quatrain in his *Rūḥ al-arwāḥ*, which from the 13th century onward was attributed to Khayyām. Another 12th century work is *Ilāhī-nāma* by Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1221) in which he tells the story of a seer who could tell what happens in tombs. The seer says that Khayyām, with all his philosophical knowledge, is perspiring and has no answer to the questions he is asked about God, the Resurrection, etc.

It would take a book to mention all the medieval references to Khayyām, but for the sake of convenience I will briefly show how, in the first two centuries after his death, certain types of quatrains were attributed to him and an image of Khayyām was shaped, which still exists today.⁶ The oldest place where Khayyām's name is cited together with a Persian quatrain is in Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's treatise *Risālat fī 'l-tanbīh 'alā ba'ḍ al-asrār al-mūda'a fī ba'ḍ al-sūra al-Qur'ān al-'azīm* (written in 1203) in which he cites Khayyām to comment on Sura XCV:

از بهر چه او فکندش اندر کم و کاست
ورنیک نیامد این صور عیب کراست

دارنده چو ترکیب طبایع آراست
گر نیک آمد شکستن از بهر چه بود

*Why did the Owner who arranged the elements of nature
cast it again into shortcomings and deficiency?
If it was ugly, who is to blame for these flaws in forms?
And if is beautiful, why does he break it again?*⁷

Twenty years later in 1223, the same quatrain together with another was cited by Najm al-Dīn Dāya, in his *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*. Dāya criticizes Khayyām for his deviant views on the Resurrection:

او را نه بدایت نه نهایت پیداست	در دایره ای که آمدن و رفتن ماست
کاین آمدن از کجا و رفتن بکجاست	کس می نزند دمی در این عالم راست

*We come and go in a circle
whose begin and end are invisible.
No one speaks a sincere word in this world
as to where we come from and where we are going.*

The number of quatrains attributed to Khayyām in various sources considerably increases from the thirteenth century onwards. Varāvīnī quotes five quatrains in his *Marzbān-nāma* which were later attributed to Khayyām. But the largest number of quatrains appear in Jamāl Khalīl Shirvānī's *Nuzhat al-majālis* (written 1251). This is a collection of more than 4,000 quatrains by a large number of poets from Azerbaijan. Chapter fifteen of this collection is entitled *dar ma ʿānī-yi Ḥakīm ʿUmar-i Khayyām*, attributing 12 quatrains to Khayyām. Several other quatrains are also ascribed to Khayyām in other chapters of this collection: there are in total 31 quatrains. What is interesting is the position of these quatrains in the collection, the chapter heading and the specific themes of these quatrains. Chapter fifteen follows a chapter in which Shirvānī has collated many quatrains on the beloved's separation and the hardship he has to endure. The next chapter continues the theme of suffering in the world, offering an answer about man's position in the world. The chapter title *dar ma ʿānī-yi Ḥakīm ʿUmar-i Khayyām* is ambiguous. It cannot mean that all the quatrains in this chapter belong to Khayyām but it indicates that these quatrains "were composed in the same philosophical and poetical vein as Khayyām's 'original' quatrains." Shirvānī's collection shows that in the thirteenth century, certain types of quatrains associated with topics such as life's transience, the unjust Wheel of Fate and predestination, *carpe diem*, scepticism, death and afterlife, and wine, were known as Khayyāmian poetry. In other words, scattered quatrains dealing with these subjects were connected to Khayyām's name in the thirteenth century. As F. de Blois rightly indicates, "In the Mongol period 'Khayyam' is no longer a historical person but a genre."⁸

Studies on Khayyām's quatrains

It is no overstatement to say that Khayyām is the most studied figure from the Persian literary tradition outside Iran. This is fascinating because no quatrain can be definitely attributed to him: rather certain types of quatrains with specific topics are attributed to him from 1203. Not surprisingly, studies of Khayyām by both Persian and Western scholars from the end of the nineteenth century have usually dealt with the question of the quatrains' authenticity. In 1897, Valentin Žukovski published his article on "the wandering quatrains," questioning the authenticity of 82 quatrains attributed to Khayyām in J.B. Nicolas' edition. Žukovski shows that quatrains attributed to Khayyām appear in several different manuscripts and are attributed to more than two authors. Žukovski's search for the quatrains' authenticity inspired several scholars to further examine this matter. Important studies have been carried by E. Denison Ross, E.G. Browne, Muḥammad Qazvīnī, A. Christensen, H. Ritter, C.H. Rempis, Ş. Hidāyat, V. Minorsky, Muḥtabā Mīnuvī, M. Dānishpazhūh, Ī. Afshār, S.G. Tīrtha, J. D. Humā'ī, A.J. Arberry, 'A. Dashtī, 'Alī Mīr-Afḍālī, Mehdi Aminrazavi, and several others.⁹

The question of authenticity remains unsolved. The number of poems in the early centuries are meagre, and increase considerably in the following centuries. François de Blois writes: "Like many Persian intellectuals of his time, Khayyām dabbled in Arabic poetry,"¹⁰ Discussing the authenticity of the quatrains, Mehdi Aminrazavi states that there are some 1,400 quatrains attributed to Khayyām, and it would be a Herculean task to recognize the authentic ones. Aminrazavi states that research on the identification of authentic quatrains "does not shed new light on the intellectual content of Khayyām's thought."¹¹ In a sense, Aminrazavi is right: at least if we are studying the 'school' of Khayyām, the authenticity of particular quatrains is unimportant. He suggests that he who has composed the *Rubāiyāt* is for us Khayyām.

The number of secondary studies on the *Rubāiyāt* and translations runs to several thousand articles, hundreds of books and editions in various languages, showing the popularity of the quatrains. While Potter presented 700 bibliographical references of Khayyām in 1929, 'Alī Dashtī guessed some 2,000 books and articles, without considering some 1500 other sources published in the United States.¹² The total number of bibliographical references in various languages runs to 3767 in Angūrānī's *Bibliography of Omar Khayyām*, published in 2002.¹³ Most recently, Jos Coumans has identified more than a thousand translations of the quatrains in a variety of languages from 1929 onwards.¹⁴ Aminrazavi's book is a comprehensive study of Khayyām in English, offering an excellent view about Khayyām, his life, work and the time he lived. Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḍālī's *Rubā'īyāt-i Khayyām dar manābi'-i kuhan* is very detailed

philological study, offering a systematic analysis of virtually all sources of the quatrains in Persian.¹⁵ The present volume, the first scholarly study of the reception history of the quatrains, in various literary traditions, supplements these.

■ The Contents of the Quatrains

What is amazing about the quatrains is that they appeal to people of all walks of life, from different cultural backgrounds. The quatrains have become a source of inspiration worldwide, for painters, book illustrators, film-directors, poets, musicians, dancers, etc.¹⁶ What is the magic of Khayyām's quatrains and what do they convey that appeals to so many people in different generations and cultures? In what follows, I analyse Khayyām's quatrains, examining his worldview, his opinion about the hereafter and the Resurrection, his hedonism and scepticism, and why he advises his readers to drink wine and spend their lives with the beloved.

■ Man, the World and the Hereafter

In Persian literature, the terrestrial world is depicted negatively. The world is made of gross matter in the shape of a disc, placed lowest in the spherical structure of the planets. It is often described as a dark pit from which man has to free himself. Man is trapped in a web of fate and doomed to die: all he can do is to sow the seeds of obedience and worship so that he can harvest them in the hereafter. Those who follow the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Koran will be redeemed and rewarded in Paradise, others will be thrown into the abyss of hell.

A central theme of Khayyām's quatrain revolves around the position of mankind in creation, his relationship with the Creator, and the mystery of death and the hereafter. In medieval Islamic culture, it was believed that man is made of clay and water and that God has breathed the soul in him to offer him life. Khayyām uses this information to make an analogy with a wine cup, which is also made of water and clay, and the wine, which is the life-giving force. This is a cliché metaphor in Islamic mysticism, used by mystics to depict man's craving for union with the Beloved. Khayyām uses this metaphor in a different sense: he wonders for whose love did God make the cup of the body and out of what hatred does God break it again, and why?¹⁷

Khayyām emphasizes that man's origin is the spiritual world (*ʿālam-i rowḥānī*, quatrain 11) and his entrance to this material world has made him confused by the five senses, four elements, six directions and seven heavens. This emphasis on numbers, which relates to the intricate structure of the world, constitutes a mystery, especially because God has created all these in order to destroy them again. Khayyām usually emphasizes man's

short and fleeting life, through a wide range of metaphors: life crosses mountains like a cloud or the desert like a wind, it flows quickly like the water in a river, the coming and going of mankind is compared to a drop of water that merges in the sea, or a particle of dust that unites with the earth.¹⁸ This quick coming and going is compared to the short life of a fly.¹⁹

Human beings in Khayyām's quatrains consist of wise men, ignorant people, youth, and the beloved who is an able musician and cup-bearer. The heart is also sometimes personified: the poet comforts the heart, which is stricken by the sorrow of the world.²⁰ In quatrain 103, the poet advises his heart to consider all matters of the world as settled, and to spend life like a dewdrop in the meadow which appears at night and disappears in the morning.

The terrestrial world is often depicted as an old crone (*ʿajūza*) and it is contrasted to the short time of man's life. This is usually depicted by cosmological metaphors alluding to the moon: "the moon will shine long upon us and would not find us" (*ki māh besyār bitābad-u nayābad mā rā*, quatrain 2). In another quatrain (44), the poet describes how the moon tears open the skirt of the night. Afterwards, he states that one should drink wine, because the moon will shine on the grave of each and every individual for a long time. In another quatrain (53), the poet advises the reader to be cheerful because "the moon will shine long after you and I are gone." The ephemeral nature of the world is also depicted through the antithesis between yesterday (*dīr*) and today (*imrūz*), "and do not speak of yesterday, for today is pleasing"

In his depiction of the world, Khayyām follows the Aristotelian concept of *kown and fasād* or 'generation and corruption.' This is the world in which things come to life and decay. To emphasize the world's transience, Khayyām alludes to mighty Persian mythic kings such as Jamshīd, Key Qubād and Bahrām whose glorious empires are long gone. In one quatrain, he refers to Jamshīd's sumptuous palace and how it has become ruins in which foxes rest and gazelles give birth. A perfect pun is in the quatrain 7 in which Khayyām alludes to the Sasanian king Bahrām who was famous for his passion for hunting wild asses (*gūr*), but in the end, it was the grave (*gūr*) that caught him.

The world is depicted as a bowl which is completely separated from the world of Non-existence, a world of secrets from which everything is decided and controlled. The poet emphasizes that a veil separates the two worlds (*asrār*, quatrain 32), and no-one has access beyond the veil of secrets. The farthest one can go is the chest of the earth. In another quatrain (36), the poet mentions that when the soul is separated from the body, the body will go to the *parda-yi asrār-i fanā* or 'the veil of the secrets of annihilation.' The world is compared to an ocean (*daryā*) which has come out of the Unseen world.²¹ The world is a riddle, an enigma, which man cannot solve, yet his curiosity entices him to busy himself with the riddle. The

mystery is compared to the pearl of reality, which cannot be pierced and threaded (with its meaning neatly ordered). In another quatrain (34), Khayyām presents the world as a kind of magic circle: one cannot go outside it, whether as a novice or a scholar. Prisoned in this magical circle, it is better to seek refuge in the beloved, wine and music, because the more one looks at the conditions of the world, the more one realizes that what one can harvest in this world is nothing except pleasure.

Khayyām's depiction of men's relationship with God is not reciprocal. God is portrayed as a powerful Being who has created mankind without permitting man to know why. Khayyām does not use the Islamic mystic discourse in which God's love for creation is the reason for the creation. Mystics cite the tradition in which God says: "I was a Hidden Treasure and I desired to be known, so I created the creation in order that I might be known."²² God desired to reveal Himself to man, who was created in His own image, and in the fairest of forms (Koran 95:5). Man functions as a mirror displaying God's 'names and attributes' (*asmā' va ṣifāt*). In a famous tradition, God speaks: "I created you to see My vision in the mirror of your spirit, and My love in your heart."²³

Khayyām refers to God as the "Painter of the Day of Creation" (*naqqāsh-i azal*, quatrain 5) but at the same time he wonders why God has made man in such a beautiful shape, with cheeks like tulips, a stature as upright as a cypress-tree, with handsome face and pleasant smell. In another quatrain (31), God is called the "Owner" (*dāranda*) who has created the universe. As in several other quatrains, the poet wonders why the Owner has cast man with deficiencies and imperfections, unable to decipher the riddle of the universe. Why does God break man down, if man is good, and if man is not good, who is to blame, except the Maker?

In Khayyām's quatrains, the world is a salt-desert (*shūristān*, quatrain 139), a nest of sorrow (*gham-āshiyān*), a station (*manzil*) on the road, which offers people the opportunity to rest only briefly. Although Khayyām's quatrains are known for a *carpe diem* philosophy, his depiction of man's life on earth is derived from a pessimistic and gloomy view on life. Many quatrains depict man's unhappy conditions on the earth. In one quatrain, Khayyām says that it would have been better if man had not been born. The world is compared to an ancient caravanserai (*kuhna ribāt*, quatrains 17, 56). It has two doors, through one door people enter and through the other, they leave. This caravanserai is depicted as an *ārāmgah*, a resting place or a graveyard. The world is also seen as a royal throne, but a throne which incessantly passes from one king to another. The world has been the palace of a hundred mighty Persian kings, such as Jamshīd or Bahrām, showing how inconstant, unreliable, and fleeting it is.²⁴

During his stay in the world, man is trapped in the web of fate. Heaven is depicted as an overturned bowl under which many people are trapped. Man is a mere plaything of the Wheel (*charkh*), Spheres (*falak*), and sky

(*sipīhr*). These are all agents of destiny, influencing earthly affairs through their rotations. Khayyām depicts these heavenly bodies as rancorous (*kīnājū*), unjust (*bīdādgār*) and man-eaters (*ādam-khār*). In quatrain 68, the poet says, “you are proud that the Wheel has not devoured you, wait, it is not too late, it will eat you as well.” In this world of fate, one should not rely on sorrow or pleasure, because the revolution of spheres changes them and these are mere games of the Spheres, which are constantly introducing some new games.²⁵ Although the Wheel is high and lofty, it will bring men down as low as the earth. There are a wide range of images and metaphors emphasizing man’s helplessness in relation to the heavens: in one image man is portrayed as a dice on the chess board while the Sphere is the player. In another quatrain we see the metaphor of the game of polo: man is a mere ball and destiny the polo-stick, beating the ball in any direction it desires.²⁶ And when the game is over, each individual has to go back to *ṣandūq-i ‘adam* or the ‘box of Nothingness.’ Sometimes the poet wonders what benefits the world achieves from this coming and going of mankind. Does the world’s glory and majesty increase by it?²⁷ In quatrain 101, the poet emphasizes that the only work of the spheres is to increase man’s sorrow and anxiety. The spheres will not stop robbing souls. Afterwards, Khayyām concludes that if the unborn knew what we are experiencing, they would never desire to be born.

In addition to the heavenly bodies which hold a sway over men’s destiny, the poet refers to Time (*zamāna*) as an agent appointed to destroy mankind. The poet advises the reader to “drink wine because Time is a mighty enemy”, quatrain 9) and one cannot fight it. Time can also bring sorrow to the heart and can even make the soul flee from the body.²⁸ It can bend the back of man.²⁹ When the house of the body is falling down, the soul cannot stay. If a man with a bent back begs the soul to stay, the soul answers: “what shall I do, the house is crashing down upon me.” A synonym for Time is *dahr* which is presented by the compound *‘arūs-i dahr*: “I asked the bride of Time, what is your dowry?” She answered: “your cheerful heart.”³⁰ In this strong metaphor of destiny, the poet shows how inextricably man is bound to destiny and the world and is doomed to decay. In several quatrains (45, 101, 115, 127), *dahr* is used synonymously for the world.

In Khayyām’s opinion, it is futile to try changing one’s destiny, because God decreed each individual’s share of destiny on the first day (*azal*) of creation. Khayyām says that when God made the earth and the heavenly bodies, He placed a brand-mark on the sorrowful heart (*dīl-i ghamnāk*) of mankind. The poet then wonders why he did this, why he places so many lips like rubies (*lab-i chu la’l*) and curls like musk (*zulfīn-i chu mushk*) back in the chest of the earth.³¹

Although the Wheel is depicted as powerful, it is a hundred times more wretched than human beings.³² All troubles derive from the Wheel, yet the

ultimate source of these troubles is the Maker of the Wheel. It is in this context that the poet questions the essence of God and the purpose of his creation. Why does the Wheel shed man's blood every moment, Khayyām asks, and who is guilty for it? With bitterness, he refers to man's helplessness and inability to decipher the riddle of the universe. In his view, God knew from the beginning what men would do in this world, as all actions and deeds are inscribed on the Well-Preserved Tablet and God oversees all. Thus, why does God punish men for their sins, especially when God is compassionate and merciful?

Salvation can be attained by hoping for God's forgiveness. What is also interesting is that God does not bestow his compassion upon us by way of grace but in exchange for our worship. Khayyām represents this as a commercial exchange and not grace. In one quatrain (6), the poet states that he is in a corner of a tavern with a wine cup in his hand, the musician at his side and free from any hope of redemption or God's mercy, not even fearing God's punishment. The poet says that he is freed from the Four Elements (fire, water, air and earth) by which man is created. In another quatrain (40), the poet uses the metaphor of 'four nails' (*chār mīkh*) for the Four Elements, stating that although the tent of the body functions as a shelter for the soul, one should not rely on the four nails, because they are weak and can be loosed.

One of the recurrent topics in Khayyām's quatrains is the issue of divine decision (*qaḍā*). In quatrain 70, he wonders why God moves the pen of divine decision (*qalam-i qaḍā*) without asking man's opinion and then holds man responsible for good and evil. The poet then asks how it is possible that, at the beginning of creation and during man's life, God does not involve men in any decision about his destiny, yet on the Day of Judgment, he will be summoned to come before the Judge. In this type of reasoning, Khayyām poses the question of Free Will and Predestination. In another quatrain (78), the word *qaḍā* is combined to the word *dihqān* or farmer which creates an agricultural metaphor. By combining the term *qaḍā* with farmer, the poet depicts God as a Farmer sowing and harvesting, and men as the seeds in His hands. This is a strong image showing men's powerlessness in relation to God and how the Creator decides without conferring with mankind.

Khayyām also challenges the idea of the Resurrection in several quatrains. In quatrain 89, he cynically conveys his reason for drinking wine and embracing his beloved:

ز انسان که بمیرند چنان برخیزند
باشد که به حشرمان چنان انگیزند

گویند هر آن کسان که با پرهیزند
ما با می و معشوقه از آنیم مدام

*It is said that those who perform pious acts
Will rise in the form in which they die.
This is why I am always with my beloved and wine
So that I may rise in this manner on the Resurrection Day.*

Closely connected to the theme of divine Decision is the belief in Paradise and hell. Khayyām candidly states that some people claim that there is a hell but this promise is false and man should not tie his heart to it, because if all lovers and wine-drinkers were to end up in hell, Paradise would be as empty as the palm of a hand.³³ In a number of quatrains, the poet rejects the promised Paradise (21, 35, 41, 42, 43, 88, 161), advising the reader to take the coin of the moment: the wine, the beloved and a musician. He emphasizes that he does not know whether God destines individuals for Paradise or hell. “Who has gone to hell and who has returned from Paradise?” he asks, “we haven’t heard from anyone who has come back from this road,” i.e. all have died and none returned (quatrains 21, 62, 111, 113). It is in this context that Khayyām usually advises the reader not to listen to stories about Paradise and the promised ‘large black eyed virgins’ (*hūrī*). It is certainly wiser to take satisfaction in earthly wine because “one should take the cash and leave the credit” (*in naqd bigr-u dast az ān nisīya bidār*, quatrain 41). The poet then ironically concludes that the sound of a drum is pleasant from a distance!

Doubt versus Certainty

Scepticism is one of the recurring topics in many quatrains. Khayyām believes that truth and certainty are beyond man’s capacity, therefore man should not spend all his life in a quandary. It is better not to put away the wine-cup, because given the lack of certain knowledge, it does not really matter whether one is drunk or sober. In this situation, the poet says that nothing remains in one’s hand except the wind and every existing entity will decay.³⁴ He then concludes: “suppose all which exists in the world does not exist! Imagine all that does not exist in the world, exists!”

Khayyām’s quatrains have become famous for their hedonistic character. It is true that hedonism is present in Khayyām’s poetry, but it is rooted in man’s deep incapacity, shortcomings, and transience. The poet uses a constellation of metaphors depicting the ephemeral nature of the world and man’s short life. The fleeting life is conveyed by metaphors of day and night, and the passage of seasons. Days are compared to leaves falling from a tree, a running river or the wind. In another quatrain, day and night are compared to a black and white horse (*ablaq-i ṣubḥ-u shām*, quatrain 17). This is an old metaphor for day and night, occurring in Firdowsī’s *Shāh-nāma* as a black and a white horse inexorably galloping after each

other and never reaching the other.³⁵ Life is compared to a book in which men's names are registered, but they will be wiped out as soon as men die.

The Knot of Death

In Khayyām's quatrains, death is not the end station but it is seen as process of regeneration. Men is made of dust and returns to dust. The earth assumes all possible forms, it can even turn into the pupils of the beloved's eyes (*mardumak-i chashm-i nigārī*, quatrain 20). Khayyām emphasizes in quatrain 50 that each speck of dust may have been either a Persian king such as Key Qubād, Jamshīd, or their crown or the precious gems upon their crowns. It is because of this that the poet warns the reader to gently remove the dust from his sleeves because even such a dust might have been the face of a beautiful person. The dust can also be transformed into flowers watching us.³⁶ All the green growing on the banks of rivers grows from the lips of a beautiful angel-like person, which is why man should not walk on the grass with contempt. Even the grass is growing from the earth of loved ones, with cheeks as beautiful as the petals of red tulips.³⁷

Death is depicted as a pair of scissors cutting the thread of life. Death will make hearts and livers bleed without showing any sympathy.³⁸ Since man is doomed to die, the poet says in quatrain 26, it does not make any difference whether his body is eaten by ants in the grave or a wolf in the plains. Death is a secret, a mystery of which no one has any knowledge (*asrār-i ajal*, quatrain 82). Perhaps the most direct message Khayyām imparts about death is the following quatrain (119) in which he states that he has untied many hard knots except the knot of death:

کردم همه مشکلات کلي را حل	از جرم گل سیاه تا اوج زحل
هر بند گشاده شد بجز بند اجل	بگشادم بندهای مشکل به حیل

*From the surface of the black clay to the zenith of Saturn,
I have solved all problems.
I have loosed difficult knots with my intellect
All knots I untied, but the knot of death.*

Many of the images and metaphors convey the unexpected arrival of death. In one quatrain (120), the poet advises the reader to hold the wine cup in the hand and sit in the rose-garden because it will not be long before the 'wind of death' (*bād-i ajal*) will suddenly tear the shirt of one's life open, like the fallen petals of the rose. Dying knows no return. In one quatrain (12), we read that if we were to open the chest of the earth, we would find many precious gems there. In another quatrain (80), Khayyām says that

compared to gold, man has no worth, because when he dies, he is buried the chest of the earth, but he is not dug up again.

Khayyām depicts the moment of death through bird imagery: death has claws while men are helpless little birds. In quatrain 66, man's life is likened to a caravan (*qāfila-yi 'umr*), and people are the travellers (*musāfirān*, quatrains 62, 160, 163) whose lives pass quickly. They will die, never coming back. Death is also seen as a journey and the destination is union with souls who are seven thousand years old. The duration of one's life is compared to wine in a wine cup (*peymāna*). In another image, life is compared to the battlements of a palace (*kungiri-yi qaṣr*) which decay and fall down. Every brick on the battlement is made of the finger of a vizier or the lips of a sultan.³⁹ Another image of life's short duration refers to the cuckoo bird. The Persian word for cuckoo is *kūkū*, which is ambiguous and also means "where is s/he, where is s/he."

Khayyām concludes in quatrain 86 that life is short and should be spent in cheerfulness:

مگذار که جز به شادمانی گذرد	گر يك نفست ز زندگانی گذرد
عمرست چنان کش گذرانی گذرد	هشدار که سرمایه سودای جهان

*If only one of your breaths passes life,
Do not allow it to pass except in cheerfulness
Be warned, because life is the capital you trade in the world
And this life passes the way you let it pass.*

Flora and Fauna

Khayyām uses several flowers and birds in his quatrains. Aside from depicting nature scenes, flowers are used to describe the regeneration process, the decay of the created world and man's ephemeral nature. The flowers show the ideal beauty of youth, but they also emphasize how precious the present moment is, because they wither and will turn to dust within a week.⁴⁰ Among the flowers, the rose (*gul*) is depicted as a beautiful beloved whose shirt is torn open by the Zephyr. In Persian literature, the rose stands for a wide range of ideas and entities: it gives the news of the arrival of Spring, it stands for the fragrance and delicate cheeks of the beloved, its red colour is associated with several precious stones, with the blood of the lover, and with fire, but above all it is the beloved of the nightingale (*bulbul*).⁴¹ In Persian literary conventions, the rose is haughty, indifferent and inconstant in her love. She has a short life, so she invites the nightingale to come and enjoy her beauty as long as possible. Khayyām uses the rose to emphasize the ephemeral nature of life and to

celebrate the moment, taking pleasure from wine and music. In quatrains, the rose is also used in compounds such as *gul-i sa'ādat* or the 'rose of happiness.'⁴² In this context the poet wonders why the reader has no wine-cup in his hands, now the rose of happiness is in full bloom, because Time is a mighty enemy and will destroy it. The rose has the shape of a cup and the red colour is associated with wine.

The beauty of the rose inspires the passionate nightingale to sing. Aside from its role as a passionate, sincere and suffering lover, this bird is a har-binger of news, announcing the coming of the spring. In the quatrains, the bird comes to the poet, singing gently in his ear: "the life that has gone cannot be found again."⁴³ In one of the quatrains (79), the nightingale appears as the lover of a yellow rose (*gul-i zard*), singing loudly in (Middle) Persian (Pahlavi) that men should drink wine.

In addition to the nightingale, the poet uses the word *murgh* or bird, without specifying the kind. A *murgh* appears in quatrain 114, perching on a palace's wall, singing to the skull of King Key Kāvūs, saying repeatedly: "Where are the sounds of bells? Where are the laments of bells?" Here again, the bird is used to remind the reader of life's fleeting nature.

There are several metaphors using the tulip (*lāla*) in the quatrains. The poet compares the form of the tulip and its red colour to a cup of wine, as if the stalk of the tulip has a cup of wine in its hand on the first day of New Year (Now Ruz, quatrain 27). The tulip is used to warn the reader of the transient nature of life. When the New Year arrives and clouds wash the face of the tulip, man should be aware of the passage of time and seize the moment and drink wine, for the flowers and meadow that are now watching men will grow again from the dust of mankind. Tulips are associated with blood. In one quatrain we read that "in every plain that there is a bed of tulips, they grow from the red blood of a prince." Tulips are often associated with an innocent person killed unjustly.⁴⁴ In quatrain 92, the poet describes a floral scene in the early morning, praising the rosebud that closes her skirt (i.e. not opening her petals) in contrast to the tulip whose open face is bejewelled with dew, and to the tall violet, bent over in the meadow.

Traditionally, the violet (*banafsha*) is used in classical Persian poetry to refer to the beloved's fragrant curly locks. The violet has a bent stem and is blue because it is mourning (blue being the colour of mourning). The mourning springs from her envy of the rose's beauty. Khayyām gives the violet a different symbolism in quatrain 49: "each violet that grows from the earth is a beauty spot (*khāl*) on the beloved's face."

The Pot and the Pot-Maker

One of the famous motifs in the quatrains is that of the pot and the pot-maker, which appears in various guises in several collections attributed to

Khayyām. These poems are called *kūza-nāma* or the ‘Book of the Pot.’ In the opening quatrain, the persona asks the beloved to bring a pot of wine (*kūza-yi sharāb*) for them to drink before pots are made of their bodies. The basic message of this group of quatrains is that the pot-maker will make jugs from the earth of man.

God is seen as *kūza-gar-i dahr* or ‘the Pot-Maker of Time’ (quatrain 115) who makes elegant pots but throws them on the ground to shatter them in pieces. The pot-maker is indifferent to the ranks and positions of mankind, treating kings and beggars alike. The pot is made of the eyes of kings (*dāda-yi shāhī*) and the lips of viziers (*lab-i dasturī*). The wine cup on the lips of a drinker is made of the cheeks of drunkards (*‘āriz-i mastī*, quatrain 16). In one quatrain (15), the pot is described as a fervent lover who has been trapped by the love of a beauty. The handgrip is compared to the lover’s hand embracing the beloved.

What is interesting in Khayyām’s metaphors is that every part of a pot can speak in human language. In many of the quatrains we see how they implore mankind to treat them kindly and not trample on them. One quatrain, relates how a man in a building is kicking the clay (*gil ba lagad mīzad*) and humiliating it, to which the clay says, in the language of its state (*zabān-i hāl*): “Be warned! You will be much trampled like me!” A similar quatrain is 107, in which the poet tells how he has seen a pot-maker in the bazaar, constantly kicking a clod of clay while the clay says to him: “I was like you, treat me fairly.”

The number of quatrains on the pot and pot-maker is not certain. Each collection of quatrains gives a different number, but perhaps the most famous of them is the following (117):

دیدم دو هزار کوزه گویا و خموش
کو کوزه گر و کوزه خر و کوزه فروش

در کارگاه کوزه گری رفتم دوش
نگاه یکی کوزه برآورد خروش

*Last night I went to the workshop of a pot-maker
I saw two thousand pots, some were talking, others in silence.
Suddenly, one pot shouted:
“Where is the pot-maker? Where is the buyer? Where is the
seller?”*

Who is the Beloved?

Khayyām gives a central place to the beloved. Although in many illustrated translations the beloved is depicted as a sensual female character, the beloved in the Persian quatrains is a boy. Generally speaking the beloved in classical Persian poetry is male. As Persian does not have a

grammatical distinction in gender, translators of Khayyām's poetry have chosen to change the beloved to a female. The gender of the beloved is indicated only once, in quatrain (110), in which the beloved is summoned in the middle of the night to fill the crystal cup with the ruby-hued wine.⁴⁵ The male gender of the beloved refers to the Persian courtly tradition in which the beloved was a handsome boy, commonly of Turkish descent, not older than fourteen years. These boys were recruited from Central Asia and China and were brought to Persia. After a training of several years, they would grow to be an appealing cupbearer, a musician, a fearless soldier and even the boon companion of kings and viziers.⁴⁶ It is in this context that this young man is called the beloved, and this explains why one popular Persian word for the beloved is 'Turk.' Pleasing behaviour were required to become a cupbearer. Persian poets such as Manūchihīrī of Dāmgān, Farrukhī of Sīstān and 'Unṣurī depict the cupbearer in erotic terms in their *Dīvāns*. The cupbearer is identified with the beloved, musicians and dancers. In his descriptions of convivial courtly gatherings, Beyhaqī reports in his *Chronicle* that cupbearers were dressed in beautiful attire. While the assembly occupies itself with gambling and playing chess or backgammon, the cupbearer pours the wine for the guests and flirts with them.⁴⁷ The cupbearer accompanied the king both in fighting and feasting (*razm u bazm*).

In Khayyām's quatrains, the beloved is a cupbearer, a musician and a pleasing social person who is always ready to please the supplicant lover. He plays harp and sings like the ethereal "melody of David," which is proverbial in Persian literature for its heart-ravishing sound.⁴⁸ It is because of these qualities that the poet prefers to have such an earthly beauty than the promised virgins of Paradise (quatrain 35). The poet says that although it is ugly in the view of common men that such a beauty should place the wine-cup to his mouth in Spring, he will not even pronounce the name of Paradise: he would be less than a dog if he did so.

People with Discernment (*khiradmandān*)

Aside from the beloved who is also a musician and someone to enjoy time with, Khayyām often suggests that the reader should seek the company of *ahl-i khirad* 'people with intellect' or 'people with discernment,' because the essence of one's body is made of dust,⁴⁹ and these men in particular know what to do when living under the ruthless, unjust and treacherous Wheel. Over against these discerning persons, we have the character of the *nādān* or ignoramus. Ignorant people walk on the earth without knowing that the soil is made of the curly locks or the faces of loved ones. The Wheel is usually presented as the enemy of these discerning persons. Khayyām concludes (quatrain 26) that since the Wheel does not revolve according to the desire of sagacious men, what does it matter whether you

consider the spheres to be seven or eight. Khayyām is making light of sciences such as astronomy with which these wise persons occupy themselves. In another quatrain (59) the poet states that heavenly bodies are the causes of doubt and uncertainties for scientists, and one should not loose the thread of intelligence because even men of knowledge are bewildered at the world. Even these wise have no access to the mystery of existence. There are several quatrains (26, 54, 59, 112) in which Khayyām refers to wise men who have mastered all scholarly disciplines, enlightening their community with knowledge, but are unable to find a way from “this dark night” (i.e. the world). Their sole conclusion is that the whole world is a myth, and they fall asleep.

In another quatrain (55), Khayyām states that discerning men are brought to ‘the desert of pain,’ i.e. this world, on the pretext of engaging them in discussion about the creation, but God had already settled all matters all alone: God is pulling their legs in fact. In another quatrain (58), Khayyām complains that God shows men nothing of his plans, simply bringing forth one individual and taking him away again, without revealing the secret to anyone.

It is not explicitly mentioned how one can grow to be a discerning person, but in quatrain 69, it is hinted that wise men have no regard for the allurements of the world. The clever thing to do is to “run off with your share of destiny before death runs off with you.” In another quatrain (71), we read that men should not be enthralled by worldly allurements because even if a man were to become the Paradisiacal source Zamzam or even the very Fount of Life, he would finally find himself in the heart of the earth.

In quatrain 93, we see a poet who tells how he has studied day and night for 72 years to acquire knowledge but the only thing that he has understood is ‘nothing’:

هرگز دل من ز علم محروم نشد	کم ماند ز اسرار که معلوم نشد
هفتاد و دو سال فکر کردم شب و روز	معلوم شد که هیچ معلوم نشد

*My heart was never deprived of acquiring knowledge
There are not many mysteries that I have not noticed
For seventy two years I contemplated day and night
It has become known to me that I know nothing*

In contrast to these wise persons, Khayyām recommends the lifestyle of vagabond mystics, the qalandars, while disapproving of the ascetics.⁵⁰ The qalandars were wandering vagabonds who refused to subject themselves to the orthodox Islamic tenets.⁵¹ They were against the outward piety of the organized mystics and ascetics. The qalandars did not follow outward social and religious norms and sought to provoke people by appearing naked

in public, by shaving all their facial hair, and by piercing their ears, noses and even genitals. Usually they seek refuge from the mosque or the ascetic's cell in a tavern, drinking wine to become entirely intoxicated. They condemn Islam and praise other religions such as Christianity and Zoroastrianism. In literary convention (and perhaps sometimes in life!) it is in the tavern that the elder of the Magi guides the qalandar to unravel the mysteries of the world.

Through this provocative appearance, the qalandars protected themselves from falling into the hypocrisy of the Sufi sheikhs and the clergy. The qalandars were extremely pious: their lifestyle was a way of concealing their true faith. The essential subjects in qalandarī poetry include the praise of wine, the tavern, the cupbearer, and the renouncement of the world. It is in this context, that Khayyām praises qalandars.

An almost synonymous word that Khayyām uses in his poetry is *rind* or 'debauchee.' Hāfiẓ refers to both of these figures as one in the expression *rindān-i qalandar*.⁵² Like the qalandar, the *rind* looks down on conventional religious piety and interprets it as hypocrisy. In the following quatrain (141), we see how the poet worships the way the *rind* spends his life:

رندى دیدم نشسته بر خنگ زمین	نه کفر و نه اسلام و نه دنیا و نه دین
نی حق نه حقیقت نه شریعت نه یقین	اندر دو جهان کرا بود زهره این

*I saw a rind sitting on the horse of the earth, having
Neither unbelief nor Islam, neither the world, nor faith
Neither believing in the Truth, nor Reality, neither Sharia nor
certitude.*

Who would have his courage in the two worlds!

Khayyām is not friendly towards ascetics, who are portrayed as hypocrites (*sālūs*) and are contrasted to *rinds*. He states, "any lament of a *rind* at morning glow is better than the prayer of the hypocrite ascetics" (*har nāla ki rindī ba saḥargāh zanad, az ṭā'at-i zāhidān-i sālūs bih-ast*, quatrain 52)

Khayyām's quatrains are sometimes characterized as mystic poetry, but the mystic message in the quatrains is strongly coloured by qalandarī poetry. Most of the quatrains that have a mystic hue, despise the hypocrisy of the organized mystics and clergy. In the following quatrain, the poet attacks the clerics who frighten people with Hell and make them long for Paradise:⁵³

در صومعه و مدرسه و دیر و گنشت	ترسنده دوزخند و جویای بهشت
وانگس که ز اسرار خدا بالخر است	زین تخم در اندرون دل هیچ نکشت

*In the cloister, school, convent and temple
They're all in fear of hell, and craving Paradise.
He who is aware of the secrets of God
Would not sow such seeds in hearts.*

Khayyām's provocative stance, in attacking the most sacred tenets of Islam, resembles the way qalandars despise religious rites and conventions. In the following quatrain (3), he contrasts wine with the Koran:

قرآن که مهین کلام خوانند آن را	گه گاه نه بر دوام خوانند آن را
بر گرد پیاله آیتی هست مقیم	کاندر همه جا مدام خوانند آن را

*The Koran which is called the lofty Word
Is read from time to time but not continuously (mudām)
Around the lip of the wine-cup, there is a miracle (āyat)
Which is overall called continuous wine (mudām)*

Here the poet uses the rhetorical figure of amphibology (*īhām*) by using the word *mudām*, which means 'wine' and 'continuous.' By connecting it with the Koran and wine, Khayyām implies that the Koran is read less frequently than men drink wine. The blasphemous aspect appears in line three in which the word *āyat* is used. The word means a 'Koran verse,' 'sign,' and 'miracle' and can here be interpreted as suggesting that a Koranic verse is engraved around the wine cup.

While he praises qalandars, Khayyām attacks mystics and hypocrite clerics, who criticize people for not following religious tenets. In quatrain 4, the poet says: "Do not take pride, in ignorance, thinking you don't drink wine / You eat a hundred kinds of food, that are more forbidden than wine." In another quatrain (39), Khayyām states that those who drink the 'morning wine' (*ṣabūḥ*) neither go to a mosque, nor to a pagan temple (*kinisht*).

It is certainly not because of Khayyām's qalandarī poetry that he has been criticized as a materialist philosopher but more because of his thoughts about God, creation, the hereafter and resurrection. There are several poems in which Khayyām defends himself against the charge of being a philosopher, which in this context means that he says he does not deny the purpose of God's creation and is not an unbeliever. One of the famous quatrains (129) in which he defends himself is the following:

دشمن به غلط گفت من فلسفیم	ایزد داند که آنچه او گفت نیم
لیکن چو در این غم آشیان آمدم	آخر کم از آنکه من بدانم که کیم

*Wrongly the enemy accused me of being a philosopher;
 God knows that I am not what he says.
 But now that I have been brought to this nest of sorrow,
 Is not it less that I have to know who I am.*

In vino veritas

Khayyām's quatrains are known for advocating wine-drinking. Wine has a central place in this poetry and is described through various images and metaphors. In one quatrain (46), wine is described as "melted ruby" (*la 'l-i mudhāb*) and the wine-cup (*surāhī*) is compared to a mine (*kān*), or the body is the cup and the soul the wine. Red wine is compared to the blood of the heart. In the quatrains, "although the taste of the wine is bitter, it is agreeable" (*gar chi talkh hast khush ast*). Drinking wine with the beloved and listening to music is compared to the position of the mighty Ghaznavid emperor Mahmud. A gulp of wine is even better than the ancient Persian empire of Kāvūs (*yik jur 'a-yi mey zi mulk-i Kāvūs bih hast*). In another quatrain (96), the poet states that one cup of wine is worth more than winning a hundred hearts and converting to a hundred religions, a gulp of wine is worth more than the Empire of China. He concludes that there is nothing on the earth like wine, which is bitter but worth more than a sweet life. Wine is described as eternal life, the capital of the delight of youth.⁵⁴ It burns like fire, but removes sorrows from the heart. We are advised not to drink wine with people, except for the beloved and the wise persons. We are also advised to drink little, to drink from time to time and to drink secretly. Wine is used when the persona is pondering on existence and cannot find the reasons for his entering and leaving this world. He becomes sorrowful and wine is the remedy to wash away the sorrows of the world (*andūh-i jahān*). Wine not only removes any excess (*kathrat*) or shortage (*qillat*) from the heart, it also takes away all the worries of the people. Wine is an elixir that if one takes one gulp, it will remove a thousand diseases.⁵⁵ Drinking wine is likened to eternal life and it is wine which gives meaning and pleasure to the moment.⁵⁶

In Khayyām's view, wine is the best thing ever created: from the time that Venus and the moon were created, no-one has seen anything better than pure wine. The poet wonders what better thing the wine-sellers could receive when they sell their wine!⁵⁷ The quatrains refer to the pleasing smell of wine. Although it is not specified what type of fragrance this is, in one quatrain (105), we read that the smell of the wine-cup is more agreeable than Mary's food. The poet concludes this quatrain by saying that the sigh of a drunkard in the middle of the night is more agreeable than the laments of great Islamic mystics such as Abu Sa'īd and Ibrāhīm Adham.

Wine is usually contrasted to other drinks from Paradise such as milk, honey, and nectar.⁵⁸ This is a reference to the rivers in the Paradisiacal gardens. In the splendid fifteenth-century manuscript from Herat in which the Prophet Muhammad's ascension is depicted, we see how three angels offer the Prophet three cups of light, filled with milk, wine and honey respectively. The Prophet chooses milk and the angels congratulate him, saying: "You have done well to choose the milk and drink it, for all who follow your way, avoiding error, will depart from the world with their faith."⁵⁹

Activities in the World

The overall message of the quatrains is to drink wine with the beloved and listen to music and poetry because life is short. The shortness of life brings the poet to the motif of sleeping. In several quatrains, sleeping is disapproved. In one quatrain (33), a wise man wakes the sleeping poet, and says he should not sleep because sleeping resembles dying. The wise man encourages him to drink wine, for he will sleep long in the earth when he dies. However another quatrain (81) says, "drink wine, because a life, which is chased by the moment of death, is better spent either in sleep or in drunkenness." In quatrain 112, the poet asks a wise man to wake up early to advise a child, who is sifting the earth, to do this gently because the earth is the brain of King Key Qubād and the eyes of King Parvīz. Another quatrain (123) asks the beloved to drink wine because time goes fast and the quarrelsome Wheel will not give men more time. A similar message appears in another quatrain (124) in which the poet wakes the beloved to drink wine, but also wants to give the intellect a beating so that it can fall asleep. In quatrain 113, the poet asks his beloved to wake up because it is morning and he should drink wine and play the harp, because the living will go and will never return.

The Present Volume

The year 2009 coincided with both the 200th anniversary of Edward FitzGerald's birth and the 150th anniversary of the first edition of his translation of 'Umar Khayyām's "Rubaiyat." Many conferences, workshops and exhibitions were organized to celebrate this anniversary. Leiden University organized a two-days international conference (6 and 7 July) focusing on Khayyām's poetic output, and on the reception of his poetry in various cultures around the world. This volume contains a selection of the essays presented at this conference and several other papers which I invited scholars to write. This is the first time that reception history of 'Umar Khayyām in various literary traditions has been collected in one volume in English.

Prominent scholars specializing in Khayyām or Persian literature have contributed. The chapters examine not only Khayyām's reception in Persian, Arabic and Turkish speaking areas but also in India, the Netherlands, England, Russia and Georgia.

The reception of Khayyām in Iran is treated in three articles. Based on Khayyām's contemporary sources and context, Mehdi Aminrazavi in "Reading the Rubā'īyyāt as 'Resistance Literature,'" examines the quatrains in the framework of Islamic intellectual history and asks why Khayyām and several other philosophers such as Fārābī, Avicenna, Rāzī and Bīrūnī were accused of heresy. Aminrazavi considers Khayyām's poetry as an intellectual literature of resistance, arguing that these Persian intellectuals reacted "to the closing of the Muslim mind by using poetic license to criticize Islamic orthodoxy. (...) By questioning the underlying epistemological certainty of the theologians, he [khayyam] argued for the futility of such debates. As the following quatrain suggests:

*I saw a wise man who did not had no regard
For caste or creed, for faith or worldly greed;
And free from truth and quest, from path and goal,
He sat at ease, from earth and heaven freed."*

Khayyām's reception during his own time is covered in two chapters. The first is "Some 'Umarian quatrains from the lifetime of Omar Khayyām" by Alexander H. Morton, who draws attention to an overlooked anthology compiled by Abu 'l-Qāsim Naṣr b. Aḥmad b. 'Amr al-Shadānī al-Neyshāpūrī during the reign of the Ghaznavid Mas'ūd III (492-508/1099-1115). While Morton's contribution focuses on the literary aspects of the quatrains, the second chapter by Mohammad Bagheri entitled, "Between Tavern and Madrasa: 'Umar Khayyām the Scientist," focuses on Khayyām as a scientist and how his scientific merits are combined with his literary genius. Bagheri's study includes Khayyām's classification of cubic equations, his commentary on Euclid's Elements, and Khayyām's scientific achievements.

Khayyām's reception in Arabic is covered by Jan Just Witkam and Mohammad Alsulami. In these chapters, various translations of Khayyām in Arabic is discussed. Witkam examines in his chapter "Ahmad Rami's Arabic translation of the Quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām" the translations of the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Muḥammad Rāmī (1892-1981) and how his translations were sung by the famous singers Umm Kulthum (c. 1904-1975) and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Vahhāb (1907-1991). Witkam and Alsulami show that the enormous popularity of Khayyām were due to popular Arabic singers such as Umm Kulthūm. Khayyām was also popular in Turkey. Sytske Sötemann, in her chapter "Quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām in Turkish and Turkish quatrains" explains that while Ottoman poets were

deeply influenced by Persian poetry, they avoided composing quatrains, preferring other literary forms. Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884-1958) was an exception, as he tried to master all the forms and genres of Ottoman poetry. In his efforts, Beyatlı translated Khayyām and introduced his poetry to Turkish people.

Five chapters are devoted to various aspects of Khayyām's reception in the Netherlands. The contribution of Hans de Bruijn entitled "Other Persian quatrains in Holland: the *Roseaie du Savoir* of Ḥusayn-i Āzād" explains how, from the nineteenth century onwards, Persian quatrains became fashionable in Dutch poetry. After briefly referring to two great Dutch poets, P.C. Boutens (1870-1943) and J.H. Leopold (1865-1925), De Bruijn concentrates on their common source, an anthology of Persian quatrains in two parts published in 1906 under the titles *Gulzār-i ma'rīfat* and *La Roseaie du Savoir* respectively. The author of these Persian and French anthologies was a Persian by the name of Ḥusayn-i Āzād, who was a physician at the provincial Qajar court of Isfahan. He travelled to London and Paris, but later settled in Paris, where he concentrated on European and Persian poetry. In his chapter, De Bruijn gives a vivid picture of Ḥusayn-i Āzād's life and how he tried to introduce treasures from the Persian literary tradition to a western public.

The next chapter entitled "Khayyām's impact on modern Dutch literature," by Marco Goud, offers an invaluable overview of Khayyām's reception in modern Dutch literature, covering Dutch translators such as Chris van Balen (1910), J.H. Leopold (1911), Willem de Mérode (1931) and several other famous poets. Goud's chief focus is on P.C. Boutens (1913), who was fascinated by Khayyām's quatrains all his life. The next chapter is by Dick van Halsema who in his contribution "Bitter Certainty: J.H. Leopold on 'Umar Khayyām'" discusses how the poet J.H. Leopold (1865-1925) focused on philosophy between 1900 and 1906, seeking to solve the problem of human loneliness. He studied Stoa, Epicurus, Spinoza, Descartes, Hume, and Kant closely, and then, in 1904, he found 'Umar Khayyām.

Khayyām also inspired artist and musicians in the Netherlands. Jos Biegstraaten, in his chapter "How 'Umar Khayyām Inspired Dutch Visual Artists," examines the work of four Dutch artists who were inspired by Khayyām's quatrains: Willem Arondéus (1894-1943), Ger Gerrits (1893-1965), Siep van den Berg (1920-1998) and Theo Forrer (1923-2004). In the next article, "The Legacy of 'Umar Khayyām in Music of the Netherlands," Rokus de Groot studies several compositions by Dutch composers. In addition to this aspect of Khayyām's musical reception, De Groot's contribution explores how Dutch composers responded to Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyāt* and other translations of Khayyām's poetry. Composers reacted differently to Khayyām's quatrains: while a number of

them concentrated on a spiritual meaning of the quatrains, others composed pieces in which hedonism is put to a central place.

In his chapter on “The Reception of FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyām by the Victorians” Esmail Behdasht gives an overview of Khayyām’s reception during the Victorian period in England, offering the reasons why the *Rubáiyát* became an archetypal Victorian poem, having a dramatic form, mysticism, Epicureanism, melancholy, loss of faith, anxiety about the future, and unfamiliar exoticism.

Khayyām’s Russian reception is covered by a joint paper by Firuza Abdullaeva, Natalia Chalisova and Charles Melville in the chapter “The Russian reception of Khayyām: from text to image.” In this chapter, the authors show the extreme popularity of Khayyām in Russia, even before Fitzgerald’s translations were published. The English translation only added to Khayyām’s popularity. The authors investigate how different translations of a single quatrain were made and how a large number of illustrated translations usually erotic, were made based on these translations. The authors also examine the contemporary popularity of Khayyām and the ready availability of editions of his quatrains, from large bookstores to tiny book-stalls. The authors examine different translations in each generation and how these translations helped to popularize Khayyām. Attention is also paid to literary forgery and how it acquires national value and prestige: D. Serebryakov “claimed Omar Khayyām for the nation” in 2000 by stating that Khayyām’s native town was in Tataria.

In her article, entitled “The Translation of ‘Umar Khayyām’s Poetry into Georgian – a Touchstone of Translators,” Tea Shurgaia devotes her attention to the translation history of the quatrains into Georgian. Georgian historian of Persian literature, Justine Abuladze published the first literal translation of Khayyām’s poetry in 1924, and this translation was followed by a series of translations up to the 21st century.

Two articles are devoted to the reception history of the quatrains in India. Anne Castaing shows in her article “Vernacularizing Rubaiyat: the Politics of Madhushala in the Context of the Indian Nationalism” the influence of Khayyām on the young Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bacchan (1907-2003), who translated the quatrains into Hindi under the title of *Umar khayyām kī Madhuśālā* (“Omar Khayyām’s House of Wine”). Bacchan wrote his own collection of quatrains entitled *Madhuśālā* (“The house of wine,” 1935) deals with the same motifs and symbolism and are interpreted as an “allegory of poetic creation, homeland, universe, love etc., with wine and intoxication symbolising the duality of existence, both sweet and bitter.” By using themes and motifs from Khayyām’s poetry, Bacchan addresses the questions of orthodoxy versus free thinking, hierarchy of being and man’s place in the universe. The next article also deals with philosophical questions concerning man’s position in the universe. In his article, “Attempts at locating the *Rubáiyát* in Indian Philosophical thought,” A.

Rangarajan gives a metaphysical reading of Khayyām's quatrains by comparing Khayyām's description of human existence with the supernatural order of Hinduism. Moreover, the author concentrates on other religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivika, showing how Khayyām's philosophy matches the tenets of these religions.

Last but not least, Jos Coumans studies in his article "An Omar Khayyām database," Khayyām's popularity worldwide, offering a methodology to establish a database to view all the information on the *Rubā'iyāt*, on the original Persian source, and on the secondary literature.

Notes

- 1 Dick Davis, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Fitzgerald, Edward. For Fitzgerald's impact on English poetry see Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio, *Eliot Possessed: T.S. Eliot & Fitzgerald's Rubā'iyāt*, New York: New York University Press, 1989.
- 2 H.G. Keene first translated Khayyām's poetry into English in 1816.
- 3 See Ch.-H. de Fouchécour & B.A. Rosenfeld in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under 'Umar Khayyām.
- 4 M. Aminrazavi. *The Wine of Wisdom*. Oxford, Oneworld, 2005, pp. 25-7.
- 5 The first references to Khayyām in Persian and Arabic texts have been dealt with in several studies such M. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom*, chapter 1 & 2, pp. 18-66; 'Alī Dashfī, *Damī bā Khayyām*, Tehran: Asāfīr 1998, pp. 17-56; H. Dānish, *Rub 'īyāt-i 'Umar-i Khayyām*, Trans. & ed. by T.H. Şubhānī, Tehran: 2000, chapter one, pp. 21-41.
- 6 Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḍālī gives an excellent chronological analysis of all sources quoting Khayyām's quatrains.
- 7 Najm ad-Dīn Rāzī, *Mīrsād al-'ibād*, ed. M.A. Riyāhī, Tehran: Scientific & Cultural Publications Company, 1992, p. 31. For an English translation see *Razi: The Path of God's Bondsmen*, trans. H. Algar, Persian Heritage Series 35, New York: Caravan Books, 1982.
- 8 F. de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, London: 1994, vol. V, part 2, p. 363. De Blois deals with Khayyām's life, work and manuscripts of the quatrains. See pp. 356-80.
- 9 These are among the most important scholars who studied 'Umar Khayyām: V. Žukovskī, *Umar Khayyām and the "wandering" quatrains*, trans by E.D. Ross, in *JRAS*, nr. 30 (1898), pp. 349-66; E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge: 1902. vol. ii, pp. 246-59; A. Christensen, *Critical studies in the Rubā 'īyāt of 'Umar-i-Khayyām*, Copenhagen 1927; H. Ritter, *Zur Frage der Echtheit der Vierzeiler 'Omar Chajjāms*, in *OLZ*, xxxii (1929), pp. 156-63; Ch. Rempis, *Beiträge zur Khayyām-Forschung*, AKM, xxiii/1, Leipzig 1937; V. Minorsky, "The earliest Collections of Omar Khayyām" in *Yādnāma-yi J. Rypka*, Prague, 1967, pp. 107-18; M. Mīnuvī, "Az khazā' in-i Tukiyya," in *Majalla-yi dānishkada-yi adabiyāt*, vol. 4, 1956, nr. 2, pp. 42-75 & nr. 3, pp. 53-89. S.G. Tīrtha, *The Nectar of Grace. 'Omar Khayyām's Life and Works*, Allāhābād 1941; J.D. Humā'ī, *Khayyāmī-nāma*, Tehran: 1967; A.J. Arberry, *The Rubā 'īyāt of Omar Khayyām*, London: 1949; idem, *The Romance of Rubā 'īyāt*, London: 1959; 'Alī Dashfī, *Damī bā Khayyām*, Tehran: 1998; Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḍālī, *Rubā 'īyāt-i Khayyām dar manābi'-i kuhan*, Tehran: 2003; M. Aminrazavi. *The wine of wisdom. The wine of wisdom*. Oxford, 2005. Three bibliographical references to Khayyām studies are available: A.G., Potter, *A bibliography of the Rubā'iyāt of Omar Khayyām*, London 1929, repr. 1994; Jos Coumans, *The Rubā'iyāt of Omar Khayyām: An Updated Bibliography*, Leiden: 2010, and a Persian book under the title of *Kitāb-shīnāst-yi 'Umar-i Khayyām*, compiled by F. Angūrānī & Z. Angūrānī, Tehran:

Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, 2002. Šādiq Hidāyat (1902-1951) is the pioneer of modern scholarship on Khayyām studies in Iran. He published his *Muqaddama'ī bar rubā'īyāt Khayyām* ('An introduction on the quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām') in 1924 which contains the results of European scholarship on Khayyām in which he also ventilates his own views about Khayyām, presenting him as a materialist thinker. Ten years later he published a revised edition entitled *Tarānahā-yi Khayyām* ('The Quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām'). Hidāyat's work was followed up by Muḥammad 'Alī Furūghī and Qāsim Ghanī, who prepared a critical text edition of the quatrains in 1942. This study was followed by 'Alī Dashtī's research on Khayyām's time, life, and work.

- 10 F. de Blois, *Persian literature*, vol. v, part 2, p. 360.
- 11 M. Aminrazavi. *The wine of wisdom*. Oxford, 2005, p. 98.
- 12 'Alī Dashtī, *Damī bā Khayyām*, p. 17, footnote 1.
- 13 *Kitāb-shināsi-yi 'Umar-i Khayyām*, compiled by F. Angūrānī & Z. Angūrānī, Tehran: Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, 2002.
- 14 Jos Coumans, *The Rubā'iyāt of Omar Khayyām: An Updated Bibliography*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010.
- 15 Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḡālī's *Rubā'iyāt-i Khayyām dar manābi'-i kuhan*, Tehran: Iran University Press, 2003.
- 16 As Coumans has indicated, the items connected to art and commerce are extremely extensive. We see 718 items in Potter's bibliography under the heading "Omar Khayyām in art and commerce" Coumans states that "a web search in Google on 'Omar khayyām' retrieves some 727,000 pages, Alta Vista even finds some 2,200,000 hits (Situation in July 2008). For book illustrations see W.H. Martin and S. Mason, *The Art of Omar Khayyām: Illustrating FitzGerald's Rubaiyat*, London, 2007; idem, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Khayyām, Omar ix. illustrations of English translations of Omar Khayyām's Rubaiyat. For parodies see J. Biegraaten, "Omar with a Smile: Parodies in Books on Fitzgerlad's Rubā'iyāt of Omar Khayyām" in *Persica: Annual of the Dutch-Iranian Society*, vol. 20, 2004-2005, pp. 1-37.
- 17 All quatrain citations are from *Rubā'iyāt-i Khayyām*, ed. M. 'A. Furūghī & Q. Ghanī, with an introduction by B.D. Khurramshāhī, Tehran: Nāhīd, 1994, unless otherwise indicated. See quatrains 19 and 22.
- 18 Quatrain 18.
- 19 Quatrain 97.
- 20 Quatrain 102.
- 21 Quatrain 14.
- 22 Najm ad-Dīn Rāzī, *Miršād al- 'ibād*, p. 49; *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, p. 75.
- 23 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 295.
- 24 Quatrain 17.
- 25 Quatrain 84.
- 26 For polo imagery in Persian poetry see Seyed-Gohrab, "My Heart is the Ball, Your Lock the Polo-Stick: The Development of Polo Metaphors in Classical Persian Poetry" in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday*, ed. F. Lewis & S. Sharma, Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers / West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, pp. 183-205.
- 27 Quatrain 60.
- 28 Quatrain 13.
- 29 Quatrain 67.
- 30 Quatrain 45.
- 31 Quatrain 57.

- 32 Quatrain 48.
- 33 Quatrain 42.
- 34 Quatrains 28 and 29.
- 35 In Firdowsī's epic, this metaphor is presented as a riddle. For a discussion of this riddle see my *Courtly Riddles: Engimatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, West Lafayette, Indiana, 2008, p. 85.
- 36 Quatrain 8.
- 37 Quatrain 51.
- 38 Quatrain 62.
- 39 Quatrain 30.
- 40 Quatrain 37.
- 41 See A. Schimmel, "Rose und Nachtigall," in *Numen*, vol. 5, 1958), pp. 85-109; J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bulbul, ii. in Persian literature.
- 42 Quatrain 9.
- 43 Quatrain 25.
- 44 Even in contemporary Iran, tulip is associated with martyrdom. Famous is the song of 'Ārif from Qazvin who sings, "because of the blood of the homeland's youngsters, tulips are growing ..." It is very well possible that Khayyām's reference to a prince is to Siyāvash, a hero from Firdowsī's *Shāh-nāma*, who was killed innocently in enemy's territory. Siyāvash is commonly seen as a martyr.
- 45 J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Beloved; E., Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine and Wine-drinking and the concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry" in *Studia Islamica*, 13, 1960, 45, pp. 43-53; and Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nezāmī's Epic Romance*, Leiden / Boston, E.J. Brill, 2003, pp. 219-24; See the following article by J.T.P. de Bruijn, in which the author investigates how the pronoun "Thou" has appeared in the FitzGerald's *Rubā'iyāt*: "...And Thou Beside me singing in the wilderness" in *Jaarboek 5: Nederlands Omar Khayyam Genootschap*, Woubrugge: Avalon Press, 2009, pp. 10-17.
- 46 W. Hanaway in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under Sāqī; See also the entry Homosexuality, iii. in Persian Literature in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. This article is written by editors and the name of the author is not given.
- 47 See J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interactions of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Ḥakīm Sanā'ī of Ghazna*, Leiden: Brill, 1983, p. 157.
- 48 Quatrain 113.
- 49 Quatrain 23.
- 50 Quatrain 72.
- 51 A.T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994; H. Ritter, "Philologika. XV. Fariduddin 'Attār. III. 7. Der Dīwān (Mit vergleich einiger verse von Sanā'ī und Ḥāfiẓ)" in *Oriens*, Vol. 12, No. 1/2 (Dec. 31, 1959), pp. 1-88; J.T.P. de Bruijn, "The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, From Sana'i Onwards" in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn, London: KNP, 1992, pp. 75-86. M.R. Shafī'ī Kadkanī, *Qalandariyya dar tārikh: digardisthā-yi yik idiulugī* ('Qalandars in History: the Metamorphosis of an idelology'), Tehran: Sukhan, 2007.
- 52 Muḥammad Shams ad-Dīn Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, ed. P. Nātil Khānlārī, Tehran: Khārazmī, 1983, ghazal, 479, l. 3.
- 53 This quatrain is not included in *Rubā'īyāt-i Khayyām*, ed. M. 'A. Furūghī & Q. Ghani, but it is included in several editions.
- 54 Quatrain 108.
- 55 Quatrain 90.
- 56 Quatrain 47.
- 57 Quatrain 73.

58 Quatrains 87 and 88.

59 *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Mirāj Nāmeḥ*, introduction and commentaries by M.R. Séguy, New York: Goerge Braziller, 1977, plate 32 (f. 34V).

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Reading the *Rubāʿiyyāt* as “Resistance Literature”

Mehdi Aminrazavi

(University of Mary Washington)

*O' righteous preacher, harder at work we are than you,
Though drunken, we are more sober than you;
The blood of grapes we drink, you that of men,
Be fair, who is more blood-thirsty, we or you?*¹

The *Rubāʿiyyāt* of ʿUmar Khayyām have traditionally been read as timeless words of wisdom that address the fundamental existential problems of the human condition. It is precisely the timelessness and eloquence of the *Rubāʿiyyāt* that accounts for their fame and reception in so many cultures throughout history. While the profundity of the *Rubāʿiyyāt* are undeniable, rarely, if ever, have the *Rubāʿiyyāt* been studied from a socio-political perspective.

In the present work, I would like to argue that many of the *Rubāʿiyyāt* were written as a reaction to the rise of Islamic orthodoxy and the demise of the intellectual freedom which was so prevalent in the first four centuries of the Islamic history. I will argue that once Khayyām's *Rubāʿiyyāt* are placed within the historical context of his time, they will no longer appear to be the pessimistic existential bemoaning of a poet-philosopher like Schopenhauer. Rather, one can see the *Rubāʿiyyāt* as an intellectual critique of the rise of orthodox and legalistic Islam as represented by the faith-based theology of the Ashʿarite. It is my argument that ʿUmar Khayyām, a tolerant sage who was witnessing the demise of the intellectual sciences at the hands of the enemies of rationalism and free thinking, took refuge in poetry and used “poetic license” to resist the rise of religious orthodoxy. The *Rubāʿiyyāt* became the literature of resistance against those who saw no room for serious scholarly debate and discourse in religious matters and, using such Qurʾanic verses as “Be obedient to God and His messenger and those with authority upon you,”² demanded absolute obedience.

To defend this thesis, it is imperative that we first briefly survey the intellectual and political landscape of the Islamic civilization in the first few centuries after its inception, and to reflect on those elements which contributed to the flourishing of the Islamic civilization and then to its demise. It

is only by placing the *Rubāʿiyyāt* within the larger political scheme of the Seljuk dynasty that we can begin to fully appreciate their socio-political significance.

From the middle of 2nd/8th century when Manṣūr became the Caliph, a massive effort began to promote science, in particular mathematics and astronomy, and to explore Greek intellectual thought³ and its use of reason and rationalism. After Manṣūr, Maḥdī who became the Caliph sought to encounter anthropomorphic interpretations of Islam which inadvertently led to theological debates in order to encounter heresy. When Mamūn became the Caliph, the scientific, philosophical and translation movements reached a new high. Mamūn, whose mother was Persian and himself had spent some time among Persians in Khurāsān, was keenly interested in the newly-formed rationalistic theology of Muʿtazilite.

By the beginning of the 3rd/9th century, rationalistic theology of Muʿtazilite, had become *Modus Operandi*, and much of the Greek intellectual heritage had been translated into Arabic especially in philosophy, logic and medicine. The Renaissance of the Islamic world had begun and scholarship, scientific research and the spirit of rationalism flourished and led to break troughs in every facet of scientific endeavor.⁴ In this context, the Greek masters, in particular Plato and Aristotle who had been given such honorific titles as “Divine Sages” (*al-ḥakimayn al-ilāhī*), should be given credit for the blossoming of sciences in the Islamic world.⁵

Regarding what had been described as the “Golden age” of the Islamic period, D. Gutas, in his work, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* says, “By the end of the 4th/10th century, almost all the Greek scientific and secular philosophical works that were available in late antiquity, including diverse topics like astrology, alchemy, physics, mathematics, medicine and philosophy, had been translated into Arabic.”⁶

As the spirit of rationalism withered away in the 5th/11th century, the outstanding achievements of Muslim scientists began to decline. The voices of the orthodoxy gained prominence at the court of Caliph Al-Mutiwakkil (232-247 AH), who opposed intellectual debate concerning religious matters. It took another century for the orthodox theologians to consolidate their position and to present the legalistic and orthodox version of Islam as the official version. This allowed such jurists as Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal to formally charge philosophers and theologians, particularly the Muʿtazilites, with heresy. With freedom of expression substantially curtailed, the spirit of rationalism was replaced by the Ashʿarites orthodox theology, which emphasized faith as opposed to reason.⁷

ʿUmar Khayyām lived in the 6/12th century when the glorious days of intellectual debate and discursive reasoning in Persia had come to an end. Philosophers like Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Zakariyā Rāzī and Bīrūnī, all of whom were once venerated figures, became symbols of apostasy and heresy. A new dawn began in which Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*) became the

supreme truth and only legal formalism was identified with faith; orthodox jurists of the time (*fuqahā*) established their hegemony and teaching intellectual sciences was forbidden in schools in Khurāsān. Libraries were purged, and poets and even philosophers were forced to criticize rationalism.⁸ As Muḥammad ibn Nijā' al-Arabālī confessed: "God most exalted is the Truth and Ibn Sīnā was wrong."⁹

Khayyām bore witness to the rise of intellectual fascism around him as the circle of permissible sciences was shrinking. The Shi'ite theologian Mūsā Nowbakhtī, in his work on the refutation of logic, wrote, "He who practices logic is a heretic."¹⁰ With philosophy and logic already denounced, even mathematics was viewed as the instrument of the devil. Khayyām, a mathematical genius, was there when geometry was pronounced a heretical subject. Aḥmad ibn Thawābah, an orthodox jurist, said, "God, I take refuge in you from geometry, protect me from its evils."

¹¹ Another orthodox jurist, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, found an opportunity to include even mathematicians among heretical subjects. The famous Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī, a contemporary of 'Umar Khayyām who allegedly studied philosophy with him, rejects mathematics all together and offers a detailed list of all the evils that may arise from studying mathematics in *The Beginning of Sciences (Fātiḥat al-'ulūm)*. A jurist may only learn enough arithmetic, Ghazzālī tells us, to enable him to calculate the collection of necessary religious taxes.¹² Khayyām, an astronomer who made the most precise calendar up to date, also witnessed *fatvās* (religious edicts) against astronomy. Mūsā al-Nowbakhtī, a jurist whose family was known to have been among the notable astronomers, wrote a book ironically entitled *Treatise on the Rejection of Astronomers (Kitāb al-rad 'ala 'l-munajjimīn)*. Other orthodox elements used the opinions of such eminent jurists as Imām Shāfi'ī, who had lived earlier, himself a practicing astronomer, who abandoned and then condemned its use. Even the science of medicine did not escape the wrath of the enemies of free thinking. The famous theologian Jāḥiz rejected the use of medicine, considering it an interference with God's will.

The demise of rationalism took a turn for worst when Caliph Al-Mutiwakkil Billāh's command that only the Quran, Ḥadīth and Sunnah alone can be taught and debate on religious matters are forbidden, led to the harassment of the Mu'tazilites forcing many to move north. The Ḥadīth scholars who had long emphasized absolute obedience to the Prophet's statements and tradition used this opportunity to implement their views forcefully, giving rise to the importance of "transmitted sciences" (*'ulūm al-naqlī*) at the expense of "intellectual sciences" (*'ulūm al-'aqlī*). Such a censure of intellectual activities reached a new high when Caliph Alqādir Billāh (381-422 AH), issued a decree on "forceful belief" in which he not only embraced the position of orthodoxy but legally enforced it. Perhaps the spirit of the time is best described in an apocryphal Ḥadīth, clearly

made up to justify the position of the jurists, which quotes the prophet Muhammad as saying “There is no benefit in the science of medicine, and no truth lies in the science of geometry, the science of logic and natural sciences are heretical and those practicing them are heathens.”¹³

In Persia, the new Ghaznavīd and Seljuq dynasty abandoned the patronage of intellectual sciences and embraced orthodoxy. Maḥmūd ibn Sabuktakin, the conqueror of the city of Ray, wrote to Sulṭān Al-Qādir Billāh declaring the Daylamites who gave refuge to Mu‘tazilites to be heretics and atheists.¹⁴ Such distinguished poets as Sanā’ī,¹⁵ who was a contemporary of Khayyām and Khāqānī who lived shortly after Khayyām, composed, perhaps under pressure, poems criticizing discursive reasoning and philosophy.

Khayyām was witnessing the end of an era: the chemistry of Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, mathematics of Khāwrazmī and Birūnī and the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā were being replaced by theological stricture. Khayyām’s lack of interest in teaching publicly and his apparent reluctance for scholarly debate should be understood in light of his fear of condemnation by the orthodox elements. Khayyām himself explains this:

*The secrets of the world, our book defined
For fear of malice could not be outlined
Since none here worthy is amongst the dolts
We can’t reveal the thoughts that crowd our mind*¹⁶

Khayyām chose two strategies to resist intellectual stagnation: philosophy and poetry. While Khayyām called Ibn Sīnā his teacher, but in all likelihood he studied directly with Ibn Sīnā’s famous student Bahmanyār. In an attempt to revive the spirit of rationalism, he wrote six short philosophical treatises in the Aristotelian tradition.

Khayyām’s other means of resistance against the rise of religious orthodoxy was to adopt a poetic mode of expression, perhaps sharing his verses only with a select group of his students. This accounts for why Khayyām was not known for his poetry when he died and the *Rubā‘iyyāt* gradually gained notoriety only after his death. It is in this context that his *Rubā‘iyyāt* should be understood as a reaction to the rise of religious orthodoxy.

Despite Khayyām’s interest in the intellectual debates of his time, which were primarily between the rationalist Mu‘tazilite and the orthodox Ash‘arite, he must have been reluctant to become directly involved. This was partially because the Mu‘tazilī-Ash‘arī debate had become politicized, often leading to violent clashes between the two sides. Yet, even with his serious demeanor and disengagement from politics and religious debates, Khayyām did not escape the wrath of the jurists, who charged him with heresy. Khayyām subsequently went to Mecca to signal his piety. One can imagine what would have happened to him if he had written a treatise

against the Ash'arite theology at a time when he was surrounded by Juwaynī, Ghazzālī and other orthodox masters of this School.

Khayyām's position with regard to such theological debates was unique: he simply thought these discussions are futile and idle speculations. In the absence of sufficient evidence, making claims that can neither be verified nor falsified are simply foolish. Khayyām could not have possibly responded to Ash'arite theological positions that had the support of the Royal Court in a systematic way. Poetry however, may have provided him with the poetic license to respond without being recognized as party to the conflict. Khayyām states:

*I saw a wise sage! he did not heed
For caste or creed, for faith or worldly greed;
And free from truth and quest, from path and goal,
He sat at ease, from earth and heaven freed.¹⁷*

Khayyām's Poetic Response to the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite Debate:

The central debate in the Islamic world is and has always been between those who support reason and discourse (*ḥukamā*) and those who rely on a strictly legal understanding of Islam (*fuqahā*). The former is interested in dialogue and the latter in dictating the nature and the terms of that dialogue.

Khayyām happened to live at a time when the conflict between the two had reached its apex, putting him in a precarious position. The masses of people followed the orthodox clergy and the jurists as they always had, and so did the Saljuq Sultans, who needed the endorsement of the orthodox '*ulamā*'. This translated into a victory for the orthodoxy and a defeat for free thinkers like Khayyām.

Let us briefly consider Khayyām's poetic response to the specific points of contention between the rationalist Mu'tazilites and the orthodox theologians of the Ash'arite school. Although Khayyām responds through poetry, he does so as a scientist who consistently reminds the ardent believers that in the absence of sufficient evidence, one is not justified in making a claim. Khayyām reminds us that this is particularly true with regard to religious matters, since masses of people tend to follow the authorities blindly.

For instance, the Ash'arite emphasize the notion of religious certainty. As their chief exponent, Ghazzālī, asserts, "certainty is the essence of religion and from ascertaining it, there is no relief."¹⁸ Khayyām could not reject Ghazzālī's call openly but he could respond in the following fashion:

*Ye do not grasp the truth but still ye grope
Why waste then life and sit in doubtful hope
Beware! And hold forever Holy Name
From torpor sane or sot in death will slope*¹⁹

Let us examine Khayyām's engagement with and response to the emerging spirit of orthodoxy within the context of the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite debate in more detail. The debate centered around the following themes:

1. Unity (*Tawhīd*)
2. Justice (*ʿAdl*)
3. The promise of reward and punishment in the hereafter (*Wa ʿd wa wa ʿīd*)
4. The state between the two states (*Manzil bayn al-manzilatayn*)
5. Commanding to do good and prohibiting from doing evil (*Amr bi'l-ma ʿrūf wa nahy ʿan al-munkir*)

1. Unity (*Tawhīd*)

While the Oneness of God was affirmed both by the Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites, the relationship between God and His attributes was a major point of contention. We will never know the ultimate answer to these questions, Khayyām tells us; nor do they alleviate the suffering and agony of the human condition. In light of the futility of the nature of this debate, what would be the point of such a discussion? A Khayyāmian quatrain explains:

*Some strung the pearls of thought by searching deep,
And told some tales about Him, – sold them cheap;
But none has caught a clue to secret realms,
They cast a horoscope and fall in sleep.*²⁰

2. Justice (*ʿAdl*)

Presenting the Mu'tazilites argument syllogistically is as follows:

1. God is all just.
2. From an all just God can only come justice.
3. God has created everything.
4. Everything is just

From this argument it follows that all the injustices of the world only appear unjust, since in essence they must be just. Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, an eminent Mu'tazilite, asserts: "From the knowledge and what is related to justice (*ʿadl*), the person should know that God's acts are all good and He does not do what is bad and does not refrain to do what is necessary for Him. In informing us, [He] does not lie and in judging does not do injustice."²¹

Khayyām was preoccupied by the problem of theodicy his entire life, and this concern emerges as the most salient feature of the *Rubā'īyyāt*. Khayyām who considered the world to be fundamentally unjust; with no apparent purpose and the presence of much evil in it, relentlessly questions the notion of a just world:

*Had I but on the heavens control
I'd remove this bullish ball beyond the goal
And forthwith furnish better worlds and times
Where love will cling to every freeman's soul*²²

And in another quatrain he laments:

*This ruthless Wheel that makes so great a show,
Unravels no one's knot, shares no one's woe;
But when it sights a wounded, weary heart,
It hurries on to strike another blow*²³

Khayyām not only questions the concept of Divine justice, but points the finger at God as the source of evil and injustice. He says:

*Since mortal compositions are cast by a Hand Divine,
Why then the flaws that throw them out of line?
If formed sublime, why must He shatter them?
If not, to whom would we the fault assign?*²⁴

Khayyām's views, should not be understood merely as a poet's play with words, perhaps similar to Abu'l 'Alā' Ma'arrī, the Arab poet who was equally critical of an unjust world. The Mu'tazilī-Ash'arī debate concerning the intricacies of how God's justice could best be explained seemed hardly relevant at a time when the injustices and corruption of the Royal Court and the Sultan together with the horrors of wars, destruction and famine throughout the land were obvious examples of injustice and evil. Khayyām asserts:

*Dedicate yourself to the wise when you find
Forget fasting and praying, you need not mind
But listen to truth from what 'Umar Khayyām says,
Drink wine, steal if you should but be ever kind.*²⁵

3. *The promise of reward and punishment in the hereafter*
(Wa 'd wa wa 'īd)

Another salient feature of Khayyām's *Rubā 'īyyāt* is the thorny subject of eschatology. Few issues are examined more extensively by Khayyām than the promise of reward and punishment in the other world.²⁶

Khayyām's treatment of the subject matter is what I call "satirical deconstructionism," or a version of *reductio ad absurdum*, a method he adopted and used consistently to respond to the type of debates he thought were irrelevant to the human condition. His response to the orthodox Ash'arite theologians who argued for the bodily resurrection was a sarcastic one:

*Anon! The pious people would advise,
 That as we die, we rise up fools or wise
 'Tis for this cause we keep with lover and wine
 For in the end with same we hope to rise*²⁷

And in another *Rubā 'ī* he says:

*In Paradise are angels, as men trow
 And fountains with pure wine and honey flow
 If these be lawful in the world to come
 May I not love the like down here below?*²⁸

Khayyām's method of deconstructing eschatological theories begins by questioning the epistemological foundation of certitude. He asks how those who postulate about heaven and hell know about such matters? Even the Prophet Muḥammad said, "After passing away, you shall join the mysterious caravan of death." Khayyām's quatrain on the subject seems to be a commentary on the prophetic Ḥadīth:

*Ye go from soul asunder this ye know,
 And that ye creep, behind his curtain low;
 Hence sing His Name, ye know not whence ye came
 And live sedate, ye know not where to go*²⁹

After casting doubt on the epistemological foundation of the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite debate, Khayyām brings our attention to here and now where the real game of life is played:

*They tell "In Heaven angels come to greet!"
 I say "The juice of Vine, in truth, is sweet."
 Take the cash, let go of future promises,
 We bear with drums when further far they beat.*³⁰

Khayyām's satirical deconstructionist project, which begins by questioning the relevance of the debate concerning life after death, takes a radical turn when he undermines the entire subject, he asserts:

*From thee, O sāqī!³¹ Those who went away,
They fall, of course, to dreaming pride, a prey,
Drink the chalice of wine and hear this Truth
"Just empty air is every word they say."³²*

4. *The state between the two states (Manzil bayn al-manzilatayn)*

What happens to a Muslim who sins? Does he/she go to hell or receive a lesser punishment for being a Muslim? Theological schools such as Khawārij, Murja'ite, Waiydites, among others, held different positions on the subject. Waṣīl ibn 'Atā, a supporter of the well-known theologian Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, argued that such a person is neither a heretic nor faithful, but has simply acted sinfully (*fāsiq*), this view came to be known as a state between the two states.

Khayyām was intrigued by the discussion concerning the gradations of sin and its consequences, eschatological reward and punishment and the certainty with which theologians commented on such matters. He casts doubt on the whole discussion by questioning the insufficiency of evidence regarding the existence of life after death and sees the entire debate as a form of unhealthy obsession with a world about which one may only speculate:

*O unenlightened race of human kind
Ye are a nothing, built on empty wind
Ye a mere nothing, hovering in the abyss
A void before you, and a void behind³³*

What we do know is that we come from the abyss of nothingness to which we return. Why ignore the presence, Khayyām wonders, and speculate on a state between hell and heaven? Who has come from the other world to tell us there are such places, Khayyām questions:

*Of those who have passed away before,
Who's come to help us Mystery explore?
Lo, in this double way of wish and dream,
Leave naught undone; you shall return no more.³⁴*

5. *Commanding to do good and prohibiting from doing evil (Amr bi 'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkir)*

In the Qur'an, the Prophet Muḥammad is addressed as follows: "You are the best of the community who have come for people, command them to do what is right and forbid them from doing wrong."³⁵ This seemingly simple principle quickly became controversial since one must be certain of what is good and bad before commanding others. As Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār tells us, "one does not always know what is good even though something might appear to be good. If one knows or suspects that one's drinking wine may lead to the death of a group of Muslims or burning of a neighborhood, forbidding him is not necessary, in fact it is not good or desirable."³⁶

For Khayyām, good and bad are intrinsically embedded within us; and humans can make a morally sound decision by relying on the power of their own reasoning. In fact it is, the "wheel of fortune" according to Khayyām and not humans who is in need of instruction not to inflict evil on humans making them the victims of a ruthless game of chance. He conveys this:

*The good and evil in the mold of man
The joy and grief in fate and fortune's plan
Leave not to the wheel of fortune, for in reason
A thousand times more helpless than in man*³⁷

In the foregoing discussion, I have tried to bring to light the place of Khayyām's *Rubā'īyyāt* within the context of the intellectual debates of his time and show that the *Rubā'īyyāt* are much more than didactic aphorisms or spiritual utterances. One could make a list of many of the points of contention between the Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites among whom we can name, Divine attributes and their relation with Divine essence, God's omniscience and predestination, beatific vision of God, and find at least one *Rubā'ī* that is a direct response to it.

Khayyām and the Revival of Rationalism:

Along with the free-spirited theological debates of the 3rd/9th century by such figures as al-Nazzām³⁸ and Ibn al-Rāwandī,³⁹ we see the rise of Muslim Aristotelians; that is, the Peripatetic philosophers (*mashshā'is*). Relying on translations of Greek philosophy, the transition from theology to philosophy began with al-Kindī and reached its zenith in Zakariyā Rāzī in 240/854. The following works that are by Rāzī (or may have been attributed to him) tells us much about the tolerant spirit of the time: *Trickery of the Prophets (Makhāriq al-anbiyā')*, *The Deception by Those Claiming to be Prophets (Ḥiyāl al-mutanabbiyīn)* and *A Critique of Religions (Fī naqd*

al-adyān).⁴⁰ Other philosophers like Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Bahmanyār and Suhrawardī, were equally bold in their claims against orthodoxy.

The spirit found in Ibn Rāwandī, Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) is best summarized by Ibn Rāwandī in his famous argument. In a book that has not survived, he argued that either revelation is reasonable or it is unreasonable. If reasonable, then we need to follow reason and do not need revelation; and if revelation is unreasonable, then one should not follow what is unreasonable. In either case we do not need revelation. It is noteworthy that Ibn Rāwandī died of natural causes, but Muslims from Khayyām's era up to the present time could not have expressed such views and remained safe from persecution.

Khayyām was the last major figure belonging to the 6th /12th century Peripatetic philosophical tradition. One needs only to compare Rāzī's critique of religion and narrow-mindedness to that of Khayyām to see the striking similarities between the two. Rāzī asserts:

*If the people of this religion are asked about the proof for the soundness of their religion, they flare up, get angry and spill the blood of whoever confronts them with this question. They forbid rational speculation and strive to kill their adversaries. This is why truth became thoroughly silenced and concealed.*⁴¹

And Khayyām in a quatrain tells us:

*The secrets which my book of love has bred,
Cannot be told for fear of loss of head;
Since none is fit to learn, or cares to know,
'Tis better all my thoughts remain unsaid.*⁴²

While orthodoxy existed in the first few centuries of Islam and remained equally opposed to freethinking and the use of reason, at least there was some degree of tolerance for those who did not aspire to a strictly legal interpretation of Islam. In his work *Nations and Sects* (*al-milal wa'l-nihal*), Shahrastānī places philosophers among those who make "authoritative use of personal opinion" (*al-istiḥdād bi'l-ra'y*) and says they are not orthodox Muslims nor heretics, but rather independent thinkers who should be allowed to remain so.⁴³ By the time of Khayyām, however, the kind of tolerance which allowed the likes of Rāzī and Ibn Rāwandī to speak freely and die old men, had disappeared.

The Demise of Rationalism and the Rise of Theological Stricture

Despite the revival of Peripateticism in Andalusia and the emergence of such great masters as Ibn Maṣarrah, Al-Majritī, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd himself, in Persia, theological stricture was on the rise.

Khayyām resisted orthodoxy on two fronts: philosophically, he wrote six treatises in the Peripatetic tradition, rationalizing traditional philosophical problems at a time when philosophy was under attack by the likes of his contemporary Ash‘arites like Juwaynī and Ghazzālī. However he paid the price and was charged with “being a Philosopher,” an accusation that implied heresy. He cleverly defended himself by saying:

*“A philosopher he’s” my enemies say,
Lord knows I am not what they say;
But while I am in this nest of suffering
Should I not ask whence and why here stay?⁴⁴*

The following Khayyāmesque *Ruba‘iyyat* are clear indications of the radical encounter with and strong reaction to the orthodoxy’s emphasis on pseudo-morality and a strictly legal interpretation of Islam. Khayyām responds:

*Serve only the wise if and when you find
Let fast and prayer blast, you need not mind
But listen to truth from what ‘Umar Khayyām says
Drink wine, steal if you should but be ever kind.⁴⁵*

And again:

*If ye would love, be sober, wise and cool
And keep your mind and senses under rule
If ye desire your drinking be loved by God
Injure no person, never act a fool.⁴⁶*

Khayyām knew that condemning orthodoxy in a written form would lead to his demise, not to mention that his writings would not have survived, just like those of Rāzī and Ibn Rāwandī. Khayyām’s second option would have been to write philosophical allegories to hide his criticism against the orthodox Muslims. This is indeed a tradition practiced by such figures as Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Sīnā, who wrote the *Ḥayy ibn yaqzān*,⁴⁷ *Salmān and Absāl* and Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī⁴⁸ who wrote numerous treatises of this nature.⁴⁹

I believe, ‘Umar Khayyām chose a third alternative to resist intellectual repression by the orthodox jurists: the use the poetic license. Stroumsa in her book *Free Thinkers of Medieval Islam*, reminds us:

It appears that after the tenth century, blunt prose expression of freethinking was no longer possible. The preoccupation of intellectuals with prophecy then found very different expressions.

Philosophical parables like Avicenna's, or poetry like al-Ma'arrī's and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rumī's, offered ways for discussing this preoccupation that were deemed safer for the writers, and perhaps also intellectually more rewarding. For, rather than forcing these thinkers into a head-long collision with the notion of prophetic religion, these new ways made it possible to integrate transformed echoes of freethinking into the Islamic legacy.⁵⁰

It is therefore imperative that we see Khayyām's *Rubā'īyyāt* not as the voice of a frustrated poet expressing his bewilderment with the riddles of life but as a form of resistance expressed philosophically and poetically against the forces of darkness who were intent on imposing their version of religion.

*And those who show their prayer-rugs are but mules-
Mere hypocrites who use those rugs as tools;
Behind the veil of zealotry they trade
Trading Islam, worse than heathen are those fools.⁵¹*

Khayyām's precarious situation is not all that different from the circumstances in which a number of contemporary Muslim intellectuals find themselves. From the rise of the Tāliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in other countries, the conflict between the free thinkers and orthodoxy appears to be a perennial one. In such circumstances, we also see the rise of the literature of resistance. The use of symbolism, allegory and short and long pieces of highly symbolic literature throughout the Islamic world by the intelligentsia both medieval and modern bears testament to the need to fight orthodoxy through resistance literature.

Nowhere has this been more apparent than the rise of highly symbolic modern Persian poetry in the years since the Iranian revolution of 1979. The contemporary 'Umar Khayyāms, are still carrying the mantle of the old master of Nayshabur in defense of tolerance and liberty. At times of oppression, we have no choice but to become 'Umar Khayyāms ourselves.

Notes

- 1 Translated by the author, this is a *Rubā'ī* that is attributed to Khayyām.
- 2 Quran, 4:59
- 3 M. Fakhry, *Philosophy, Dogma and the Impact of Greek Thought in Islam*, VARIORUM, 1994, and D. Gutas, *Greek thought, Arabic Culture*, London: 1998.
- 4 Dh. Šafā, *Tārikh-i 'ulūm-i 'aqlī dar tamadūn-i islāmī*, Tehran: 1371.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 37-134.
- 6 D. Gutas, *Greek thought, Arabic Culture*, London:1998, p. i
- 7 For more information see 'A. Badawī, *Madhāhib al-islāmiyyīn*, 2vols. Beirut: 1973.

- 8 Ibid., p. 144.
- 9 Dh. Ṣafā, *Tārīkh-i 'ulūm-i 'aqlī dar tamadun-i islāmī*, p.140
- 10 Ibid., 144.
- 11 Yāqut al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, vol.4, Cairo: 1936, p. 161-173.
- 12 Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī, *Fatḥat al-'ulūm*, Cairo: 1322, p. 56.
- 13 *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, Beirut:1957, vol. 4, p. 95.
- 14 Dh. Ṣafā, *Tārīkh-i 'ulūm-i 'aqlī dar tamadon-i islāmī*, p. 137-38.
- 15 H. Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-islām al-siyāsī wa'l-dīnī wa'l-thiqāfī wa'l-ijtimā'i*, Cairo: 1965, vol. 3, pp. 168-169.
- 16 A. Saīdī, *Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, p. 200. This may be an unauthentic quatrain
- 17 Govinda Tirtha *The Nectar of Grace*, p. 209.
- 18 Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' al-'ulūm al-dīn*, trans. M. Khwārazmī, Tehran:1378, p.211.
- 19 Govinda Tirtha *The Nectar of Grace*, p.125.
- 20 Ibid., 234.
- 21 Qāḍī 'Abd Al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, Cairo: 1965, p.139.
- 22 Govinda Tirtha *The Nectar of Grace*, p.26. Modified by the author.
- 23 Ahmad Sa'idi, *Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam*, p. 202.
- 24 Ibid. p.88.
- 25 Modified by author.
- 26 Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār summarizes this when he states, "Regarding God, since intention and decision making is impossible for Him, assumption of the violation of intention to Him [is impossible] for He is power and more exalted than such allegations." Qāḍī 'Abd Al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, Cairo: 1965, p.139.
- 27 Govinda Tirtha, *The Nectar of Grace*, p.253, modified by the author.
- 28 Trans. by Whinfield in A.J. Arberry, *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, London:1949, p.124.
- 29 Govinda Tirtha, *The Nectar of Grace*, p.200, modified by the author.
- 30 Ibid., p.251. Modified by the author.
- 31 *Sāqī* in Persian means a female who serves wine.
- 32 Govinda Tirtha, *The Nectar of Grace*, 156, modified by the author.
- 33 E. H. Whinfield, *The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam*, p.424.
- 34 Ahmad Sa'idi, *Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam*, p. 181.
- 35 Qur'an, 3:110.
- 36 Qāḍī 'Abd Al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, p.140.
- 37 A. Sa'idi, *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, p.71. Modified by the author.
- 38 Al-Nazzām, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New ed. VII, J. Van Ess, 1057-58. Also, *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, ed. S.H. Nasr and M. Aminrazavi, vol. 3, London: 2004, pp. 33-37.
- 39 For ibn Rāwandī see S. Stroumsa, *Free Thinkers of Medieval Islam*, Leiden: 1999, pp.73-86.
- 40 These three treatises may well be part of the same book. See Ibid., p.93.
- 41 As reported by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *A'lām al-nubuwwah*, ed. S. Al- Sawy, Tehran:1977, p.31. trans. by S. Stroumsa.
- 42 Govinda Tirtha, *The Nectar of Grace*, p.266. This may be an unauthentic quatrain.
- 43 For a survey of independent thinkers, often referred to as "free thinkers," see S. Stroumsa, *Free Thinkers of Medieval Islam*, Brill, 1999 and D. Urvoy, *Les Penseurs libres dans l'Islam classique*, Paris: 1996.
- 44 Author's translation.
- 45 Translated by the author.
- 46 Ibid. 137.
- 47 For Islamic philosophical parables, see H. Corbin, *Visionary Recital*, trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton: 1988.

- 48 For more information on Suhrawardī's allegorical writings see M. Aminrazavi "Suhrawardī's Persian Writings," in L. Lewhison, *Persian Sufism From Origin to Present*, London: 1993. pp.259-283.
- 49 For philosophical parables of Suhrawardī, see *Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques*, vol.3, ed. S.H. Nasr, Institut d'Etudes et des Recherches Culturelles, Tehran: 1993.
- 50 Stroumsa, *Free Thinkers in Medieval Islam*, p. 241.
- 51 A. Sa'idī, *The Ruba'īyyat of Omar Khayyam*, p.104. Modified by this author.

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Some ‘Umarian Quatrains from the Lifetime of ‘Umar Khayyām

Alexander H. Morton
(SOAS, University of London)

It is well known that the earliest independent manuscripts or substantial collections of rubāʿīs explicitly attributed to Khayyām date from no earlier than the fifteenth century, some three hundred years after he lived. Rubāʿīyyāt given under his name have been found in anthologies and other works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; discoveries of this kind continue to be made. Yet, so far as I am aware, the earliest one so far known is the single quatrain found in the *Risāla fī ʿl-tanbīh of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī*, which was written in the late twelfth century;¹ the same poem and one other are quoted as Khayyām’s in the *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād* of the Sufi Najm al-Dīn Dāya, also of Rayy, which is datable to 620/1223.² These have long been known; the earliest of them comes from the best part of a century later than ‘Umar’s death.

The quatrains presented here belong to another category, ones which are quoted anonymously, but which occur in the later corpus under Khayyām’s name. Not many have been discovered from before the thirteenth century, though the number has recently been increased. Four quatrains and one single verse in the *Sindbād-nāma* of Ṣahīrī Samarqandī, dating from 566-7/1160-1, were noted long ago.³ More recently single specimens have been found in earlier works, in the *Rowḥ al-Arwāḥ fī Sharḥ Asmāʾ al-Fattāḥ* of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Samʿānī, who died in 534/1140, the *Risāla-yi ʿAynīyya* of Aḥmad Ghazzālī, written not long before Ghazzālī’s death in A.H. 520/1126, and in Shaykh Aḥmad-i Jām’s *Sirāj al-Sāʿirīn*, written when its author was seventy-two, that is in 513/1119-20.⁴ These may, the last almost certainly does, come from the lifetime of Khayyām.

To these can now be added a handful from about ten years earlier. They are preserved in a work by one Abu ʿl-Qāsim Naṣr b. Aḥmad b. ʿAmr al-Shādānī al-Nishāpūrī who was writing during the reign of the Ghazanavid sovereign Masʿūd III (492-508/1099-1115) and who tells us more than once that in 503/1109-1110 he was in attendance upon a patron (*valīni ʿmat*), who had access to the court. There is doubt over the year in which Khayyām’s death is to be placed, but people who knew him mention him as being alive in 506, 507 and 508.⁵ Shādānī’s book has reached us in incomplete form; the introduction and first chapter are missing and in a

later preface, evidently written in India and probably in the eighteenth century, the anonymous saviour of the work tells us that he found it with its beginning missing and to ensure its preservation added the new preface and had it copied. The original title has been lost; it now goes under the clumsy name *Ganj al-Ganj*. The book was first mentioned in print in Captain Charles Stewart's Catalogue of the library of Tipoo Sultan, which passed into the hands of the British at Seringapattam in 1799, but the entry is too brief to show that it is of any great interest.⁶ A second manuscript dated 1232/1816 in the Ahli Islam Library of Madras has been recorded in even more uninformative fashion.⁷ The description given by Ivanow of the manuscript belonging to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which is probably that of Tipoo, is the only one that reveals the early date of the work and gives more than the vaguest idea of the contents.⁸ However, so far as I know, this has attracted no attention; in addition, this manuscript only contains the first half of the work. The copy I have used is preserved in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, where it has been given a minimal description in the card index of Persian manuscripts.⁹ I hope to write a fuller one and little more needs to be said here. The text is often corrupt but the language has not been modernised in a systematic manner, if at all. Although no reference to the author or to his work as such has come to light it was evidently known in the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century. For instance, Fakhr-i Mudabbir, writing in the reign of Iltutmish, quotes almost word for word Shādānī's eye-witness account of the occasion in a.h. 503 when the loss of the priceless pearl on the top of the state umbrella was met with superbly royal unconcern by Mas'ūd III.¹⁰

The book essentially falls into the category of practical and ethical advice or *andarz*. Eleven of the original twelve chapters survive. With one exception each chapter is divided into thirty sections; each section begins with quotations from the usual list of pre-Islamic and Islamic sages who appear in such works, Socrates, Aristotle, Khusraw, Buzurgmihr, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Abū 'Alī and so on. This is followed by an appropriate anecdote; some of these are set in the pre-Islamic period, a few in relatively recent times, with a quite a high proportion from the early Abbasid Caliphate. What is of concern here is that Shādānī frequently quotes poetry, Arabic and Persian, both in the introductory passages of each section and in the course of the anecdotes, where Persian verse is on occasion put in the mouths of such unlikely speakers as Alexander of Macedon and Hārūn al-Rashīd. Only two of the quotations are attributed, to 'Asjadī and 'Unṣurī. There are many lines from the *Shāh-nāma* and a poem of four lines which has been attributed to Rūdakī. Otherwise I have identified another hemistich of 'Unṣurī, one of Labībī and some verses from Azraqī. Besides rubā'īs there are fragments of qaṣīdas, ghazals, etc. This

substantial and varied body of verse makes the *Ganj al-Ganj* an important source for the earlier stages of Persian poetry.

Of rubā'īs there are eighty-seven with a further fifty-eight single verses and fifteen hemistichs in rubā'ī metre. Four, as well as one single verse, are found later attributed to Khayyām. For an admirer of FitzGerald's Khayyām, the first I came across was a particularly pleasing discovery as it was one of those used by FitzGerald, who found it in the Bodleian manuscript:¹¹

روزبست خوش و هوا نه گرمست و نه سرد ابر از رخ گلزار همی شوید گرد
بلبل بزبان پهلوی با گل زرد آواز همی دهد که می باید خورد

*It's a fine day; it's neither hot nor cold.
The rain-clouds wash the rose-trees free from dust.
The nightingale calls to the yellow rose
Singing in Pahlavi 'Time to drink wine'.*

The second beyt is, of course, the principal source of FitzGerald's lines:¹²

*And David's Lips are lock't;
but in divine High-piping Pehlevī, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!" – the Nightingale cries to the Rose That yellow Cheek
of hers to incarnadine.*

Some later sources have a variant in which *ba-zabān-i Pahlavī* is replaced, by *ba-zabān-i ḥāl-i khud* 'in its symbolic language' or a similar phrase, but, whoever wrote this poem and whichever version one prefers, it is the one with 'Pahlavī' that is now by far the earliest attested.

The next quatrain is pessimistic and paradoxically illogical rather than hedonistic:¹³

چون نیست از آنچه هست جز باد بدست چون هست از آنچه نیست نقصان و شکست
انگار که هر چه هست در عالم نیست انگار که هر چه نیست در عالم هست

*Since what exists gives only air to grasp,
Since what does not produces loss and harm,¹⁴
Suppose that what is in this world were not,
Suppose that what is not came to exist.*

This poem is quoted without attribution in the *History of Vaṣṣāf* and in two other fourteenth-century sources.¹⁵ It is also what has come to be known as a wandering quatrain: besides being attributed to Khayyām it has been

claimed for no less than five other persons: Abū Saʿīd b. Abī ʿl-Khayr, Bābā Afḍal Kāshī, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Awhad al-Dīn Kirmānī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.¹⁶ The last four of these lived much later than the date of the *Ganj al-Ganj* and can now be excluded. As for Abū Saʿīd, his early biographers tell us that he only wrote one rubāʿī, not this one, and one other verse.¹⁷

The third quatrain is on the the common theme of hedonism as the only response to the incomprehensibility of life:¹⁸

چون نیست حقیقت یقین اندر دست نتوان بامید شک همه عمر نشست
بل تا ننهیم یکزمان باده زدست¹⁹ در بیخبری مرد چه هشیار چه مست

*Since certain truth is not within our grasp
We cannot spend our lives in doubtful hope.
No, let us never put the cup aside.
Sober or drunk, man dies uncomprehending.*

The fourth specimen reflects on the brevity of life and the inevitability of death:²⁰

آنها که کهن شدند و آنها که نوند هر يك بمراد خویش گامی بدون
در سفله جهان کسی نماند باقی²¹ رفتند و رویم وانگه آیند و روند

*Those who've grown old and those who've newly come
All as they choose run through their little race.
None lasts for ever in this wretched world.
They've gone, we'll go; others then come and go.*

The single verse ends a quatrain in which a speaker faces death with equanimity rather than remain futilely in the unjust world and observes that others have no reason to rejoice at his passing:²²

آنها باید ز مرگ من شاد بدن کز دست اجل تواند آزاد بدن²³

*That man may celebrate when I am dead
Who can himself escape the grip of fate.*

In addition to the quatrains later attributed to Khayyām, the *Ganj al-Ganj* contains a few others which display sentiments typical of the Omarian corpus but which I have not traced elsewhere. Here, for instance, is another on the theme of “eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”²⁴

جانرا ز پی جهان چرا رنجانم روزی که بمن رسد بشاری رانم
بنگر که جهان چه کرد با یارانم با من بیقین همان کند من دانم

*Why vex my soul with matters of this world?
I'll spend what days it gives me merrily.
See what the world has done to my dear friends.
It's sure to do the same to me, I know.*

A second one is similar:²⁵

رفتست قضا و بودنیها بودست از حکم بد و نیک قلم آسودست
شاری و طرب کن که غم بیهودست غم خوردن بیهوده کسی نستودست

*Fate has decided: what's to be is fixed.
The pen has ceased foredooming bad or good.
Enjoy yourself, for sorrow has no point
And pointless sorrow no one's ever praised.*

This is reminiscent of the well-known quatrain of FitzGerald:²⁶

*The moving finger writes;
and having writ Moves on:
nor all thy Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.*

FitzGerald's source was No 31 in the Bodleian manuscript, which has three of the same rhyming words and similar, but not identical, content.

The collection of quatrains in the *Ganj al-Ganj* provides a suitable opportunity to raise the question of the rhyme-schemes of rubā'īs as an indication of their date. At the All India Oriental Conference in Baroda in 1933 Mohammad Iqbal presented a paper in which he presented evidence showing that from at least the eleventh up to the earlier part of the twelfth century a very high proportion of rubā'īs had four rhymes rather than the three typical of, for instance, FitzGerald's translation.²⁷ For the small number of quatrains ascribed to poets of the earliest period, up to the later eleventh century, which were available to Iqbal the proportion with four rhymes was considerably less. As Iqbal acknowledged, it is likely that not all these quatrains were correctly attributed, and he maintained that in fact the four-rhyme type would have been favoured at that time. He also provided evidence that in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries the type with four rhymes was regarded as the original.²⁸ Although he acknowledged that not all these quatrains were correctly attributed he himself maintained that the three-rhyme type was favoured at that time. Against this

however, he also provided evidence that in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries the type with four rhymes was regarded as the original. Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāt, for instance, states that the du-beytī lacking the rhyme in the third miṣrāʿ was known as khaṣī, castrated, implying that it is in some way imperfect.²⁹ Iqbāl's study attracted little attention but was not completely overlooked, for it is considered in Govinda Tīrtha's *Nectar of Grace*.³⁰ Tīrtha considered that the four-rhymed form was the earliest but rejected Iqbāl's conclusion that 'in a genuine collection of 'Umar Khayyām's quatrains the four-rhymers should outnumber the three-rhymers.' Tīrtha had a complicated and unsatisfactory scheme of dividing the quatrains attributed to Khayyām into 'Known' and 'Unknown'; it is evident from his preface that for him 'Known' at times meant genuinely the work of Khayyām. Against Iqbāl's argument he pointed to three quatrains with three rhymes in which, he maintained, 'indicate the poet's age at the time of their composition.'³¹ However, there is no good reason to regard these as by Khayyām rather than by somebody else (or indeed to assume that the mention of age necessarily indicates the age of whoever wrote them). The question of the rhyme-schemes of the rubāʿī was later considered by Ellwell-Sutton, who knew of Tīrtha's work, and provided further statistics which tally with Iqbāl's, though he did not discuss what bearing they had on the 'Omaric question.'³² Ellwell-Sutton's observations on the matter became known to Iranian scholars, in particular, Sīrūs Shamīsā.³³ Recently a more detailed investigation was carried out by Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḍalī, who examined the divans of nine poets of the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries, eight of them on the basis of thirteenth and fourteenth-century manuscripts. In a total corpus of 1,458 quatrains 92.3% had four rhymes. There is some variation between the poets but the highest proportion of triple rhymes, in the work of Sanāʿī and 'Abd al-Vāsi' Jabalī, is less than 20%.³⁴ The evidence of the *Ganj al-Ganj* falls into this pattern. Of 86 quatrains 67, that is, nearly 85%, have four rhymes.

In the later twelfth century fashion changed, the percentage of quatrains with four rhymes drops and the proportions are soon reversed: three-rhymed quatrains come to heavily outnumber four-rhymed ones. Iqbāl provided data for this period but the material available to him was limited. Those given here are from a selection of the major poets based on the more recent editions of their works. Even if these may not all be wholly reliable the contrast with the previous period is clear enough. Some poets can be said to stand in an intermediate position. Of over three hundred of Khāqānī's rubāʿīs nearly 54% have four rhymes.³⁵ For Sūzānī's eighty-one the proportion is 49%.³⁶ Others of their contemporaries appear to be rather less old-fashioned. In nearly four hundred and fifty quatrains in the *Dīvān* of Anvarī the percentage is 36%.³⁷ Of Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāt's 40 quatrains 13 (32.5%) have four rhymes.³⁸ Only slightly later the proportions have shifted more decisively. In Athīr al-Dīn Akhsikātī's *Dīvān* quadruple

rhymes account for just over 22%.³⁹ For Jamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī the figure is a little more than 9%.⁴⁰ In the *Dīvān* of his son Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl for the first 200 (of 867) quatrains it is 16.5%.⁴¹ In a sample of some three hundred from 'Aṭṭār's *Mukhtār-nāma* the percentage of quadruple rhymes is less than eight.⁴² Sporadic counts of poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have revealed some variation but almost none have more than 30% of quadruple rhymes. Most have far less: of ninety-nine quatrains of 'Ubayd Zākānī only one has four rhymes.⁴³

As Muḥammad Iqbāl observed, since three-rhymed quatrains are found at all periods, his discovery cannot be used to prove that any individual quatrain is early, let alone by Khayyām. Nevertheless, it does provide a criterion by which any collection of rubā'īyāt can be assessed. The results are striking. Of the 31 quatrains attributed to Khayyām in the thirteenth-century *Nuzhat al-Majālis* 39% have four rhymes; for the famous Bodleian manuscript of 865/1460 the percentage is down to 27%. Even the higher figure is far below the 80% or more to be expected from a collection coming from Khayyām's lifetime.

The same test can be applied to the modern selections claiming, with greater or less assurance, to represent the authentic Khayyām. Ṣādiq Hidāyat's *Tarāna-hā-yi Khayyām* has just under 19% of four-rhymed quatrains; the edition of Furūghī and Ghanī does a little better with almost 27%. 'Alī Dashtī's smaller corpus of 75 quatrains included 41% with four rhymes, better but still by no means good enough.⁴⁴

In conclusion, while the persona of Khayyām has for centuries played a useful part in encouraging the preservation, study and enjoyment of the Omarian poems it has also presented an obstacle to a realistic appreciation of them. Even the titles of Iqbāl's and Mīr Afḡālī's studies imply that they thought of them as part of the search for the genuine Khayyām while their data show that the search itself has in the past been carried out ineffectively and, except in the improbable eventuality that different and trustworthy evidence is found, can never succeed.

Doubts about attribution began early. FitzGerald himself had reservations about the late Calcutta manuscript. Many others have since expressed pessimistic opinions. Estimates of the proportion of genuine poems in the corpus, and the definition of the corpus is itself problematic, have varied but are often very low. In 1934 Hans Schaeder boldly stated that the name of 'Umar should be struck out from the history of Persian poetry.⁴⁵ Although the twelfth-century sources for Khayyām say nothing about his being a poet a small number of verses in Arabic are attributed to him on reasonably good authority and it is of course impossible to prove that he did not write some in Persian. Yet, allowing for this slight reservation, the case for regarding the Persian poet Khayyām as a fiction evolved long after the man himself had died, as already argued by, for instance, de Blois,⁴⁶ is strong. The statistical evidence provides concrete support for the doubts

expressed earlier on account of the late appearance and dubious nature of the textual tradition, supported by arguments from style and content, which last are often to some extent arbitrary. The poet Khayyām is a will-o'-the-wisp. We should be prepared to abandon the pursuit and accept that few, if any, of the quatrains attributed to him are his, and that we have no means of discovering which those might be. The corpus as a whole should not be seen as including somewhere the philosophy of an individual genius but rather as the expression by many minds of currents of pessimism and skepticism with a long history in Greek, pre-Islamic Iranian and early Islamic thought.

Notes

- 1 See Muḥtabā Minuvī, "Az khazā" in-i Turkiyya," I, *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi Adabiyyāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran*, IV, 3, 1335, p. 71.
- 2 Najm-i Rāzī, *Miršād al-'ibād*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī, Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb 1352, p. 31.
- 3 Zāhri Samarqandī, *Sindbād-nāma*, ed. Ahmed Ateş Istanbul: Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Şarkiyat Enstitüsü 1948, partial reprint Tehran 1362, pp. 33, 39, 157, 284, 340.
- 4 Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḡalī, *Rubā'īyyāt-i Khayyām dar Manābi'-i Kuhan*, Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1382, pp. 131-6.
- 5 Nizāmī 'Arūdī, *Chahār Maqāla*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Leyden and London: Gibb Memorial Series 1910, pp. 62-3. 'Alī b. Zeyd b. Funduq Beyhaqī, *Tatimma shiwan al-ḥikma*, ed. Muḥammad Shafī', Fasciculus I, Lahore: L. Ishwar Das 1935, p. 116.
- 6 Charles Stewart, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1809, p. 52, No. 17.
- 7 "Notes on Important Arabic and Persian MSS. found in various libraries of India," II, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 14, 1918, p. cccxxiv.
- 8 Wladimir Ivanow, *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Collection of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924, pp. 655-6, No 1370.
- 9 Accession No. 345670.
- 10 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f111b. Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ādāb al-ḥarb wal-shajā'a*, ed. Aḥmad Suhaylī Khwānsārī, Tehran: Iqbāl, 1346, p. 52. Cf. C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977, p. 87.
- 11 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f373a. Bodleian Persian MS Ouseley 140. See Edward Heron-Allen, *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyām BEING A Facsimile of the Manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford* h, London: H.S. Nichols 1898, pp. 184-5 and Heron-Allen's, Edward FitzGerald's *Rubā'iyāt of Omar Khayyām...*, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1899, pp. 12-13. In what follows cross-references to Oмарian quatrains are given to Swāmī Govinda Tīrtha, *The Nectar of Grace*, Allahabad: Kitabistan 1941 and to Yār Aḥmad Rashīdī Tabrīzī's *Ṭarab-khāna*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī, second printing Tehran: Humā 1367. These are henceforth abbreviated to Tīrtha (p. 44, No 448 [III. 38] in this case) and Tabrīzī (p. 60, No 220). Tīrtha notes that this poem has also been attributed to Mu'izzī. (Tīrtha's rare book, containing the largest and most fully referenced corpus yet published, can now be downloaded free at <http://www.archive.org>) Variants in different sources are only occasionally noted here.
- 12 No. VI in FitzGerald's first version, which is followed here.

- 13 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f50a, emending the *chun hast* of the manuscript at the beginning of the first line to *chun nīst*. Tīrtha, p. 65, No 146 (IV. 52); Tabrizī, p. 41, No. 148.
- 14 Why should what does not exist cause harm? Reading a second *nīst* for *hast* here would seem to make better sense: 'Since what does not exist causes no loss or harm.' However the recorded specimens do not support this.
- 15 Mīr Afḡalī, *Rubā 'iyyāt-i Khayyām*, p. 255, No 15.
- 16 Sīrūs Shamīsā, *Sayr-i Rubā 'ī dar Shi 'r-i Fārsī*, Tehran: Āshtiyānī 1363, p. 170.
- 17 See F. de Blois, in C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey*, v, second edition, London: Royal Asiatic Society 2004, pp. 67-9.
- 18 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f48a. Tīrtha, p. 125, No 145 (VII. 156); Tabrizī, p. 48, No 177.
- 19 Emending the MS readings *naniham* to *nanihūm* and *nāla* to *bāda*.
- 20 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f409a; Tīrtha, p. 231, No 326 (X. 19), noting attributions to Sanā'ī and Bābā Afḡal; Tabrizī, p. 17, No. 43.
- 21 Deleting the unmetrical *wāw* after *sufḡa* in the MS and emending *nadānad* to *namānad*.
- 22 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f225b. Tīrtha, p. 297, No 851a (XII. 35); Tabrizī, p. 107, No. 420.
- 23 The nonsensical *nakhwāhad* of the MS, perhaps intruding from its place in the first verse of the complete quatrain, has been replaced by the *tavānad* of the other sources.
- 24 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f 419b.
- 25 *Ganj al-Ganj*, f373a.
- 26 FitzGerald, first edition, No. LI.
- 27 A few of FitzGerald's quatrains have four rhymes.
- 28 Mohammad Iqbal, "The genuine collections of the Rubā 'iyyāt of Khayyām", *Proceedings and Transactions of the 7th All-India Oriental Conference, December 1933*, Baroda, 1935, pp. 903-14.
- 29 Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt, *Ḥadā 'iq al-sehr fī daqā 'iq al-shi 'r*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl, in *Dīvān-i Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī, Tehran: Bārānī 1339, p. 705. For the evidence of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī see Muḥammad Iqbāl, pp. 903-4 and Shamīsā, *Seyr-i Rubā 'ī*, pp. 19.
- 30 Tīrtha, pp. CXXXIV-V.
- 31 In fact the second one has no reference to age at all.
- 32 L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "The "Rubā 'ī" in early Persian literature", *Cambridge History of Iran*, iv, ed. R.N. Frye, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1975, pp. 639-640; idem, *The Persian Metres*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976, pp. 254-5. Elwell-Sutton noted the apparent discrepancy of the figures for quatrains of the earliest period and the problem of its attribution.
- 33 *Seyr-i rubā 'ī*, pp. 18-20.
- 34 Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Afḡalī, "Rubā 'iyyāt-i aṣīl-i Khayyām kudām ast," *Nashr-i Dānish*, xv/5 (1374/1995), p. 4-16.
- 35 *Dīvān-i Khāqānī Sharwānī*, ed. 'Alī 'Abd al-Rasūlī, Tehran: Sa'ādat, 1316.
- 36 *Dīvān-i Ḥakīm Sūzanī-yi Samarqandī*, ed. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Ḥuseynī, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1338.
- 37 *Dīvān-i Anvarī*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris Raḡlavī, Tehran 1340.
- 38 *Dīvān-i Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī, Tehran: Bārānī 1339.
- 39 *Dīvān-i Athīr al-Dīn-i Akhsikaṭī*, ed. Rukn al-Dīn Humāyūn Farrukh, Tehran: Rudakī, 1337.
- 40 *Dīvān-i Jamāl al-Dīn Isfahānī*, ed. Vahīd Dastgirdī, Tehran: Armaghān, 1320.
- 41 *Dīvān-i Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā 'īl*, ed. Ḥusayn Baḡr al-'Ulūmī, Tehran: Dihkhudā, 1348.
- 42 'Aṭṭār, *Mukhtār-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Riḡā Shafī 'ī Kadkanī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ṭūs, 1358.
- 43 *Kullīyyāt-i 'Ubeyd-i Zākānī*, ed. Parvīz Atābakī, Tehran: Zavvār, second printing, 1343.
- 44 Statistics for a number of the older published collections are given by Iqbāl, p. 913.
- 45 Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Der geschichtliche und der mythische Omar Chajjam," in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Band 88, Neue Folge, Band 13

(1934), p. 28. Schaefer's brief note ended with the announcement that its arguments would be published in expanded book form, but no such book appeared.

46 De Blois, in *Persian Literature*, v, pp. 304-6.

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Between Tavern and *Madrasa*: ‘Umar Khayyām the Scientist

Mohammad Bagheri
(University of Tehran)

Iran is the land of poetry. The tradition has continued for at least one millennium without a break. Names such as Ḥāfiz, Sa‘dī, Firdawsī, Rūmī and Khayyām are known around the world. Ḥāfiz’ collected poems may be found in any Iranian house, beside the holy Koran. The poetic legacies of Sa‘dī, Firdawsī and Rūmī are known for their special fragrance and also their very large volume. In this history, Khayyām has a special position, for besides composing several hundred famous quatrains (*rubā’iyyāt*) that reflect his philosophical inclinations, he was also an eminent mathematician and astronomer.

Khayyām lived in the late 11th and early 12th century. In Iran he is mainly known for his quatrains; the scientist Khayyām was not introduced until 1938 when the late Prof. Gh.-H. Mosaheb published the original Arabic text of Khayyām’s treatise on algebra with an abridged Persian translation and introduction (second edition 1960). In the West, he was known as a mathematician as early as 1742 when G. Meerman mentioned Khayyām’s algebra (preserved in manuscript no. 199 in the library of Leiden University) in the introduction to his textbook on differential calculus, whereas the poet Khayyām became known in the West mainly through Edward FitzGerald’s translation in verse of Khayyām’s quatrains, first published in 1859 (almost 120 years later).

Khayyām’s philosophical inclination consists of a variety of tendencies from atheism, pessimism, nihilism and skepticism to Epicureanism. His quatrains reflect his perplexity regarding the purpose of man’s life and his nostalgia for the glory of ancient Iran. He encourages his reader to drink wine to alleviate philosophical and social sufferings.

Such teachings of course could be dangerous for their direct incompatibility with dominant religious orthodoxy. This is why we read a lot of criticism of Khayyām in the writings of later authors such as Najm al-Dīn Rāzī who, in his *Mirṣād al-‘ibād*, attacks Khayyām for his blasphemous beliefs. For the same reason, Khayyām’s contemporaries such as Nizāmī ‘Arūzī (author of *Chahār-maqāla*) and Abu ‘l-Ḥasan Bayhaqī (author of *Tārikh-i Bayhaqī*) do not mention his quatrains. It is only about 50 years

after Khayyām's death that his poetry is mentioned, by 'Imād al-Dīn Kātib Iṣfahānī in his *Kharīdat al-qasr*.

Some authors have tried to solve the so called "inconsistency" between the characteristics of the knowledgeable Khayyām and the Epicurean teachings of the composer of quatrains, by claiming that there were two independent Khayyāms. But the arguments for this are weak, and there is some evidence that Khayyām was just one person, the poet and the scientist.

In the first place, in the introduction to his algebraic treatise, Khayyām complains of the social ambience in which he cannot easily pursue his mathematical research. Here we can recognize the pessimistic and critical tone of the poet Khayyām:

I was unable to devote myself to the learning of this al-jabr and the continued concentration upon it, because of the obstacles in the vagaries of Time which hindered me; for we have been deprived of all people of knowledge save for a group, small in number, with many troubles, whose concern in life is to snatch the opportunity, when Time is asleep, to devote themselves meanwhile to the investigation and perfection of a science; for the majority of people who imitate philosophers confuse the true with the false, and they do nothing but deceive and pretend knowledge, and they do not use what they know of the sciences except for base and material purposes; and if they see a certain person seeking for the right and preferring the truth, doing his best to refute the false and untrue and leaving aside hypocrisy and deceit, they make a fool of him and mock him.

Khayyām's quatrains present complete and perfect messages in a very concise form, which remind us the brevity of mathematical statements and may be compared with Japanese *haikus*. There are references to the celestial bodies or constellations such as the Pleiades and Taurus in his poetry, and a decided declaration that he puts no faith in astrology. In one of his quatrains, Khayyām says that he wishes to drink wine in order to extinguish the meddling of his curious mind. Mathematical research that could engage his mind might have a similar effect, offering well-organized and certain mathematical facts as an escape from the suffering caused by his own philosophical pessimism and social annoyances.

In the English translation of his quatrains, there is one quatrain in which he refers to his work on calendar reform:

*Ah, but my computations people say,
Reduced the year to better reckoning? Nay,
(Have squared the year to human compass, eh?)*

*'Twas only striking from the calendar
Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday.*

This quatrain is quoted by two renowned historians of mathematics, D.J. Struik and J.L. Berggren, however I have not been able to identify the corresponding Persian quatrain. FitzGerald might have included this based on his knowledge of Khayyām's role in calendar reform.

In another quatrain, he says:

از درس و علوم جمله بگریزی به و اندر سر زلف دلبر آویزی به

*It's better to escape from lessons and sciences,
to be entangled in the locks of the loved-one's hair...*

This implies that the poet was already involved in science. These and other evidences show that in spite of attempts to acquit the scientist Khayyām of atheism and drinking wine, there is one Khayyām, who seeks a spiritual refuge in wine and in the search for philosophical and mathematical truth.

There are thousands of books and articles containing editions, translations and analyses of Khayyām's life, beliefs and works. Among them, I want to mention the works of two Iranian authors that represent major political, philosophical and literary trends in Iran. The first author, Taqī Erani, was sent to Germany, like many other young and talented Iranians, for higher academic studies in the reign of the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Shah. Many of these students were shocked by the contrast between what they had seen in the underdeveloped Iran of their time and what they could see in Europe. This shock influenced their careers and led to an intellectual reaction on their part. Taqī Erani was first attracted by fascist pan-Aryan teachings, but later became an influential Marxist. He was later murdered in hospital. He contributed to the publication of an edition of Khayyām's quatrains and Khayyām's treatise on finding the proportions of gold and silver in an alloy, published in Berlin in 1925. He later published an edition of the Arabic text of Khayyām's commentary on Euclid's *Elements*, in Tehran in 1936, using manuscript no. 199 from the Leiden University Library, which Friedrich Rosen had taken to Berlin, and which Erani copied there in 1925.

The other figure is Ṣādiq Hidāyat, the most internationally renowned of Iranian novelists, whose works have been translated into several languages (including Dutch). Like Erani, he was sent to Europe to continue his studies. He had close contacts with Iranian leftists but his deep pessimism never allowed him to join the movement actively. Like Khayyām, he was nostalgic for the glory of ancient Iran. Hidāyat published an edition of

Khayyām's quatrains preceded by a description of Khayyām's beliefs. Hidāyat committed suicide in Paris in 1951 and was buried in Perlachaise cemetery.

Khayyām's major work in mathematics is his treatise on algebra. Gerard Meerman found a manuscript of this work in Leiden (before 1742). Then L. A. Sedillot found a partial version in the National Library of France (Paris). F. Woepke published the Arabic text with a French translation in 1851. English translations of Khayyām's algebra appeared in 1931 and 1950. In 1981, an edition of the Arabic text was published in Aleppo. A Persian translation, with the original Arabic text, appeared in 1938 and 1960 (re-printed in 2000). The Russian translation appeared in 1962 (Moscow).

In this work, Khayyām provides a brilliant classification of the algebraic equations which shows his highly ordered approach. George Sarton, in his *Introduction to the history of science*, regards it as one of the highest achievements of the Islamic period in mathematics. Khayyām only considered positive coefficients and the solutions to the equations. He discussed the 6 types of linear and quadratic equations, already mentioned by al-Khwārazmī, and continued with 19 types of cubic equations, 5 of which can be reduced to linear and quadratic equations. Of the 14 remaining types, two had been solved before Khayyām, and he solved the remaining 12 types by the intersection of conic sections. His methods were geometrical, but he desired a pure numerical solution to cubic equations and hoped that this might be achieved in the future. In the early 15th century another Iranian mathematician, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Jamshīd Kāshānī (al-Kāshī), devised an iterative method for finding the numerical value of the roots of cubic equations, with any desired accuracy. In the mid-16th century, G. Cardano provided a strict analytic formula for the solution of cubic equations.

Another algebraic treatise by Khayyām, *Treatise on the division of a quadrant*, preserved in a manuscript kept in the Central Library of the University of Tehran, was first published in Tehran (1960) with a Persian translation. English, Russian and French translations of this short Arabic treatise are also published. In this treatise, Khayyām seeks a method of dividing a quadrant in such a way that certain relations between the line segments are satisfied. He reduces the problem to a cubic equation which he solves using conic sections. Later it turned out that this construction problem is closely related to a geometrical tiling design found in manuscript MS 169 in BN (Paris).

Khayyām's commentary on Euclid's *Elements*, "Explanation of the difficulties in Euclid's postulates" consists of three chapters: I) on Euclid's famous postulate on parallel lines, II) on ratios and proportions, III) on composite ratios. In the first chapter, Khayyām refutes the attempts by his predecessors to prove the parallel postulate and presents his own proof. He tries to prove that in any birectangular isosceles quadrangle, the two

remaining angles are also right. To do so, he shows that if we suppose them to be acute or obtuse, the hypotheses lead to inconsistency. His hypotheses of the remaining angles being acute or obtuse correspond to the first theorems of non-Euclidean geometries of Lobachevsky and Riemann. Khayyām's birectangular isosceles quadrangle was later used in the works of the 18th century Italian mathematician G. G. Saccheri. Although it later became clear that the efforts of Khayyām and other mathematicians before and after him were mathematical dead ends, such endeavors were important in the final developments of geometry.

In the next two chapters, Khayyām concentrates on the exact definition and nature of the concept ratio. This treatise has been widely studied and translated, also into Spanish.

In his treatise on algebra, Khayyām refers to his treatise on proving the validity of the Indian methods for extracting square roots and cube roots. Khayyām adds that he has generalized these methods for extracting roots of higher orders. This means that he was aware of the coefficients of binomial expansion. The earliest source of this subject is from Karaji (10th century) quoted by Samual Maghribī (12th century). This work of Khayyām has not yet been found. The contents list at the beginning of codex no. 199 in the University of Leiden library mentions a treatise on *Mushkilāt al-hisāb* (the difficulties of arithmetic) by 'Umar Khayyām, which might be a copy of this work, but unfortunately, the treatise is not included there. A manuscript of this work is reported to exist in Munich, but scholars' attempts to locate it have failed.

Khayyām was a member of the group of astronomers who carried out astronomical observations in Isfahan, on Malikshāh's orders, which were compiled in the *Zīj-i Malikshāhī*. This group also improved the Iranian solar calendar which had experienced a shift due to the neglect of intercalation after the Arab invasion in the 7th century. The *Zīj* has not survived and the exact nature of the calendar reform and Khayyām's role in it are unclear. This has led to long and hard debates in this regard, and the final word remains to be said. However, it is certain that the group decided to define the Iranian New Year (Nowrūz) based on an actual astronomical criterion (the sun entering the astronomical sign Aries at the vernal equinox) rather than arithmetical or tabular criteria. This guarantees keeping Nowrūz at the vernal equinox forever. This brilliant method is applied in the present Iranian calendar. I will conclude with a quatrain composed in Nishabur (Khayyām's native city) some nine centuries after Khayyām, by Dr. Shafī'ī Kadkanī. It tells us the fate that awaits people like Khayyām, then or now:

گه دشمن خلق و فتنه پرور باشد
مردی که ز عهد خود فراتر باشد

گه دهری و گه ملحد و کافر باشد
باید بچشد عذاب تنهایی را

*Any person whose qualities go beyond the standards of his time,
Must suffer the torture of loneliness;
He will be accused of being a materialist, atheist and blasphemous,
Also an enemy of the people and a seditious person.*

The Arab ‘Umar Khayyām

M. Alsulami

(Leiden University, Umm al-Qura University)

Persian literature, particularly classic poetry, has attracted the interest of Arab writers, poets, and translators for centuries. The Abbasid period has been considered the starting point for the interaction between Arabic and Persian literature. *Kalīla wa Dimna*,¹ which was translated from Middle Persian by the Persian Abdullāh b. Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (724-759), is one significant example. Yet, despite the geographical, cultural and religious relationship between Arabs and Iranians, it must be said that in modern times, Arabic readers had less access to post-Islamic Persian literature than to European literature, until the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Even then, the Arabic world’s interest was mediated by English, French or German interest. After their counterparts in the West had started collecting and translating the *Rubā‘īyāt* of Khayyām during the nineteenth century, Arab intellectuals followed suit.² A huge number of Arabic translations of Khayyām’s quatrains, and studies of his life, philosophy and literary works, were produced, and the broader interaction between Arabic and Persian literature was revived.³ As the Egyptian writer Taha Husain (1889-1973) remarks, in his introduction to the translation of the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz (1325–1389): “Before the age of the [Arab] Renaissance, our knowledge of Persian literature was very narrow and limited. It is great that our familiarity with this literature begins with an eminent poet such as Khayyām, though it reached us through [indirect] translations.”⁴

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the translations of the *Rubā‘īyāt* initiated new moral, intellectual and psychological activities for Arab writers and poets due to the variety of subjects and philosophical views that these literary masterpiece contained. Familiarity with Khayyām’s quatrains, through translations, led to a new phenomenon among Arab intellectuals, who translated quatrains from other Iranian poets such as those of Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz (1325-1389) and Bābā Ṭāhir-i ‘Uryān (about 1000–1058). Moreover some Arab poets, such as Jamīl al-Zahawī⁵ (mentioned below) and ‘Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (1902-49), composed poetry in this genre.

Sixty translations of the *Rubā‘īyāt* were made for Arab readers, thirty eight of which are in standard Arabic poetry, fourteen in prose, and eight in the Arabic spoken in various Arab countries.⁶ The translations differ widely, especially in terms of loyalty to the source text (whether Persian or

English). Some, particularly those in prose, are very close to the original. Translation, particularly in the case of poetry, requires the selection of terms, expressions and words to paint a beautiful picture, coloured with imagination, and adorned with types of the sublime, analogies and metaphors. In the case of translations in verse, it also demands creativity in choosing the rhyme and rhythm. I will show how different Arabic poets and translators have dealt with one quatrain, as they read it, and leave it to the reader to note specific differences.

■ Translations from European Languages

The *Rubāʿīyāt* of Khayyām were introduced to Arabic literature through third languages, and mainly through English, relying especially on the seminal English translation of Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883), who published his translation in London in 1859. The first translation of Khayyām's quatrains in Arabic was a prose version that appeared in 1901, when Aḥmad Ḥāfiẓ ʿUadh (1877-1950) translated nine quatrains from English and published them in the Egyptian Magazine⁷ in Egypt, under the title: *Shuʿarā al-Furs* (the Persian Poets): Khayyām.⁸ A number of other short translations appeared here and there (see the table below), but I will focus on the best known translations which were published in book form and/or which contain a large number of the *Rubāʿīyāt*.

The first translator and poet who introduced the *Rubāʿīyāt* of Khayyām to a broad Arab readership, in a separate work, was the Lebanese scholar Wadīʿ al-Būstānī (886-1954), whose work was published in 1912. Al-Būstānī translated 109 quatrains,⁹ in the form of *Subāʿīyāt* (seven hemistiches). Since he could not read a word of Persian, as he indicates in his introduction, al-Būstānī studied all the available English and French translations of the *Rubāʿīyāt*, whether in prose or poetry, literal or figurative.¹⁰ He then chose the English translation of FitzGerald to be his primary source, while also using some French and German translations.¹¹ Following FitzGerald's approach, al-Būstānī produced a figurative translation, but in his case it is, of course, a figurative translation of another figurative one. He claims that he spent three to four hours translating each quatrain, in which time he read other translations such as those of Edward Henry Whinfield (1836-1922), J.B. Nicolas (1814-1875) and John Leslie Garner, and then chose the meaning for his own translation. He also says he was careful that his translation should exactly represent Khayyām's intention, as he understood it.¹² The main problem with this translation is that al-Būstānī mixed one or two, and sometimes three quatrains, into one *Subāʿīyāt*, not necessarily following the order of his English source, which makes it difficult or impossible to identify the exact Persian equivalent of the translation.¹³

This is an example of al-Būstānī's translation of one quatrain, followed by its Persian and English equivalents:

وقبيل انهزام جنح الظلام
صارخاً بالنيام : حتى إلى ما
قبلما تجرعون كأس حمام

بت في حانتي ضجيع المدام
راعني هاتف دوى في المقام
فارشفوها وودعوا الأيام
راحها علقم أسيع شراباً¹⁴

*bitu fī ḥānatī ḍajī al-mudāmī
wā qubayl inhizām junniḥ alẓalāmī
rā 'nī hātīfun dawā fī almuqāmī
ṣārikhan binīyāmī: ḥatā ilāmā
farrshufūhā wa wadī 'ū al-ayāmā
qablamā tojraūna ka 'sun ḥimāmā
rāḥhā 'alqamun ūsigha sharābā*

The Persian original reads as follows:

کای رند خراباتی و دیوانه ما
زان پیش که پر کنند پیمانه ما

آمد سحرى ندا ز میخانه ما
برخیز که پر کنیم پیمانه ما

Fitzgerald's translation:

*Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."*¹⁵

The second example I would like to highlight in this section is the work of Muḥammad al-Subā'ī (1881-1931), which was published in *Khumāsīyāt* (quintuples), in 1922. Like al-Būstānī, al-Subā'ī neither followed the order of the English translation nor was loyal to his primary source. However he did translate the whole English edition, in 101 *Khumāsīyāt*. al-Subā'ī gave his translation an Arabic flavour, to the extent that it seems to be an original Arabic text, yet as an Arab critic has said, "the translation of al-Subyāi is of lower quality than al-Bāstānī's, in terms of instruction, smoothness, gentleness, and charm. This is because the former used neglected words and dull expressions which sound unpleasant to the ears and taste of the audience. Therefore, this translation has not obtained the fame of the latter's work."¹⁶ Nonetheless, these two translations, in my judgment, remain the best indirect translations. Here is al-Subyāi's version of the same quatrain:

نملاً الأكواب من ياقوتها
خمرة الروح وترتد إلى

صاح بي في النوم طيف هاتها
قبلما تنضب في كاساتها
منيع بالغيب مجهول البقاع¹⁷

ṣāḥa bī fi al-naumī tayfun hātahā
namlau al-akwāba min yāqutihā
qablamā tanḍubu fī kāṣātihā
khammratu al-rūḥi wa tartadū ilā
manba 'in bilghaybi majhūl al-biqā'

Direct Poetic Translations from the Persian Language

The first direct Arabic translation of the Khayyām's quatrains from Persian appeared in 1924, from the Egyptian poet and translator Aḥmad Rāmī.¹⁸ In 1922, he was sent to Paris by the Egyptian National Library, to study Persian at the School of Oriental Languages. During his stay in Paris he read chapters from the Shāh-nāma of Firdowsī, the Gulistān of Sa'dī and other classical and medieval Persian literature. He then came across the Persian copy of Khayyām's quatrains, which had been translated into French, in 1867, by J.B. Nicolas. He studied the text and thought of translating it into Arabic since there was no direct translation of the Rubā'īyāt in Arabic.¹⁹ Another motivation for what proved to be a masterpiece of translation was the death of his brother. According to Rāmī, when he received this sad news he was prompted, on the one hand, to understand and feel Khayyām's suffering, reflected in his quatrains, and on the other, to express his sorrow, pain, and grief on the loss of his brother in his translation. He read and compared the available manuscripts in Berlin, the French National Library, the British National Museum, and Cambridge University Library.²⁰ Rāmī translated 168 quatrains, using the Rajaz-metre, but he followed the Persian quatrain rhyme system. Rāmī started his translation with the quatrain chosen in this paper as an example of different translations:

نادى من الحان: غُفَاة البشر
تفعم كأس العمر كف القدر²¹

سمعتُ صوتاً هاتفاً في السحر
هبوا املنوا كأس الطلي قبل أن

samī 'tu ṣawtan hatīfan fī al-ṣaḥar
nādā min al-ḥānī: ghufāt al-bashar
hibū imla 'ū kā's al-ṭilti qabla 'an
tafa 'amu kā'su al-ūmrī kaffu al-qadar.

Another well-known direct translation from Persian was made by the Iraqi poet Aḥmad al-Šāfi al-Najafī (1897-1977). The story of his encounter with the Rubā'īyāt is interesting. Al-Najafī read al-Būstānī's translation, based on European sources. He writes, "when I read this translation, it influenced me deeply and took me from my real world to an imagined one, a world is full of delight and happiness; and I wished I could stay in this imagined world forever, leaving behind the world of sorrows and fatigue."²² He began to learn Persian, to enjoy the original text which he expected to be much more beautiful than the translation. In 1920, he travelled to Tehran where he stayed eight years, studying Persian language and literature and seeking to "dive in the beauty and the nuances of meaning of Persian literature, to reach the pure source from which the creativity and imagination of Khayyām flowed."²³ He mastered the language to the extent of publishing in various Iranian newspapers and journals, such as *Shafaq-i Surkh*, *Kushish*, *Iqdām*, *Armaghân* and *Ta'lim wa Tarbiat*.²⁴

It took him three years to finish the translation of 351 quatrains, in a parallel text (Arabic and Persian). This translation was published for the first time, in Tehran, in 1926. He used two Persian editions: that of the Iranian poet and translator Ghulām-Rizā Rashīd-i Yāsāmī (1895-1951), published in Tehran in 1924, and the edition that was copied by the German Orientalist Friedrich Rosen (1856-1935).²⁵ His aim in this translation was of twofold: first and foremost, to produce a very close translation of the Persian text, to the extent that he translated it word by word, and second, to colour his translation with the taste of Arabic poetry. To achieve this, he sometimes had to translate one quatrain into more than twenty forms, of which he would choose one as most suitable one for Arab readers and at the same time reflecting the full and exact meaning of the original quatrain. He omitted some quatrains due to the difficulty of satisfying both standards in one translation.²⁶ He sent the finished translations to many Iranian poets and writers, inside and outside Iran, one of whom was the Iranian intellectual Muḥammad Qazvīnī. Qazvīnī praised his work, as the best translation of the quatrains he has seen, particularly in terms of reflecting the exact meaning of the Persian quatrains²⁷.

As with the other translators discussed above, I conclude this section with al-Najafī's version of selected quatrain.

يا خليعاً قد هام بالحانات
قبل أن تمتلئ كؤوس الحياة²⁸

جاء من حاننا النداء سحيراً
قم لكي نملأ الكؤوس مداما

jā 'a min ḥāninā al-nidā 'u suḥīran
yā khali'ān qad hāma bilḥānāti
qum likī naml 'a al-ku 'ūsu mudāman
qabla 'n tamtalī ku 'ūsa al-ḥayāti

Direct prose translations from Persian

It has been said that the first prose translation of Khayyām's *Rubā'īyāt* into Arabic was made by Jamīl al-Zahāwī, (1883-1936), a Kurdish Iraqi.²⁹ Al-Zahāwī first made a literal prose translation from Persian and then elevated it to a more poetic style, which makes his work unique in its type. Both translations were published together in one volume in Baghdad in 1928. al-Zahāwī translated 130 quatrains, chosen as being "the best quatrains, reflecting the true philosophy of Khayyām." He claims that only about 200 of the quatrains attributed to Khayyām are authentic.³⁰ His translation was widely appreciated in the field of Oriental studies. The German Orientalist G. Kampffmeyer, for instance, states that al-Zahāwī's work was accurate, produced a perfect text, and added a new masterpiece to oriental literature.³¹ Al-Zahāwī grouped the quatrains into eight main sections by subject: Wine (45), the cup (4), complaints (25), preaching and ethics (15), wisdom doubt and love (3), addressed to God (11) and others (4).

Here is his translation of the quatrain I chose above to show the different translations of different translators:

سمعت في السحر منادياً من جانب حائتنا يقول أيها الظريف الذي دله بنا الغرام قم نملاً الكأس
من الخمرة قبل أن يملئوا منها الكأس المجدولة من حياتنا³²

*Sami 'tu fī al-saḥari munādīyan min jānibi ḥānatīnā yaqūlu ayuhā
al-ẓarīfu al-ladhī dallahahū binā al-gharāmu, qum naml 'u al-
kā 'sa min al-khamrati qabla 'n yamla 'ū minhā al-kā 'sa al-
majbūlata min ḥayyatīnā*

And his poetic rendering of the same quatrain:

قد أتاني من حانة القوم صوت في بياض الصباح يغري النفوسا
قائلاً قم نشتف كأس الحما قبلما يصنعون منا كؤوسا

*qad atānī min ḥānati al-qūmi ṣawtun
fī bayyaḍi al-ṣabāḥi yughrī al-nufūsā
qā 'īlan qum nashtaḥu kā 'sa al-ḥamā
qablamā yaṣna 'ūna minnā ku 'ūsā*

Another well-known prose translation from the Persian was made by the Iraqi intellectual and lawyer Aḥmad Ḥāmid al-Ṣarrāf (1900-1985), who translated 153 quatrains in 1931. He relied on the editions of Friedrich Rosen (1856-1935) and Ḥusayn Dānish. Al-Ṣarrāf's book consisted of two parts, the first being a comprehensive study of Khayyām's life, poetry, works, philosophy and the political and social events his time. The second part is a parallel Persian-Arabic text and translation of the *Rubā'īyāt*.

Al-Ṣarrāf's familiarity with Persian language and literature came mainly from two sources; from his hometown, Karbalā, to which thousands of Iranian Shiites come each year to visit the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (626-680), the third Shiite's Imam, and from an old Persian woman called Bībī Jān who at one time lived in his grandfather's house. According to Al-Ṣarrāf, Bībī Jān was one of the granddaughters of the Qajar king Faṭḥ-'Alī Shāh (1772–1834). She was married to a rich man from Shiraz. She and her husband travelled to Karbalā and decided to stay in the city. Her husband squandered his health and wealth on drugs, suffered various illnesses and died. Bībī Jān was left alone and in poverty. When al-Ṣarrāf's grandfather learned of her situation, he took her into his house as a member of his family. She used to compose poetry, and more importantly to memorize hundreds of poems by the best Persian poets, including 'Umar Khayyām. She told al-Ṣarrāf many stories and myths about Khayyām and recited for him many of his quatrains.³³ This introduction to Persian literature encouraged him to learn more about it, particularly the works of Khayyām. Al-Ṣarrāf translated our selected quatrain as follows:

سمعت هاتفاً في السحر من حانتنا يقول	أي يا أخا الشرب المقتون
قم لنملأ الكأس بالخمرة قبل أن	يملئوا كأسنا- قبل أن تداهنا المنية ³⁴

sami 'tu hatifan fī al-saḥri min ḥānatīnā yaqūlu:
ay yā akhā al-shurrbi al-maftūn,
qum linaml 'a al-kā 'sa bi 'l-khamrati qabla 'n
yamla 'ū kā 'sunā - qabla 'n tudāhimunā al-manīyatu.

Translations into Arabic Dialects

Generally speaking, there are eight Arabic dialectic translations, three of which were in the Egyptian dialect, three Iraqi, one Lebanese and another in Algerian colloquial Arabic. The first Arabic poet to turn a prose translation into dialect poetry was Ḥusayn Riyāḍ (1860-1967). His work, which appeared in 1944, contained 115 quatrains. Riyāḍ used the translation by al-Subā'ī as his source text.³⁵ Another poet was Arthur Ḍaou, who translated 75 quatrains from FitzGerald's English version into the Lebanese Arabic dialect in 1962. Like FitzGerald, he did not make a literal translation but translated the meaning of the Rubā'īyāt. Mention can also be made of Aḥmad Sulaymān Ḥijāb, who used Aḥmad Rāmī's translation as his source and turned it into Egyptian Arabic, emphasised mystical meanings throughout. He said that it took him three years to produce a translation that would make the work available to ordinary Egyptian people in the language they best understood. The first edition, consisting of 76 quatrains, appeared in

1968. The fourth edition in 1982 contained 181 quatrains.³⁶ The number is possible because he divided some of Rāmī's quatrains into two.

Arab Intellectuals's Reception of Khayyām

I would like to conclude this paper by discussing how Arab intellectuals received Khayyām, and whether they have agreed with the image of Khayyām formed by most western scholars. Basically, the Arab intellectuals have split into two main groups in their studies of Khayyām's philosophy, particularly as it is expressed in his *Rubā'īyāt*. A minority, such as Aḥmad Rāmī, have followed the conclusions of western scholars, ascribing all or at least most of the available quatrains to Khayyām. They have described him as a poet and philosopher who loved women, wine, songs, etc. and saw in him the Persian student of the atheist and freethinking Arab poet Abu 'l-Alā al-Ma'rī, who died when Khayyām was about 10 years old (973-1058).³⁷ However the majority of Arab authors took the opposite tack, and made every effort to acquit Khayyām of such accusations. They have seen all the quatrains dealing with these themes as wrongly attributed to Khayyām, or in some cases they have claimed that the poet used these themes as symbols indicating his desire for God and spiritual assimilation, as Sufis commonly do. They also find strong support in Khayyām's Arabic poetry, in which he appears as a religious man and true believer.³⁸ A third group has been very hesitant to spell out their ideas about 'Umar Khayyām. Al-Ṣarrāf, for example, who translated the *Rubā'īyāt* from Persian, states that "what I could understand from Khayyām's *Rubā'īyāt* is that he was in doubt and suspicion, great disturbance, in fear, and had a soul full of obsessions and fantasies. His personality, al-Ṣarrāf continues, "appears in the *Rubā'īyāt* to be doubtful, distrustful and for this reasons, a researcher is inclined to believe in his agnosticism."³⁹

A number of books, articles and internet websites have been used to prepare this table, indicating Arabic translations.

Prose Translations

<i>Translator</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Quatrains</i>	<i>source</i>
Aḥmad Hāfiẓ 'Awaḍ	1901	9	FitzGerald
Muṣṭfā al-Tall	1922	155	Persian
Muḥammad al-Manjūrī	1923	16	FitzGerald
Jamāl al-Zahāwī	1928	130	Persian
Aḥmad al-Ṣarrāf	1931	153	Persian
Homāyūn	1938	5	Persian
'Isā al-Nā'ūrī	1954	8	Italian
Nuyil 'Abdul-Aḥad	1958	75	FitzGerald
Muḥammād Hilāl	1965	73	Persian

<i>Translator</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Quatrains</i>	<i>source</i>
Abu al-Naṣr al-Ḥusaynī	1967	40	Persian
Fu'ād al-Sāyyid	1969	5	Persian
Is'ād Qandīl	1975	12	Persian
Maryam Zuhayrī	1986	21	Persian
Badr Tawfīq	1989	101	FitzGerald

Poetic translations in Standard Arabic

Iskandar Ma'ūf	1910	6	FitzGerald
Wadī al-Būstānī	1912	80	FitzGerald and others
Unknown translator	1912	5	FitzGerald
'Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī	1913	3	FitzGerald
'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Nashshār	1919	27	FitzGerald
Muḥammād al-Subā'ī	1922	101	FitzGerald
Muḥammad al-Hāshimī	1923	113	al-Ṣarrāf
Aḥmad Rāmī	1924	186	Persian
Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī	1924	13	FitzGerald
Amīr Nakhlāh	1925	12	FitzGerald
Jamīl al-Zahāwī	1928	130	Persian
Aḥmad al-Najafī	1931	351	Persian
Aḥmād Abū Shādī	1931	130	al-Zahāwī
Ibrāhīm al-'Arīḍ	1933	152	FitzGerald
Muḥammad al-Hāshimī	1936	113	al-Ṣarrāf
Muṣṭafā Al-'Aqqād	1942	1	FitzGerald
Nūr al-Dīn Muṣṭafā	1929	3	Persian
Tawfīq Mufarij	1947	107	FitzGerald
Muṣṭafā Jawād	1949	18	Al-Ṣarrāf
Tālib al-Ḥaydarī	1950	159	Persian
'Abd al-ḥaqq fāḍil	1950	350	Persian
Aḥmād Abū Shādī	1952	108	FitzGerald
Muḥammad 'Awād	1955	6	Al-Ṣarrāf
Jamīl al-Malā'ikah	1957	50	FitzGerald
Mahdī Jāsim	1964	182	Persian
Ḥikmat al-Badrī	1964	110	Persian
Ja'far al-Khalīlī	1965	1	Persian
Muḥammad Kibāh	1965	1	Persian
Muḥammad al-'Aqīlī	1966	79	FitzGerald
Qaysar al-Ma'ūf	1968	86	FitzGerald
Aḥmad al-Sharīf	1970	25	FitzGerald
'Āmir Bihīrī	1978	75	FitzGerald
Taysīr Sabbūl	1980	29	FitzGerald
Muḥammad Tāwīt	1985	150	Persian
Ṣāliḥ al-Ja'farī	2007	400	persian
Muḥammad al-Qurq	2009	200	persian
Jalāl Zankabādī	2010	74	Persian
Khalīl Ḥannā Tadrus	1985	N/A	
Muḥammad al-Furāfī	MS	2	Persian

Translations in Spoken Arabic

Husayn Riyaḍ	1944	115	FitzGerald	Egypt
Fāḍil Bin Ḥammūd	1949	?	Al-Najāfī	Iraq
ʿAbbās al-Turjumān	1949	185	Persian	Iraq
Arthur Ḍaou	1962	75	FitzGerald	Lebanon
Aḥmād ʿAbd al-Jabār	1966	116	Abū Shādī and others	Iraq
Aḥmad Sulaymān Hijāb	1975	118	Rāmī	Egypt
Muḥammad Rakhā	1975	106	Tawfiq Mufarij	Egypt
Bilqāsim al-Shāyib	2006	186	Rāmī	Algeria

Notes

- 1 Bīdpāi, *Kalīla wa dimna*, Cairo, al-Dar al-Arabiyya, 2002 and R. Wood & D. M. Lessing, *Kalila and Dimna: Fables of Friendship and Betrayal*, London, Saqi, 2008.
- 2 On the translations of Khayyām quatrains into European languages see for example J. Coumans, *The Rubaʿiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Leiden, Leiden University Press, 2010 and J. Biegstraaten & J. Coumans, *A Book in the Wilderness*, Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers, 2009.
- 3 See for example M. R. Buheiry, ed., *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890-1939*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1981 and S. K. Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, volume vol. i, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1977.
- 4 T. Husayn's introduction in A. al-Shawārbī, *Ḥāfiẓ al-Shīrāzī: shāʿir al-ghinā wa al-ghazal fī Irān*, al- Cairo, Maʿrif, 1944.
- 5 He wrote a philosophical poem called "the Cup of Khayyam" see J. al-Zahāwī, *Kaʿs al-Khayyām*, Beirut, al-Qamus al-Arabi, 1924.
- 6 J. Zankabādī claims that there are more than seventy partial and total translations of the quatrains of Khayyām in Arabic. See J. Zankabādī, *The Divan of Omar al-Khayyam*, Beirut, Dar al-Kamal, 2010, p. 49.
- 7 *Al-Majla al-Miṣriyya*
- 8 Y. H. Bakkar, *Al-Awhām fī Kitābat al-Arab ʿan al-Khayyām*, Beirut, Dar al-Manahil, 1988, p. 31.
- 9 *Al-Būstānī left out 30 quatrains in FitzGerald's translation, 21 of which were sporadic and 9 sequential (89-97)*. A. Ḥasan, *Rubāʿiyāt al-Khayyām bayn al-Aṣl al-Fārisī wa al-Tarjama al-Arabiyya*, Cairo, *Dar al-Haqīqa*, 1989, p. 70.
- 10 W. al-Būstānī, *Rubāʿiyāt ʿUmar al-Khayyām: al-Falakī al-Shāʿir al-Faylasūf al-Fārisī*, Cairo, Dār al-Arab Albustanī, 2nd edition, 1994, p. 26.
- 11 M. Árrar, *Rubāʿiyāt al-Khayyām*, ed. Y.H. Bakkar, Beirut, *Dar al-Jeel*, 1990, p. 240.
- 12 W. al-Būstānī, *Rubāʿiyāt ʿUmar al-Khayyām*, p. 28.
- 13 A. Ḥasan, *Rubāʿiyāt al-Khayyām*, p. 73.
- 14 W. al-Būstānī, *Rubāʿiyāt ʿUmar al-Khayyām*, p. 34.
- 15 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Cosimo Inc., New York, 2005, p. 39.
- 16 A. al-Ṣarrāf, *ʿUmar al-Khayyām*, Baghdad, Dar al-Salam, 1931, p. 32.
- 17 M. *Al-Subāʿī*, *Rubayyat ʿUmar al-Khayyām*, Dar Ehya al-Kotob al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1922, p. 30.
- 18 For an analysis of this poet's translation see the contribution of Jan Just Witkam in this volume.
- 19 A. Rāmī, *Rubayyat al-Khayyām*, Dar al-Shorūq al-Ula, Cairo, 2000, pp. 28-9.
- 20 Ibid., p. 30.
- 21 Ibid., p. 33.

- 22 A. A. al-Najafī, *Rubayyat Omar al-Khayyam*, Damascus, al-Tawfiq, 1931, p. v.
 23 Ibid., p. v.
 24 Ibid., pp. v-vi.
 25 Ibid., p. ix.
 26 Ibid., p. vii.
 27 Ibid., pp. 11-13.
 28 Ibid., quatrain No. 47, p. 18.
 29 A. Hasan, *Rubayyat al-Khayyam bain al-Asl al-Farisi wa al-Tarjama al-Arabiyya*, p. 191.
 30 J. al-Zahāwī, *Rubayyat Omar al-Khayyam*, al-Forat, Baghdad, 1928, p. 3.
 31 G. Kampffmeyer, 'Jameel al-Zahawi,' in *Lisan al-Arab*, Issue vii, No. vi, Baghdad, 1930, pp. 372-3.
 32 J. al-Zahāwī, *Rubayyat Omar al-Khayyam*, quatrain No 16, p. 12.
 33 A. al-Ṣarrāf, *Omar al-Khayyam*, pp. 2-6.
 34 Ibid., quatrain No. 110, p. 242.
 35 Some writers claimed that Riyāḍ used both al-Subyāf and al-Būstānī's translations. See A. al-Hanafī, *Omar al-Khayyam wa al-Rubayyat*, Dar al-Rashad, Cairo, 1992, p. 209.
 36 Ibid., pp. 210-11.
 37 Al-Najafī claimed that he was the first Arab writer to recognise the similarity between Khayyām and al-Ma'rī. See the introduction to his translation, pp. 9-10. Yet, according to Bakkar, 'Ābbas Maḥmūd al-Āqqad wrote on this similarity in 1908, see Y.H. Bakkar, "Rubayyat al-Khayyam fi al-Adab al-Arabi", in *Minbar al-Ra'i* newspaper, on 21/11/2008. I believe that al-Najafī was not the first Arab translator to discover this similarity, since al-Būstānī mentions it very briefly in the introduction to his translation in 1912, pp. 12-3. On the similarity between Khayyām and al-Ma'rī see also T. Za'emyan, *al-Ara al-Filsafiyya 'ind Abi al-'ala al-Ma'arri wa 'Umar al-Khayyam*, al-Dar al-Thaqafiyya, Cairo, 2003, and A. al-Ṣarrāf, *'Umar al-Khayyam*, pp.160-84.
 38 1 It is known that al-Khayyām wrote his scholarly works both in Arabic and Persian, but it is not widely known that he wrote poetry in Arabic. Although there are only a few couplets, they give at least some idea of his remarkable talent. These verses, which deal with asceticism, mysticism and wisdom, give strong support for the argument that most of the available Rubayyat were not written by al-Khayyām himself. Here are some examples of his Arabic poetry:

بصائب فكرة وعلو همه	سبقت العالمين إلى المعالي
ليال للضلالة مدلهمة	فلاح بحكمتي نور الهدى في
ويأبى الله إلا أن يتمه	يريد الجاحدون ليطفنوها

I reached ideas before (other) learned men by good character and high ideals
 Guiding light shone through my wisdom during dark nights (spent in) error.
 Those, who deny, wish to put it out, but God will only allow it to be perfected
 (Translation by A.S. Tritton, 1964)
 And:

تدين لي الدنيا، بل السبع العلى	بل الأفق الأعلى إذا جاش خاطري
أصوم عن الفحشاء جهراً وخفية	عفاً، وإفطاري بتقديس فاطري

The world obeys me, nay, the highest seven, nay, the Highest sphere, when my mind is roused.

I fast from vice openly and in secret so as to be chaste, and my breaking of my fast is deeming my Creator holy (Translation by A.S. Tritton, 1964)

39 Page 149.

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Singing the quatrains

Omar Khayyām and Umm Kulthūm

by Jan Just Witkam
(Leiden University)

In the 1950's and 1960's Omar Khayyām enjoyed an enormous popularity in Egypt. This had, of course, to do with the intrinsic and perennial qualities of the quatrains but even more so with the fact that they were performed by the woman who till today is considered *Kawkab al-Sharq*, the 'Star of the Orient', that greatest of Arab singers, Umm Kulthūm (1898-1975). She did not sing the quatrains in Persian, but in the Arabic translation of her long-time admirer, friend and songwriter, Aḥmad Rāmī (1892-1981), the *Shā'ir al-Shabāb*, 'the poet of the Youth' as he was called, after the name of the journal in which he first published.

As a part of the large repertoire that Aḥmad Rāmī especially wrote for Umm Kulthūm, she also sung selections of Aḥmad Rāmī's translation of Omar Khayyām's quatrains. Umm Kulthūm's performance has brought the quatrains to the attention of an audience of many millions in Egypt and, propelled by the singer's fame, also in the rest of the Arab world. Omar Khayyām's popularity had in fact not only spread to the Western World after he had been discovered by Edward FitzGerald in 1859 – or rather after FitzGerald's translation had in itself become a discovery. In Iran Khayyām the poet became as popular as Ḥāfiẓ (d. 1320) and Sa'dī (d. 1292) had been there all the time, but only *after* he had become famous in England and the US. Before his Western discovery Khayyām was just one of many interesting Persian poets, as is evident from his relatively modest entry in the *Ātashkada*, the poetical anthology by Luṭf 'Alī Beg Ādhar Begdilī (d. 1780) which precedes the Omar hype by about a century. Modern works by Khayyām-enthusiasts (such as Mehdi Aminrazavi's recent book) have a tendency to project Khayyām's present popularity back into history, but this is entirely anachronistic. The Arab Middle East saw the publication of a considerable number of different translations of the quatrains of Khayyām once he had been recognized in the West as a great poet.

One of these Arabic translations was made in the late 1920's by the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Muḥammad Rāmī. Aḥmad Rāmī's translation seems first to have become public in 1924, but in its final shape it was published in 1931. This translation became popular and has remained in

print ever since. Aḥmad Rāmī came from a literary and musical family. His brother Maḥmūd was a composer, but he died in 1923, too early to make a lasting name in Arab music for himself. Aḥmad Rāmī was active in many fields of literature and the performing arts. In his younger years he had travelled in Europe, among other things in search of manuscripts of Khayyām's quatrains in Europe's oriental collections, as he tells his reader in the preface to his translation. His translation is said to be based on his research on the most important Persian manuscripts of the quatrains, kept in Oxford, Paris, Berlin, London, Cambridge and also in Patna in India, and on a number of translations into European languages. From Aḥmad Rāmī's translation itself it is not clear what exactly has been the consequence of all this research, but the introduction to the translation gives the book a nice cosmopolitan flair, behind which its textual sources remain hidden.

Apart from his work on Khayyām's quatrains Aḥmad Rāmī has also translated plays by Shakespeare into Arabic, yet his lasting fame rests on the numerous lyrics he wrote for both Umm Kulthūm and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1899 or 1907-1991), two great names in Egypt's musical history. The relationship between Aḥmad Rāmī and Umm Kulthūm was one of long standing. From 1924 onwards Rāmī started visiting Umm Kulthūm and read poetry with her. Aḥmad's brother Maḥmūd was hired to teach her the lute. Soon after, in 1926, Aḥmad Rāmī started writing lyrics for Umm Kulthūm's repertoire. In the late 1920's and the 1930's the composer Muḥammad al-Qaṣabgī and Aḥmad Rāmī completely dominated Umm Kulthūm's repertoire. Aḥmad Rāmī provided the romantic texts. When in 1935 Umm Kulthūm's first film *Widāʾ* ('Love') came out, the script and song texts were by Aḥmad Rāmī.

The exact nature of the relationship between Umm Kulthūm and Aḥmad Rāmī has been the object of speculation. In his biographical compilation on Umm Kulthūm, the Egyptian radio and TV journalist Sa'd Sāmī Ramaḍān tells how Aḥmad Rāmī, in 1954 during a conference in Beirut, was completely surprised by the news that Umm Kulthūm had just married (in fact her family doctor, Ḥasan al-Ḥifnāwī). Aḥmad Rāmī immediately left the conference, withdrew to his hotel room and wrote the ode *Dhikrayāt*, 'Memories', also titled *Qīṣṣat Ḥubbī*, 'My love story'. Later on, the ode was, of course, incorporated in Umm Kulthūm's repertoire (songbook, p. 199 = *Dīwān Rāmī*, pp. 197-198). That caused an interesting lover's paradox. That Aḥmad Rāmī was infatuated with love of the 'Star of the Orient' is evident. His ode *Dhikrayāt*, and some others as well, such as *Ḥayyarti Qalbī ma'āk*, 'You have brought my heart in utter confusion' (songbook, p. 194, in which Umm Kulthūm probably sang *Ḥayyarta* = *Dīwān Rāmī*, pp. 281-282), would, because of Aḥmad Rāmī's popularity as a poet at the time, have been read and heard by a hundred thousand of people anyway, but only when Umm Kulthūm would sing this ode it

would be heard by at least a hundred million in the entire Arab fatherland. The rejected lover could only let his complaint be widely heard if Umm Kulthūm, the object of his unrequited love, would make it popular. For whatever it is true, the anecdote, which is said to have been recorded from the mouth of Aḥmad Rāmī himself, nicely shows the intimate symbiosis between the singer and her poet.

When one reads Aḥmad Rāmī's poetry from this angle one gets the impression that many poems in the *Dīwān* could actually have been written for Umm Kulthūm or were at least inspired by her. Would she have been the one he waited for at night, while listening at the radio? (*Dīwān Rāmī*, p. 81):

*'How many nights I have spent awake
All alone, while people around me were sleeping?
I ask the wind about a companion that whispers
To me, and sleep flies away from my eyelids.'*

'My love story', written when he heard that Umm Kulthūm had married, begins (*Dīwān Rāmī*, p. 197):

*'Memories that transgress the horizon of my imagination
A lightning that shines in the dark of the night.
She woke up my heart from its slumber,
And illuminated me behind the curtain of the empty days.
How can I forget her, as long as my heart beats in my breast?
She is the story of my love.'*

On July 7, 1975, a few months after the singer's demise, Aḥmad Rāmī wrote an elegy for her, which begins as follows (*Dīwān Rāmī*, p. 191):

*'I would never have thought that I would write an elegy for her,
After all those emotional songs that I have created for her.
I have heard her singing and she enraptured me.
Today I hear myself: I cry, and I mourn for her.
I loved her from the morning of my life and I lived for her.'*

But Aḥmad Rāmī was more than just a sentimentalist. Directly after Egypt's revolution of 1952 a new national anthem was written by Aḥmad Rāmī with music by Riyāḍ al-Sunbātī (1906-1981). It shows that this duo was at the height of their popularity. But Egypt has had quite a number of national anthems in a relatively short period. In 1970 the poem *Nashid al-Silāḥ*, the 'Song of Arms', by Ṣalāḥ Ḡāhīn (1930-1986) became Egypt's national anthem, after it had first been made popular and famous in 1956 during the Suez crisis by a rendering by Umm Kulthūm

(songbook, p. 312) on a musical score by Kamāl al-Ṭawīl (1922-2003), the same composer who also wrote the scores for the national anthems of several other Arab countries. In 1979 the text of Egypt's national anthem was changed into the well-known *Bilādī*, *bilādī*, *bilādī*-song by Muḥammad Yūnus al-Qāḍī, who wrote the text as early as 1878, and for the melody of which use was made of the musical score originally composed by Sayyid Darwīsh (1892-1923), another great name.

This short digression on modern Egypt's musical and literary history may serve to show that Khayyām's quatrains were brought to an immense public by the country's artistic *élite* and top-performers of the period. In 1949 Aḥmad Rāmī's translation of the quatrains had come on Umm Kulthūm's repertoire and Riyāḍ al-Sunbātī (d. 1981), who was the singer's principal lute-player and composer at the time, had made the musical score. He has been Umm Kulthūm's preferred composer for many years, and he was the necessary third person in the relationship. The trio, Aḥmad Rāmī, Riyāḍ al-Sunbātī and Umm Kulthūm contributed each according to their talents and capacities: words, melody, performance. The fourth factor was, of course, Umm Kulthūm's music ensemble, and Queen Umm Kulthūm lead them all. Aḥmad Rāmī kept writing lyrics for Umm Kulthūm till well in the 1970's and the relationship between him and the singer remained one of loyalty and trust, though not one of exclusivity, as Umm Kulthūm was constantly diversifying her dependence on songwriters and composers. Her songbook mentions thirteen different composers (including herself), and more than fifty poets whose works she sang. Of the latter group Aḥmad Rāmī has contributed by far the most to her repertoire.

In order to get a better idea of how Aḥmad Rāmī worked let us have a look at the famous opening quatrain by Khayyām and how this fared in Rāmī's hands (Persian text taken from Nicolas, No. 1):

آمد سحری ندا زمیخانهء ما	کی رند خراباتی دیوانهء ما
بر خیز که پر کنیم پیمانه زمی	زان پیش که پر کنند پیمانهء ما

My literal translation from the Persian of Omar Khayyām:

*'One morning there came a voice from our wine house,
Come on, you wine house friends, you crazy ones of us
Arise, and let us fill up another cup of wine,
Before the moment that destiny will fill our cup.'*

And here is what Aḥmad Rāmī in his Arabic translation made of it:

سمعت صوتا هاتفا في السحر	نادى من الحان: غفاة البشر
هبوا املاؤا كاس الطلى قبل أن	تفعم كاس العمر كف القدر

And in my literal translation of Aḥmad Rāmī's Arabic translation:

*'I heard a voice calling, in the early morning,
That called from the wine house: you slumbering people,
Come on, fill the brilliant cup, before
The hand of destiny makes the cup of life overflow.'*

Edward FitzGerald, in his first version (of 1859) of the quatrains, makes two quatrains out of this one opening quatrain (his Nos. 1-2), but the idea of life's transience is less evident in his second, reworked version (of 1868) of this quatrain. From Aḥmad Rāmī's translation of the opening quatrain it is evident that he has not let himself be influenced by FitzGerald, but that he has faithfully followed the Persian text, although we do not know exactly which edition or version of the quatrains he used.

Let us now see how Umm Kulthūm sung this quatrain, and two others. For that purpose, I analyse some 6:25 minutes of Umm Kulthūm's rendering of three of Khayyām's quatrains. I took these from: 'Oum Koulthoum, Roba'eyat El Khayam. Music by M. Riad El Sonbaty', which is a CD (EAN 5425019290016), in a licensed edition by Platinum Records and Movies, AMD Classics, Brussels 2006 (later dates are sometimes given and the CD is available in internet shops) containing 36:58 minutes of sound in all. The date of the original recording is not indicated. The songbook (pp. 217-218) gives the text of the quatrains as sung and puts them together as one collection. I purchased the CD in Paris in October 2008 during the the Umm Kulthūm exhibition 'Oum Kalsoum, la quatrième pyramide' in the Institut du Monde Arabe.

The 6:25 minutes which I have selected I have divided into six parts:

1. 0:00-2:17 Musical prelude
2. 2:17-3:24 Quatrain 1
3. 3:24-3:52 Musical interlude
4. 3:52-4:45 Quatrain 2
5. 4:45-5:12 Musical interlude
6. 5:12-6:25 Quatrain 3.

In her performance Umm Kulthūm does not exactly follow the printed version of the Arabic translation by Aḥmad Rāmī. The small differences which can be observed between the published translation and the performance may be based on personal preferences of Umm Kulthūm or re-workings by Aḥmad Rāmī, but we do not know. These differences occur in the printed songbooks of Umm Kulthūm as well. The text of the

opening quatrain in Umm Kulthūm's performance runs as follows (songbook, p. 217):

نادى من الغيب وفاق البشر تملا كأس العمر كفّ القدر	سمعت صوتا هاتفا في السحر هَبُوا إملأوا كأس المنى قبل أن
Umm Kulthūm's text (songbook)	Aḥmad Rāmī's printed text
Sami'tu ṣawtan hātīfan fī s-saḥar Nādā min al-ghayb wa-fāqa l-bashar. Hubbū 'mla'ū ka's al-munā qabla an Tamla'a ka's al-'umri kaff ul-qadar.	min al-ḥān / ghufāt ka's al-ṭalā Tufima

My translation of the quatrain as given in the Umm Kulthūm songbook:

*'I heard a voice calling in the early morning
It called from the unseen and people arose.
Come on, fill the cup of wishes, before
The hand of destiny fills the cup of life.'*

But Umm Kulthūm does more than just singing the four lines of the quatrain in a slightly different wording. Here is the exact and not-normalized rendering of her performance of the opening quatrain:

*Sama'tu ṣawtan hātīfan ... fī s-saḥar
Sama'tu ṣawtan hātīfan ... fī s-saḥar
Nādā min al-ghayb u-fāqa l-bashar.
Sama'tu ṣawtan hātīfan ... fī s-saḥar
Sama'tu ṣawtan hātīfan ... fī s-saḥar
Nādā min al-ghayb u-fāqa l-bashar.
Hubbū 'mla'ū ... ka's al-munā
Hubbū 'mla'ū ... ka's al-munā ... qabla an
Tamla'a ka'sa l-'umri kaff ul-qadar.*

In Umm Kulthūm's rendition, the four lines of the original of Aḥmad Rāmī's translation are produced in the sequence: 1-1-2-1-1-2-3-3-4.

With Umm Kulthūm's performance of the second quatrain is somewhat similar, but this second quatrain in the songbook and on the CD cannot be found in the editions of Aḥmad Rāmī's translation of Khayyām's quatrains, and in a moment I will try to say why this is. The Arabic text comes from the songbook (p. 217):

ولا يأتي العيش قبل الأوان فليس في طبع الليالي الأمان	لا تشغل البال بماضي الزمان واغنم من الحاضر لذاته
---	---

Lā tashghal al-bāl bi-māḍī z-zamān
Wa-lā bi-ātī l-‘aysh qabl al-awān.
Wa-ghnam min al-hāḍiri ladhdhātahu
Fa-laysa fī ṭab‘ il-layālī l-amān.

And in my translation:

‘Be not worried over the passing of time
Nor about the future of life before it is time.
And take from the present its delicacies
Because in the nature of the nights lies no safety.’

Umm Kulthūm sings this second quatrain as follows:

Lā tashghal il-bāl bi-māḍī z-zamān
Lā tashghal il-bāl bi-māḍī z-zamān
Lā tashghal il-bāl bi-māḍī z-zamān
Wa-lā bi-ātī l-‘aysh ... qabl al-awān
Wa-ghnam min al-hāḍiri ladhdhātihi
Fa-laysa fī ṭab‘ il-layālī l-amān.

In this second quatrain Umm Kulthūm’s sequence of the text according to the four lines of the original of Aḥmad Rāmī’s translation is different from what she did with the first quatrain: 1-1-1-2-3-4.

The third quatrain as performed by Umm Kulthūm could not be found either in the editions of Aḥmad Rāmī’s translation of Khayyam’s quatrains. The text is taken from the songbook (p. 217):

وكم يخيب الظن بالمقبل
 جمال دنيائي ولا أجتلي

غد بظهر الغيب واليوم لي
 ولست بالغافل حتى أرى

Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb wal-yawmu lī
Wa-kam yakhību ẓ-ẓannu bil-muqbili
Wa-lastu bil-ghāfil ḥattā arā
Ġamāla dunyāya wa-lā aḡṭalī

And in my translation:

‘Tomorrow lies in hiding but today is mine
How much deceiving is thinking about the future.
And I am not negligent until I see
The beauty of my world, without looking at it.’

Umm Kulthūm's actual performance of the third quatrain goes as follows:

Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb ... wal-yawmu lī
Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb ... wal-yawmu lī
Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb ... wal-yawmu lī
Wa-kam yakhību ẓ-ẓannu ... bil-muqbili
Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb ... wal-yawmu lī
Ghadun bi-ẓahr il-ghayb ... wal-yawmu lī
Wa-kam yakhību ẓ-ẓann ... bil-muqbili
Wa-lastu bil-ghāfili ḥattā arā
Ġamāla dunyāya wa-lā aḡtalī

Umm Kulthūm's rendering of Aḥmad Rāmī's translation is in the sequence: 1-1-1-2-1-1-2-3-4.

The performance by Umm Kulthūm of the quatrains is characterized by a repetition of the beginning line(s), which she also does in her performance of *Qaṣīdas*, odes, for that matter. With this technique she creates more substance of text, as a quatrain is actually a very short entity. It is precisely its shortness which makes the quatrain an excellent vehicle for epigrammatic literature, and that is an important reason of the genre's popularity. Umm Kulthūm, however, does not exploit that particular feature but she prefers to use the quatrain text for a longer-drawn songline. She substitutes succinctness by repetition. While doing so she creates tense moments in the first half of the song – as if she is struggling uphill – whereas in the second half she can release this tension, going downhill, coming home, and it works. That release is always followed by an enormous applause of the audience, who rejoice in the singer's achievement.

As we have seen, 'Omar Khayyām has, from 1949 onwards, been immensely popular in Egypt but only through the performances by Umm Kulthūm of Aḥmad Rāmī's translations, set on music by Riyāḍ as-Sunbātī. In this, Aḥmad Rāmī's translation of the quatrains has enjoyed a fate which was different from that of any other of the Arabic translations. However, Aḥmad Rāmī's Arabic translation of the quatrains was used by Umm Kulthūm in a way of her own. She may have omitted the references to wine drinking from the first quatrain out of decency or prudishness. In the Persian mystical context wine is well-known as a metaphor and being drunk is understood as the state of self-abandonment of the mystic to the divine being. This is still very much the case in Iran where everybody knows that the wine poetry of the Imam Khomeini (to name but one recent example) does not celebrate real wine, the drinking of which is explicitly forbidden in the Qur'ān (5:90-91), but that it refers to the intoxication of the mystic by his divine

beloved, and in classical Arabic mystical poetry this is also the case. Whether the more mundane or popular audiences of Umm Kulthūm would also understand intoxication as a mystical state is not so evident. However, as an explanation for the differences between Aḥmad Rāmī's printed translation and his version in the Umm Kulthūm songbook this is not entirely satisfactory. The songbook does mention the *ka's al-ṭalā'*, 'the brilliant cup', which was left out of Aḥmad Rāmī's third line of the first quatrain, in other contexts, e.g. in the song *Sulūw Ku'ūs al-Ṭalā'*, 'the solace of the brilliant cups', in a poem (not a wine poem, though) by one of Egypt's greatest poets of the early twentieth century, Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932), several of whose poems were sung by Umm Kulthūm as well (songbook, pp. 216-217).

Umm Kulthūm sang quatrains which were said to be by Khayyām but which cannot be found in Aḥmad Rāmī's translation (Nos. 2 and 3 of the above sample). Either Aḥmad Rāmī translated more quatrains than were eventually published, or he provided Khayyām-style quatrains of his own making. About this we have no further information, but we can speculate. The constitution of the corpus of Persian quatrains of Khayyām is a difficult enough matter, and it is not very useful to search for Persian quatrains of a content similar to these mystery quatrains sung by Umm Kulthūm. Anyway, a search through Nicolas' edition did not yield result. For an accomplished poet such as Aḥmad Rāmī it cannot have been very difficult to catch the atmosphere of Khayyām's poetry and write quatrains of his own manufacture in the spirit of Khayyām, and no doubt at the request of his leading lady whom he revered.

The fact that Umm Kulthūm sang some of the quatrains differently from the wording in the published texts may have wider implications. It would be interesting to compare more of her song texts, also texts by other poets, and to see in which form they have actually been performed, and thereby have become famous, as they were written by their poets or as they were sung by Umm Kulthūm. The ambition to create both simplification and beautification may have played a role, and it would be interesting to find out whether this reworking of the text was done by Umm Kulthūm herself, who, if that is indeed the case, may have thought that she, being the diva who she was, had the fullest right to do.

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* Contains the Arabic translations of the quatrains by Aḥmad al-Ṣāfi al-Nağafi and Aḥmad Rāmī. Also contains FitzGerald's translation of 1868. In Egypt Aḥmad Rāmī's translation has remained in print in editions of Dār al-Shurūq, one of Cairo's more prominent publishing houses. Leiden University library possesses a copy of the 1931 edition of Aḥmad Rāmī's translation (class-mark 850 F 30).

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* Contains the translations of and introductions to the quatrains by Edward FitzGerald of both 1859 and 1868, and the volume also contains FitzGerald's translation of Jami's *Salāmān and Absāl*.

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2. Other sources:

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* Facsimile edition of a manuscript dated 1247/1831, with introduction, index and notes. When space in an anthology is an indicator of popularity Sa'dī is by far the most important poet (*aḫṣaḥ al-mutakallimīn*, he is called, 'the most eloquent of orators', pp. 275-293). Ḥāfiẓ lags far behind with only four pages (pp. 271-275) and Omar Khayyām has a mere two pages (pp. 138-140) in the *Ātashkada*.

Mehdi Aminrazavi, *The wine of wisdom. The life, poetry and philosophy of Omar Khayyam*. Oxford (Oneworld) 2007.

* The wine that so pervades the quatrains has here been promoted to the title of the book. The author projects Khayyām's greatness back into history. In addition he treats Khayyām the poet and Khayyām the philosopher and mathematician as one person, which is far from historical. All this shows how great a person Khayyām has become in the past century and a half.

Virginia Danielson, *The voice of Egypt. Umm Kulthūm, Arabic song, and Egyptian society in the twentieth century*. Chicago & London (The University of Chicago Press) 1997.

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* A study on Umm Kulthūm's political activism and the development of the Egyptian and Arab myth that she became.

Raġā' al-Naqqāsh, *Lughz Umm Kulthum*. Cairo (Aṭlas) 2004

* 'The enigma of Umm Kulthūm'. The memoirs of a young companion of Umm Kulthūm on the singer's life and times, and the men that lived around her.

Aḥmad Rāmī, *Dīwān Rāmī*. Cairo² (Dār al-Shurūq) 2006.

* A selection of the best known pieces of Rāmī's poetry, with a preface by Tawḥīd Rāmī, dated April 2000, and a short biographical notice about Rāmī's early life by Šāliḥ Ġawdat, dated 1973. Several songs of Umm Kulthūm's repertoire can be found in this collection.

Umm Kulthūm. I'dād Īzīs Faṭḥ Allāh & Maḥmūd Kāmil. Cairo (Dār al-Shurūq) 2001. *Mawsū'at A'lām al-Mūsīqā al-'Arabīyya*, No. 1.

* An encyclopaedic work on Umm Kulthūm (with a CD containing historical recordings), which also contains a comprehensive songbook of the singer. Therefore I refer to this work as 'songbook'. The fifteen quatrains of Khayyām as sung by Umm Kulthūm are found on pp. 217-218. Aḥmad Rāmī is mentioned there as the song writer.

Sa'd Sāmī Ramaḍān, *Umm Kulthūm. Ṣawt fī Tārīkh Umma*. N.p. (Beirut ?, al-Sharika al-'Ālamiyya lil-Kitāb) 1997.

* A compilatory work containing a large number of memories of Umm Kulthūm mostly written by her contemporaries and the generation after. The 'love story' between Aḥmad Rāmī and Umm Kulthūm is told by Ramaḍān himself (pp. 43-47).

Quatrains of ‘Umar Khayyām in Turkish, and Turkish Quatrains⁴⁰

S. Sötemann

(Independent scholar)

Although Ottoman poets were deeply influenced by Persian poetry from the very beginning, i.e. from the fourteenth century onwards, they did not adopt the Persian quatrain, or *rubāʿī* form. They preferred the *kaside* and the *gazel*. This was not a coincidence, as I understand from the key-note address at the conference on *The Legacy of Omar Khayyam* by Dick Davis, entitled *Too good a poem to be faithful?* The Ottoman poets were not acquainted with Khayyām’s quatrains, because this poetry reached the Ottomans only at the end of the nineteenth century through western translations or adaptations.

The Turkish quatrain form, the *tuyuğ* (from Old Turkish) or *terane* (from Persian) or *mani* or *murabba* (both from Arabic), was very rare among *dīvān* poets, but it was widely used by folk and mystical poets. The *tuyuğ* originates with Turkish folk songs brought by the nomads from the Altai through Central Asia, into Anatolia and even further. This consists of a couple of four-line stanzas, each of eleven syllables, usually rhyming aaba. The *tuyuğ* with ‘*arūd*’ metre (i.e. the Arabic quantitative metre), in contrast, was a product of Ottoman *dīvān* poetry in which the Turkish language, without any differences between the length of vowels, is adapted to a metre based on length differences. This was possibly because of the linguistic complexity of Ottoman Turkish, a combination of Arabic, Persian and Turkish vocabulary, united by Turkish grammar. The Ottoman elite was multilingual, using Turkish and Arabic for administrative and religious purposes, Persian for literary purposes, and often also French.

We know of only three Ottoman *dīvān* poets who devoted a substantial part of their poetical works to Turkish quatrains of this type. The first is Kadı Burhaneddin from Kayseri (1344-1398), who specialised in writing *gazels* and ‘songs’ consisting of *tuyuğs*. The second is Ahmed Paşa (died 1497) from Edirne, who witnessed the conquest of Istanbul by Mehmet II in 1453. He was appointed kadi of the new capital by the same sultan and in later years even became his vizier. Apart from writing *gazels*, Ahmed Paşa, like his predecessor, also preferred the Turkish quatrain for the composition of his so called ‘songs,’ for which he won popular fame. Last but not least Mihri Hatun (died 1506), daughter of a kadi and one of the very

few woman poets among the Ottomans, wrote *tuyuğs*. Devoting herself to writing rather than accepting marriage, she was even a member of the literary 'salon' of Prince Ahmed, son of Sultan Beyazıt II and governor of Amasya.

On the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, i.e. towards the end of the Ottoman State's existence, there appeared a young poet, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884-1958), who, inspired by the French poets with whom he became acquainted during his ten years' sojourn in Paris, considered his literary heritage of such importance that he started his career by seriously studying the work of his predecessors before creating his own. Kemal tried to master the art of classical Ottoman poetry by composing such poetry himself, using the required forms. He did the same with the quatrains of Khayyām which he, as a traditionally-educated intellectual, read in the original language. He could hardly do otherwise, in fact, because Turkish translations hardly existed at that time.

Besides his new and original poetry, he produced two special collections of 'old poetry,' entitled *Eski Şiirin Rüzgârıyla* [On the Wind of the Old Poetry], published in 1962 and *Rubâiler ve Hayyâm Rubâilerini Türkçe Söyleyiş* [Quatrains and the Quatrains by Khayyām in Turkish] in 1963. As the publication dates indicate, these were published after his death, by the director of the newly-founded 'Yahya Kemal Institute and Museum,' and one of his best friends, Nihad Sami Banarlı (1907-1974). During his life, his poems appeared in papers, magazines and the like. Although Kemal's poetry represents a turning point in Turkish poetry, Kemal, not being an avant-gardist, did not want a break with the past. He, on the contrary, sought continuity. Despite this 'conservatism,' Kemal came to be considered the first modern Turkish poet, and also one of the best, a reputation that still holds today.

In this presentation, I will take a closer look at the quatrains of Khayyām as they were translated and recreated in Turkish by Kemal, because the other Khayyām translators of his time remained, poetically speaking, in his shadow. Among them were Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932)⁴¹ and Hüseyin Daniş (1870-1942),⁴² intellectuals and scholars who were active in politics as well as in the literary field. Both translated the quatrains into Turkish prose, wrote a comprehensive introduction to Khayyām's life, philosophy, ideas and poetry, and provided detailed annotations. Another poet was Hüseyin Rıfat, who compiled and translated '*Rubâ'ıyyat-ı Hayyâm, manzum tercemeleri*', [The Rubâ'ıyât of Khayyām, poetical translations]⁴³ in 1926, when the Arabic script was still in use in Turkey. The radical change from Arabic to a Latin script was introduced by Atatürk in 1928. The change in script was part of wider developments relating to the modernization of Turkey and the spreads of literacy. It was accompanied by a rigorous 'purification' of the language, especially the vocabulary. The effect of this for poets will appear below, in some

comparisons of translations by Kemal and by a younger poet, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu (1908-1973).

The last translator of Kemal's generation who should be mentioned is Rıza Tevfik Bölükbaşı (1869-1949), a dissident politician and minister, who published his translations of Khayyām in 1945. Finally, in 1963, the year Kemal's volume of quatrains appeared, the Turkish iranist, Mehmed Nuri Gencosman (1897-1976), published his translations into modern Turkish,⁴⁴ aiming at allowing the younger generation to experience the beauty of Khayyām's quatrains.

Kemal's *Quatrains of Omar Khayyam in Turkish and Turkish quatrains*⁴⁵ consists of fifty-three quatrains translated from Persian and forty quatrains made by the poet himself. If we apply Whinfield's⁴⁶ classification of Khayyām's quatrains into chapters and mentalities, seventeen of the quatrains Kemal translated belong to the chapter 'Poetry' in the spirit of 'carpe diem,' about the joys of love and wine drinking. All the remainder belong to the chapter 'Philosophy,' addressing questions of faith and life from an agnostic perspective. The selection gives a good impression of Kemal's own preferences.

In Kemal's view, 'Umar Khayyām is an agnostic, who had great doubts about the meaning of life but enjoys life to the full, his life revolving around science, literature and wine. In the words of a quatrain written by Kemal himself:

Hayyam⁴⁷

*Hayyam ki her bahsi açar sagarden
Bahsetmedi cennette akan Kevser'den
Gül sevdi şerab içti gülüp eğlendi
Zevk aldı tıraşide rubailerden*

In my translation:

Khayyām

*To Khayyām every conversation started with a glass
He did not mention the river of paradise Kevser
He loved roses, drank wine, laughed and enjoyed himself
And found pleasure in polishing quatrains.*

Kemal made the following recommendation about the good translation of Khayyām's quatrains:

Rubai⁴⁸

*Hayyam'ı alıp tercüme et derlerse
Öğrenmek için talib isen bir derse*

*Derdim ki rubaisini nazmetmelisin
Hayyam onu türkîde nasıl söylerse*

Quatrain

*If one says let's translate Khayyām
And says: let me study to learn this
I would say one ought to turn his quatrains into verse
As Khayyam would have said them in Turkish*

Now, as I promised, I would like to give an impression of the differences between Kemal's language and the 'Pure Turkish' [*Öz Türkçe*] which developed following the switch to a Latin script, before having a closer look at Kemal's choices and translations.

The younger author and translator Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, who celebrated his twentieth birthday in the year of the change of script, 1928, became a passionate supporter of the political fight against illiteracy in Turkey, initiated by the regime. He himself translated many important works of Ottoman and non-Ottoman writers into modern Turkish. He also tried his hand on Khayyām's *Rubā'īyāt*.⁴⁹ I will compare his and Kemal's translations of the same quatrain, beginning with the meaning of the quatrain concerned in English:

*We are on a lawn in the season of roses on the edge of the stream
And with us are some lovely beloveds as well
Pour the wine, so the early drinkers of that wine
Will be free from mosque and church*

Kemal's version reads:⁵⁰

*Gül faslı çemendeyiz kenar-ı cuda
Bizlerle beraber iki üç ahu da
Mey sun ki sabah erken içenler o meyi
Mescidle kenisaden olur asude*

Wherever Persian words were also regularly used in Ottoman, and especially in Ottoman poetry, Kemal adopted them in his translation. *Asude* ['free from care'] is an example here. He also employs the *izafet* genitive construction, which is not native to Turkish but was borrowed from Persian by the Ottomans. The *izafet* compound 'kenar-ı cu' here has the meaning 'on the edge of the stream.'

Eyüboğlu did it in this way:⁵¹

*Gül mevsimi çimendeyiz su kıyısında
Birkaç nur yüzlü güzel de var aramızda*

*Şarap sun çünkü sabah erken içenlere
Ne mescit gerekir ne kilise dünyada.*

The Turkish is quite colloquial, as Turkish was spoken and written around the middle of the twentieth century.

The content of this quatrain is remarkably close to the themes and motifs of the Ottoman *gazel*, in which the dominating themes are wine drinking in the rose garden on the edge of a stream in the company of one's sweetheart or some other beauties. *Carpe diem*: in this short worldly existence love and wine provide heavenly delights. The next quatrain, also a translation, has the same themes.

<i>Zühre'yle kamer gökte olaldan peyda</i>	Dünyaları değişmem kızıl şaraba;
<i>Meyden iyi şey görmedi bir kimse</i>	Ay da ondan sönük; çoban yıldızı
<i>daha</i>	da.
<i>Ben mey satanın aklına cidden</i>	Şarap satanların aklına şaşarım:
<i>şaşarım</i>	
<i>Bir şey alamaz sattığı şeyden ala</i>	Ondan iyi ne var alınacak dünyada?

Since Venus and the moon have appeared in the sky
Nobody has seen a thing better than wine
I am truly astonished at the intelligence of the wineseller
There is nothing superior to be had than the thing he sells.⁵²

Other examples of Kemal's translations dwell on themes which did not generally appear in the Ottoman *gazel*, or at least not too explicitly, such as themes about the creation and the meaning of human existence. But the metaphors and diction used are as common in the Ottoman world as in Persian poetry.

I will give a few examples with English translations.

<i>Hallāk ki hilkatleri eyler terkiḳ</i>	Tanrı gönlünce yaratır da her şeyi
<i>Mahkûm-ü zeval etmesi gayetle</i>	Neden ölüme mahkum eder hepsini?
<i>garib</i>	
<i>Hilkatler eğer güzelse tahrib neden</i>	Yaptığı güzelse neden kırar atar
<i>Çirkinse bu işten kim edilsin ta'yib</i>	Çirkinse suçu kim kime yüklemeli?

From the Creator who is making his creations
Their being condemned to decline is very strange
If creations are beautiful why should they be ruined?
If ugly who will therefore be reproached?

<i>Dünyada nedir hisse-i en'amum hiç</i>	Bu dünyada nedir payıma düşen, hiç
<i>Ömrümde felekten alınan kāmum hiç</i>	Nedir ömrümün kazancı felekten, hiç
<i>Ben şu'le-i şevkim sönüversem hiçim</i>	Bir sevinç mumuyum sönüversem hiçim
<i>Ben cam-ı Cem'im kırılısam</i>	Bir kadehim kırılısam ne kalır ben-
<i>encamum hiç</i>	den hiç.

What in the world is my part of mankind? It is nothing
 The pleasure I took from fate during my life was nothing
 I am a flame of longing, should I suddenly be extinguished,
 I am nothing
 I am the bowl of Cemshid, should I break, my fulfillment
 will be nothing

Therefor it is better to enjoy the good things on earth:

<i>Yakut-leb ol la'l-i Bedahşan nerede</i>	O yakut dudakları kıvılcık kıvılcık yanan nerde?
<i>Hoşbuy şerab o rahat-ı can nerede</i>	O güzelim kokusu cana can katan nerde?
<i>Derler meyi İslām haram etmiştir</i>	Müslümanlara şarap haram edilmiştir derler
<i>İç gam yeme İslām'a o iman nerede!</i>	İçmene bak, haram işlemeyen müslüman nerde?

Where are the ruby lips of Bedahshan
 Where the colourful wine that's balsam for the soul?
 It is said that wine is forbidden according to Islam
 Drink, don't swallow tears for islam, where is that faith!

If we turn from Kemal's translations to his own quatrains, we find some particularities. They all have titles, often naming the person to whom they are dedicated. He used these verses to honour his masters, friends, or predecessors and the like.⁵³ The motto which Kemal gave to his volume shows the same preference:

Farkında değildik göğe ermiş serimiz
Şimdengerü gülzar-ı suhandır yerimiz
Gitmiş haber-i neşvesi Hayyam'a kadar
Haz vermiş ahibbaya rubailerimiz

We are not aware that our heads reach the sky
 Henceforth our place is in the rose garden of words

If his message of intoxication reaches Khayyām
Our quatrains will bring the beloved's enjoyment

The next quatrain is dedicated to one of his masters and friends, *İhsan Kongar*:

İhsan'a

*Cem mezhebi vaktinde şu dünya neydi
Cuşışle akan hayat rindaneydi
Günler geceler her biri bir türlü şerab
Nef'î sagar Nedim meyhaneydi*

To İhsan

*How was this world at the time of Cemshid's creed
Hedonistic was life and flowing with ebullience
All day and night all and sundry kinds of wine
Nef'î was the glass Nedim the tavern*

I suppose we all know what Cem and his creed stand for in Persian poetry: it is no different in Ottoman poetry. Nef'î (1572-1635) and Nedim (1681-1730) are well-known Ottoman poets, satirical and worldly respectively.

Another quatrain by Kemal himself, on life:

Ömür

*Bir merhaleden güneşle derya görünür
Bir merhaleden her iki dünya görünür
Son merhale bir fasl-ı hazandır ki sürer
Geçmiş gelecek cümlesi rü'ya görünür*

Life

*In one day's journey sun and water are seen
In one day's journey both worlds are seen
The last stage is an autumnal season that continues
Everything appears in a dream, what has been and what is coming*

And in the end only wishes and dreams persist:

Tercih

*Dünyada ne ikbal ne servet dileriz
Hatta ne de ukbada saadet dileriz
Aşkın gül açan bülbül öten vaktinde
Yaranla tarab yar ile vuslat dileriz*

Preference

*In this world neither prosperity nor wealth is what we want
Not even eternal happiness is what we want
Blooming roses and singing nightingales in times of love
Joy with friends and union with our beloved is what we want*

Notes

- 1 The basic research for this article I did when I was writing my thesis *Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Türkse poëzie in de vroege twintigste eeuw - een analyse* - [YKB, Turkish poetry in the early twentieth century - an analysis -], Rotterdam: 2004.
- 2 Abdullah Cevdet, *Rubāiyāt-ı Hayyam ve Türkçeye Tercümeleri* [Quatrains of Khayyam and translations in Turkish], Istanbul: 1914, 2nd ed. 1926.
- 3 Hüseyin Daniş, *Rubāiyāt-ı Ömer Hayyâm* [Quatrains of Omar Khayyam] (Second improved and completed edition, dedicated to his deceased friend and orientalist 'the late Professor Edward G. Brown of Cambridge'), Istanbul: 1922, 2nd ed. 1927.
- 4 Those three works were newly edited, translated into modern Turkish and published in one volume by Mehmet Kanar, *Abdullah Cevdet, Hüseyin Dâniş, Hüseyin Rifat: Ömer Khayyam Rubailer*, Istanbul: 2000.
- 5 Mehmed Nuri Gencosman, *Hayyam'dan Rubailer* [Quatrains from Khayyam], Ankara: 1963.
- 6 Kemal, *Rubâiler* [Quatrains].
- 7 E.H. Whinfield, *The Quatrains of Omar Khayyâm*, 2nd ed. Londen: 1901.
- 8 Kemal, "Rubâiler," in *Rubâiler* [Quatrains], p.28.
- 9 The motto of Kemal to "Hayyam Rubâilerini Türkçe Söyleyiş" [The Quatrains by Khayyam in Turkish], in *Rubâiler* [Quatrains], p.49.
- 10 Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, *Hayyam*, Istanbul: 1973.
- 11 Kemal's translations are from Kemal, "Türkçe Söyleyiş" [In Turkish], in *Rubâiler* [Quatrains].
- 12 Eyüboğlu's translations are from Eyüboğlu, *Hayyam*.
- 13 The first line in Persian is: 'Tâ Zuhra-u Mâh dar âsmân gashî padîd')
- 14 The following quatrains are from Kemal, "Rubâiler," in *Rubâiler* [Quatrains].

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Other Persian Quatrains in Holland: the *Roseaie du Savoir* of Ḥusayn-i Āzād

J.T.P. de Bruijn
(Leiden University)

In 1932 the Dutch poet and classical scholar Pieter C. Boutens published a collection of one-hundred Dutch quatrains under the title *Honderd Hollandsche kwatrijnen*. These poems are not translations, but entirely original poems, without any trace of romantic Orientalism; no names of ancient Persian kings, no wine, no roses and nightingales. Apart from the prosodical features only a few items remind us of Persian literature: for instance, the crown and the beggar's bowl, or the king's robe of honour and the rags worn by a dervish – who would not think of the contrast between king and beggar in so many Persian texts? The image in the final lines of Boutens' concluding quatrain is also unmistakably Persian:

Nothing but empty bridges of twilight
Between the moth and his starry candle.

The “Hollandsche kwatrijnen” are characteristic of Boutens' own poetics, marked by an ideosyncratic Platonic symbolism. In an intimate monologue he speaks to a transcendental person about his desire to escape from this limited existence and to unite with eternal beauty, which he can only reach after death.¹

Reading these remarkable Dutch quatrains, I could not escape the impression that there are more “Persian” elements than appear at first sight. But this impression could only be tested by a thorough analysis of the text, which has still to be carried out. In this paper I cannot go further than to explore the context in which the poems were written.

Many Dutch poets of the 20th century wrote original poems in the form that came to be known as the ‘Oosterse kwatrijn’ (the Eastern quatrain); sometimes very serious poems, sometimes no more than light verse. If there is anything Persian about them, this can be retraced to ‘Umar Khayyām and in particular Edward FitzGerald.²

To Boutens the choice of this Persian form for his own poetry was the outcome of a long process of interiorisation of Persian poetry, which began about 1913 when he published his versions of Khayyām's quatrains. Only a few years before the *Hollandsche kwatrijnen*, Boutens had published

another volume of *Oudperzische kwatrijnen* (Ancient Persian quatrains). This was based on a collection of Persian mystical quatrains, appearing in 1906 in two parts: one, published in Paris, was entitled *La Roseaie du Savoir. Choix de quatrains mystiques tirés des meilleurs auteurs persans*, and contained French prose translations of mystical quatrains; the other part, with the Persian texts, was printed by E.J. Brill in Leiden.

The French part of this anthology became a fairly popular book in the Netherlands. It profited from the popularity of 'Umar Khayyām in the Netherlands during the first decades of the 20th century. Yet few translations were made, apart from Boutens' *Oudperzische kwatrijnen*. Johan Hendrik Leopold made a smaller selection, of thirty-two of the quatrains. It is remarkable that the *Roseaie* did not have a similar success in other Western countries, either with the general public, or with the orientalist. The only translations into a European language known to me are by the Czech Orientalist Věra Kubíčková.³

No Dutch poet of the last century, not even Leopold, was as fascinated by Persian quatrains as Boutens. What impressed him was not Khayyām, and certainly not Edward FitzGerald's version, of which he did not hold a very high opinion. Rather, it was the *Roseaie*, which opened to him a much wider range of the Persian poetical tradition than the rather limited themes of the Khayyāmian corpus.

The Persian author of this anthology is not named in Western histories of Persian literature. Even Edward Browne never mentions him. Also in Persia, few people still know who he was. His biography can only be retraced from the scant information he gave about himself in the introductions to his published anthologies and from a limited number of other sources.

The Life of Ḥusayn-i Āzād

The full name of the anthologist was Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān of Tabriz. However, on the titlepages of his books he called himself "Hoceýne-Azad," or Ḥusayn-i Āzād in the transcription used in this article. Āzād ("the free one") was evidently a *takhalluṣ*, or pen name, but no poems of his, in which he might have used it, are known to me. Perhaps he only adopted it when he began to publish his anthologies in exile, and as we will see, it is very likely that this choice had an autobiographical significance.

Ḥusayn must have been born in Tabriz around 1850. His grandfather was a merchant in the capital of Azerbaijan, which in the 19th century was the most progressive city of Qajar Iran. Several leaders of the reform movement before and during the Constitutional Revolution were Azarbaijanis. Ḥusayn's father, Mīrzā Yūsuf Khān, who later received the honorific name Mustashār al-Dowla, "Counsellor of the State," was a

diplomat who was stationed in Russia, Georgia and France. He became a supporter of the reformer Malkum Khān, who had a great political influence in Iran until he fell out with the Qajar ruler Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. From London, where he had been the Shāh's ambassador, Malkum Khān promoted his political ideas in many publications, including a periodical entitled *Qānūn*, "the Law." This title summarizes the essence of his program: the establishment of a constitutional government in Persia under the rule of law. Following in his footsteps, Mustashār al-Dowla wrote a pamphlet entitled *Yak kalima*, "One Word," by which Malkum's keyword *qānūn* was intended. He advocated the introduction of a secular code of laws, modelled on the French legal system, that would be valid for moslems and non-moslems alike. The Islamic Shari'a would be relevant only for strictly religious matters.⁴

During the following decades, Mustashār al-Dowla played a role in Iranian politics as a minister in the reformist cabinet of Ḥusayn Khān Sipahsālār, but little progress was made in the implementation of his ideas about the change of autocratic rule. In 1891 he came into conflict with the Shah. He was put in jail and brutally tortured. Four years later he died from the injuries.

The tragic ending of his father's life must have made a deep impression on his son Ḥusayn. However, this did not induce him to take part in the revolutionary upheaval in Persia. Throughout the years of the constitutional revolution he led the life of a private scholar living far from his country, and there are no signs that he took any interest in the events to which his father had been such an important intellectual forerunner.

Ḥusayn was educated in Europe where his family travelled from one country to another. This enabled him to acquire a good knowledge of more than one Western language, including Latin. He also became well-read in Persian literature. In the late 1860s, he began his medical studies in Paris, continuing them in England during the Franco-German war of 1870-71. After the war he took his *doctorat en médecine* in Paris and then returned to Persia. At that moment his father was at the peak of his political career, which must have helped him to gain access to the Qajar court. He joined the team of medical advisors, including the French doctor Tholozan, who guarded the health of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. Here he caught the attention of the eldest son of the Shah, prince Mas'ūd, who hired him as his personal physician.

Prince Mas'ūd, who is better known by his honorific Zill al-Sultān, "Shadow of Royal Power" was, even more than his father, the personification of Qajar autocratic rule. As the Shah's governor he controlled the central and southern provinces of Persia from his residence in Isfahan. He arrogated great powers to himself, even recruiting his own army which was dressed in Prussian uniforms. The memory of his ruthless and, at times, cruel behaviour has lived on in Persia to the present day. It is reflected in

the short novel *Prince Ihtijāb* (1969) by Hūshang Gulshīrī, one of the most remarkable works in recent Persian literature.⁵ On the other hand, the Zill al-Sultān liked to pose as an enlightened ruler who was open to modern inventions, and he maintained good relations with the British, then the most influential foreign power in southern Persia. Many Europeans came to Isfahan to visit the formidable governor. Among them was Wilfrid Sparroy, an English tutor to whom Zill al-Sultān entrusted the education of his children. He wrote a book about his experiences at the court of Isfahan, in which an entire chapter is devoted to the “Persian virtuoso” whom he met there in 1898.⁶ This was the Zill al-Sultān’s physician, Dr. Ḥusayn Mīrzā. Sparroy describes him as a very erudite man with a modern frame of mind. He distinguished himself from the rest of the courtiers by not trying to enrich himself, although he could not stay entirely aloof from the petty rivalries in this environment. Sparroy makes mention of the antagonism between the doctor and another courtier by the name of Āghā Bāshī:

*“...two men, who were not only opponents contending for the upper hand in the Court circle, but also rivals in the pursuit of a hobby, the collecting of old Persian manuscripts. That the doctor, who is probably the most learned man in his country, and able to hold his own in any circle in England and France, his knowledge of the languages spoken there being absolutely faultless, could be jealous of an effete individual who can neither read nor write, did not enter into my calculations...”*⁷

This kind of life had made Ḥusayn a very suspicious man, who seemed to be deeply unhappy. His intellectual refuge was the study of Persian art and literature. He told the English teacher that his ambition was to make a huge illustrated volume on the illumination of Persian manuscripts:

I am on the way of being the authority on the Persian illuminated art work. My collection is fairly representative, and is the result of many years of patient toil. I had it in mind at one time to write a book on the subject, that should be published in France.

For the purpose of copying ancient manuscripts he employed a calligrapher “who can challenge comparison with our Old Masters in the art of writing and illuminating the works of Persian poets.”⁸

Sparroy was sceptical about the chances that this monumental book would ever be written, and indeed it never was. In 1899, one year after his meeting with Sparroy, Ḥusayn left for Europe on the pretext of visiting the International Exhibition in Paris. He did not return to his post in Isfahan.

A few details of the later years of his life in Paris have been recorded by other eyewitnesses. He is pictured as a depressive, withdrawn person

spending his life entirely on the study of Persian manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The only person with whom he was more or less befriended was Edgar Blochet, the keeper of the Oriental department of the library. The well-known Persian scholar Muḥammad Qazvīnī, who worked at the Paris library at the same time, remarked that Ḥusayn and Blochet shared a profound dislike of their fellow human beings.⁹ Ḥusayn refused to have any contacts with his compatriots. When the Iranian ambassador needed to talk to him he had to act as a postman in order to gain access to Ḥusayn's apartment. This lonely life came to an end in March 1938, when Ḥusayn was run over by a car on a Paris street. His collection of books and manuscripts, which he valued so highly, was auctioned in London at Quaritz.¹⁰

La Roseraie du Savoir

Instead of the *magnum opus* he had dreamed about in Isfahan, Ḥusayn-i Āzād prepared in Paris four anthologies from Persian poetry in a French prose translation, starting in 1903 with an anthology of fragments from the *ghazals* of Bābā Fighānī (fl. about 1500), *Les Perles de la Couronne*, introduced by a sketch of the history and the main features of the Persian *ghazal*. The series was concluded in 1916 by *Guêpes et Papillons*, a volume containing short pieces of Persian poetry which he called “*épigrammes et madrigaux*.” The first and the last anthologies contain only French translations, but the second and third were accompanied by the separately bound Persian texts, printed in Leiden. In 1906 the aforementioned *La Roseraie du Savoir*, and the Persian text entitled *Gulshan-i maʿrifat* (The Rosegarden of Knowledge), were published. This was followed in 1909 by *l'Aube de l'Espérance*, and the Persian *Ṣubḥ-i Ummīd* (The Dawn of Hope), devoted to fragments from *mathnavīs*, longer poems with a narrative or didactical content. Āzād's aim was to acquaint the European public not only with selected specimens of the most important forms of Persian poetry, but also with the basic ideas and themes of Persian mysticism. The Dutch poet Leopold used both the *Roseraie* and the *Aube* for his versions of Persian poems, but his confrere Boutens concentrated on the volume of quatrains.¹¹

La Roseraie du Savoir is a volume of 470 mystical quatrains by Persian poets who lived between the eleventh and the nineteenth centuries. The earliest were three great mystics – Abū Saʿīd, Kharaqānī and Ansārī of Herat – who all lived in the eleventh century. Other great names from the mediaeval Sufi tradition represented are Sanāʾī, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Rūmī, Saʿdī, Jāmī, and Bābā Afḍal. Most of the poets in this anthology lived in Safavid times or later. By far the most often cited poet is Saḥābī of Astarābād, a prolific writer of quatrains who lived as a secluse in the Shiʿite holy city of Najaf in Iraq in the late sixteenth century. Many of

these poets are no more than names to us. Āzād does not give many details concerning his sources, but it is obvious that he relied much on the great Persian anthologies, the *tadhkiras*. Most of these works were compiled between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, in both Iran and India. The youngest poet is Riḍā-Qulī Khān Hidāyat, who died in 1871, and was therefore partly a contemporary of Āzād. He was also the author of two comprehensive anthologies of Persian poetry that are both cited by Āzād.

The *Roseaie* is divided into twelve chapters and a short epilogue. The headings refer to central Sufi themes, such as “De la connaissance de Dieu”, “La création et l’Homme”, “l’Orgeuil et l’Humilité”, “La vanité du Monde”, and “Le véritable Amour”. The poems are distributed over these chapters on the basis of their contents without any regard of chronology. This suggests that they are selected to document a perennial mystical wisdom, unchanged over more than eight centuries.

A passage in the introduction tells something about Āzād’s motivation. He points to the great enthusiasm in the West for ‘Umar Khayyām, which in the first decade of the twentieth century was at its apogee:

The first idea to write this book came to me a few years ago in Isfahan during a conversation with an officer of the British-Indian army. He had a fine taste and was a great lover of literature. When we touched upon the subject of Persian poetry he revealed to me his passion for Khayyām and told me how much he was admired in England. I was deeply moved by his words, but a bit like the person from Tabriz in front of whom some one boasts of the fruits in his hometown, whereas Tabriz produces excellent fruits of all kinds.¹²

This Western craze contrasted with the almost complete ignorance of the poems of the famous scholar among Iranians at the time. Āzād found the exclusive attention devoted to Khayyām’s *rubā’iyyāt* in Europe and America exaggerated and onesided. He wanted to balance this by assembling a volume of quatrains which he regarded as at least as interesting as those of ‘Umar. His own collection contained just three quatrains ascribed to ‘Umar. His personal favourite was the mystical sheikh Abū Sa‘īd. He claims that many cultivated people in Persia shared this view. Risking the outrage of the members of the London Khayyām Club, he declares that he would gladly give the entire poetical output of the “algebrarian of Nishapur” in exchange for fifty quatrains by Abū Sa‘īd.¹³

The notes to the French translation are very copious, as they are in Āzād’s other anthologies. He turns into every side-path that presents itself to him. One cannot escape the impression that he likes to show off his erudition, which was indeed amazing. However, these digressions are a rich source of information about his frame of mind and his preferences. His principal aim in collecting these anthologies was to make Persian literature

better known to the Western public and to demonstrate how much these poems have in common with the works of their own poets, philosophers and mystics. To enable them to make the comparison he cites not only many prominent French writers, but also great names from English and German literature. Among the philosophers Schopenhauer, *le Sage de Francfort*, is one his favorites. He is well read in the devotional works that would be familiar to his French Catholic readers and frequently cites from Blaise Pascal, the letters of St. François de Sales and other Christian saints. He is familiar with the works of some of the Orientalists of the nineteenth century, such as Nathaniel Bland, Joseph Garcin de Tassy and Hermann Ethé. Several times he refers critically to the French translation of Khayyām's quatrains by J.B. Nicolas,¹⁴ notorious for his consistently mystical readings, but not once to FitzGerald, although the fame of the *Rubáiyát* was the cause of his own project.

■ Husayn-i Āzād and Modern Persian Culture

The course of Āzād's life made him into a marginal figure in modern Persian culture. As we saw, he did not participate at all in the political life of his country, but he also did not make any contribution to the renewal of Persian literature, the great concern of most other poets and writers of his time. His upbringing and his early contacts with the leading modernists of the mid-nineteenth century gave him a broad outlook on both Western and traditional Persian culture. This could have been a strong incentive to make an important contribution to a new synthesis of East and West. Yet he did not take this course.

The main reasons for his isolation in self-imposed exile seem to have been the traumatic experiences after his return to Persia, first among them the cruel fate of his father and his own humiliation at the court of Isfahan, where he was confronted with Qajar despotism in its ugliest form. His life shows some similarities with that of the modern prose writer Šādiq Hidāyat, a loner like Āzād, who in 1951 also died as an exile in Paris. The two men, both descendants from the elite of the Qajar period, shared a pessimistic outlook on the development of Persian society in their lifetimes. However, the manner in which they reacted was quite different. Hidāyat, unlike Āzād, sought inspiration in the pre-Islamic past and in the popular culture of Persia, not in the traditional high literature of the Islamic tradition and Persia's mystical heritage. The sole classical poet whom he admired was ʿUmar Khayyām, in whom he recognized the reflection of his own worldview.¹⁵

In spite of his almost pathological avoidance of his compatriots during his later life in Paris, Āzād shows a missionary zeal to share the treasures of his own culture with the Western public. He was constantly searching for points of similarities between Christian and Muslim cultural traditions.

His own religious beliefs are by no means clear. Wilfrid Sparroy discussed free thought and faith with him, and said that he was “an agnostic, who would like to know.”¹⁶ He had a strange affinity for Catholic spirituality, but there is no indication that he had become a Christian, though he was probably not a Muslim anymore. Even his great interest in Sufism seems to be that of an interested outsider, not of a true mystic, let alone a practising Sufi. One of the last translations in this anthology is a quatrain by Jāmī:

*Lorsque l’Océan respire, il se produit ce qu’on nomme des vapeurs;
celles-ci se réunissant forment une masse qui s’appelle un nuage.
Le nuage répand des gouttes (d’eau) et se change en pluie; cette
pluie devient un torrent, et finalement le torrent retourne à la mer*

*(When the ocean exhales, it produces what one calls vapours; these
unite to form a mass that is called a cloud.
The cloud scatters drops and turns into rain; this rain becomes a
flood, and finally the flood returns to the ocean.)*

In this image of the circular course of existence Āzād recognizes the fundamental Sufi doctrine.¹⁷

The only place in the world where Ḥusayn-i Āzād’s work received a noticeable response was the Netherlands. He was fortunate to attract the attention of two outstanding Dutch poets of the early twentieth century, Pieter Boutens and Johan Hendrik Leopold. They were both inspired by his anthologies, although they knew nothing about the anthologist or the poets represented in his *Roseaie du Savoir*, and very little about the Persian language and its literature. On the other hand, it was also Āzād’s fate that he landed up in the secret garden of a national culture, enclosed by the forbidding wall of the Dutch language.

Notes

- 1 P.C. Boutens, *Honderd Hollandsche kwatrijnen*, Haarlem: Joh. Enschedé and Zonen, 1932. In Dutch the quoted lines read: Niets dan de leêge bruggen van de scheemring / Tusschen den nachtmoet en zijn sterrekaars.
- 2 On the reception of Khayyām’s quatrains in the Netherlands, see the essay by Marco Goud.
- 3 Rubá’ijāt. *Výbor ze starých mystiků*, Prague: Symposium, 1948.
- 4 The pamphlet has been published and translated, with an introduction, by A. Seyed-Gohrab and S.M. McGlinn, *The Essence of Modernity: Mirza Yusof Khan Mustashar ad-Dowla Tabrizi’s Treatise on Codified Law (Yak Kaleme)*, 2nd revised edition, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, & West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008.
- 5 The most recent English translation of Golshiri’s novel is by James Buchan, *The Prince*, The Harvill Press, 2005; a Dutch translation in *Prins Ehtedjâb en andere Iraanse verhalen*, Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2007.

- 6 Wilfrid Sparroy, *Persian Children of the Royal Family. The narrative of a tutor at the court of H.I.H. Zillu' as-Sultan*, London and New York: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1902, pp. 157-75 and passim. 50.
- 7 Sparroy, *Persian Children*., p. 50.
- 8 Ibid., p. 165.
- 9 Muḥammad Qazvīnī, "Yāddāshthā-yi tārikhī" in *Yādgār* IV/4, 1325-1326/1946-1947, pp. 19-20.
- 10 A biographical notice on Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Āzād is contained in Mahdī Bāmdād, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i rijāl-i Īrān*, 4 volumes, 2nd print, Tehran: Zavvār, 1371/1992, I, p. 378, citing from Tārikh-i Iṣfahān va Ray by Hājī Mīrzā Ḥasan Anṣārī, who was a collaborator of Ḥusayn during his years at the court of Zill al-Sulṭān. Bāmdād also enters notices on Ḥusayn father (IV, pp. 490-493) and his nephew Sādiq Mustashār al-Dowla (II, pp. 166-168), a progressive member of the first two Persian parliaments. I owe these references to the kind help of Dr. Iraj Afshar.
- 11 Leopold's translations from the *Roseaie* have been studied by G.J. Dorleijn (J.H. Leopold *Gedichten uit de nalatenschap*, 2 volumes, Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1984, from the perspective of modern Dutch poetry. Much less attention has been paid to the translations of Boutens.
- 12 Hocéýne Āzād, *La Roseaie*, Introduction, p. vii.
- 13 Ibidem, p. viii.
- 14 *Les quatrains de Khèyam*, traduit du persan par J.B. Nicolas, Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 1867; several reprints.
- 15 On Šādiq Hidāyat's understanding of Khayyām's philosophy see H. Kamshad, *Modern Persian Prose Literature*, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 149-150, and the monograph by Homa Katuziyan, *Sadeq Hedayat: the life and literature of an Iranian writer*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1991.
- 16 Sparroy, *Persian Children*, p. 170.
- 17 Hocéýne Āzād, *La Roseaie*, pp. 343-344, quatrain nr. 469.

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‘Umar Khayyām’s Impact on Dutch Literature

M. Goud

(Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam)

This essay will survey the reception of ‘Umar Khayyām in Dutch literature, from the first translation in 1910 to the most recent echo of Khayyām in Dutch literature.¹⁸ In his renowned 1929 Khayyām bibliography, Ambrose George Potter mentions only two Dutch translations, but many more have appeared since.¹⁹ The recently published bibliography by Jos Coumans lists 40 Dutch editions.²⁰ Khayyām’s work is still being translated into Dutch today. I will focus on the poet and translator P.C. Boutens, whose biography I am currently preparing. I will conclude with a current case study of Khayyām’s reception in Dutch literature.

The First Dutch Translations

In 1910, more than fifty years after Edward FitzGerald’s publication of his *Rubāiyāt* in 1859, the first volume of Khayyām’s quatrains appeared in Dutch, entitled *Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat: naar het Engelsch van FitzGerald* by Chr. van Balen Jr.²¹ The collection contains 76 quatrains, and as the title indicates they were based on the translations made by FitzGerald. The illustrations by Jessie M. King were taken from an earlier English edition dating from 1903.²² Van Balen translated Khayyām as well as works of Oscar Wilde. This combination was not uncommon, as we will see. Although van Balen remained very much in the margin of Dutch literary history, he was the first of a long parade of Khayyām translators in Dutch, among whom we find more prestigious poets such as J.H. Leopold and P. C. Boutens.

In 1911, one year after van Balen’s publication, the poet and classicist J. H. Leopold (1865-1925) published a series of 29 quatrains of ‘Umar Khayyām in the journal *De Nieuwe Gids*, entitled ‘*Uit de Rubaiyat*’ (‘From the Rubaiyat’).²³ Leopold did not really need van Balen to discover Khayyām, for he himself had already published a review on J.K.M. Shirazi’s biography entitled *Life of Omar-al-Khayyāmi* (1905) in *De Nederlandsche Spectator* of 1906.²⁴ His translation therefore was not the first sign of interest in Khayyām, nor the last. There is another Khayyām quatrain in Leopold’s volume *Oostersch (Eastern or Oriental)*, published in 1924, together with other translations of Persian and Arabic poets by Leopold.²⁵ At his death in 1925, Leopold left behind a massive amount of

unpublished work, including a series of 24 quatrains entitled 'Omar Khayam' (sic), which were published posthumously.²⁶

Unlike van Balen, Leopold's translations were not based on FitzGerald, but on the English and German translations of E.H. Whinfield (1909) and Friedrich Rosen (1909). For his second series of translations, he used the French translation by Claude Anet & Mirza Muhammad (1920). Pessimism plays a great role in Leopold's Khayyām edition: life is pointless and mankind is helpless and impotent. What remains in life is an instant moment and lust. For this I would like to refer to the contribution of Dick van Halsema in this volume.²⁷

P.C. Boutens as Translator of 'Umar Khayyām

Another important Dutch translator is the poet and classicist P.C. Boutens (1870-1943).²⁸ Boutens had several things in common with Leopold. They were both renowned Dutch poets before World War II. They are both representative of Dutch literary Symbolist authors. They were both classicists. Finally, both Boutens and Leopold translated Persian poets, including 'Umar Khayyām. There is also a direct connection between these two poets. Out of admiration for his fellow poet, Boutens edited a bibliophile volume of Leopold's collected poems in 1912 (against Leopold's wish), including Leopold's Khayyām quatrains of 1911.²⁹

Leopold's work may have inspired Boutens to translate Khayyām as well, for one year later, in 1913, Boutens published three series with a total of one hundred quatrains by Khayyām in three different journals: thirty quatrains in *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* (April 1913), thirty quatrains in *De Nieuwe Gids* (May 1913) and forty quatrains in *Groot Nederland* (July 1913). Together, all one hundred quatrains were published in a volume entitled *Rubaiyat*, which appeared in the autumn of 1913.³⁰ The cover, with oriental motifs, was designed by C.A. Lion Cachet. Being a fervent bibliophile, Boutens ordered, in addition to the regular edition, thirty luxurious copies with a gilt leather cover, printed on Japanese paper.³¹ A second edition of Boutens's *Rubaiyat* appeared in 1919.

Boutens's translations are very different from Leopold's. They are more mystical, focusing more on a higher, divine Love, and less on the earthly aspects of profane love. As such, his Khayyām translations fitted in with his other translations: he translated classical authors such as Homer, Sappho and Plato, and contemporary poets such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Oscar Wilde. We have seen before, in van Balen's case, that the combination of Khayyām and Oscar Wilde was a popular one. Boutens's translations are also strongly influenced by the mystical interpretations of the French translator J.B. Nicolas (1867), but this was not the only source he used.

Like Leopold, Boutens did not use FitzGerald's translation as a basis for his own. In a letter to another famous Dutch author Lodewijk van Deyssel, on November 8th 1918, Boutens wrote that he thought the 'doggerel' verse by FitzGerald – he does not call them poems, but 'rhymes' – were 'inadequate'.³² In the same letter he mentions the translators he preferred: Edward Heron-Allen's edition of the Bodleian manuscript and the French translation of J.B. Nicolas. Moreover, he says that he has used American and German translations, without specifying them. The German translation might include those of Adolf von Schack, Friedrich Bodenstedt or Friedrich Rosen.³³ Research by Orientalists such as J.H. Kramers and J.T. P. de Bruijn has proven that Boutens combined several translations, including the French translation by J.B. Nicolas and the English translation by E.H. Whinfield.³⁴ In addition, a few years ago I discovered a manuscript with 64 quatrains of Khayyām translated by Boutens, which demonstrated that he also used the English translation by Justin Huntley McCarthy.³⁵ McCarthy's translation, entitled *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, was published by David Nutt in London in 1889 (2nd edition: 1898). It was reprinted, together with FitzGerald's translation, by Brentano's in New York in 1909. McCarthy's prose translation was based on the French translation by Nicolas. In his manuscript, Boutens marked the quatrains with the abbreviations 'N.' and 'Mc.' and with numbers that correspond with the numbers in the editions of Nicolas and McCarthy. With the discovery of this manuscript we can conclude that Boutens used at least these two translations. This manuscript is also interesting for the variant readings it contains, which enable us to study how Boutens went about translating the quatrains.³⁶

In short, Boutens certainly used translations by Nicolas and McCarthy and maybe other English and German translations. In addition, he consulted an expert to help him understand Khayyām's quatrains.

In the same letter to Van Deyssel of November 8th 1918, Boutens mentions his visits to a 'learned friend' of his, who guided him in his study of the original texts in Persian. This is how Boutens gained insight into 'the distinguished and excellent form of the Persian *rubai*, which we can compare with our sonnet,' as he writes in this letter. Although Boutens did not translate directly from the Persian, we can see from this letter that he did study the original texts with the help of a learned friend. The scholar's name is not mentioned, but he was probably Professor William Brede Kristensen (1867-1953) at Leiden.³⁷ Boutens was well acquainted with him and his wife, and often visited the Kristensens in Leiden.³⁸

Boutens's letter to van Deyssel refers to another interesting aspect of the reception history of the quatrains. Van Deyssel had met the Englishman Henry Wildermuth (who lived in the Netherlands) in Haarlem in 1918. Wildermuth was very interested in literature. He was an admirer of Boutens and was captivated by his translations of Khayyām. Through van

Deyssel, Wildermuth asked Boutens some questions about his quatrains, and Boutens answered these questions in his letter to van Deyssel. At the end of this letter, Boutens wrote: "I would be pleased to meet your Englishman personally and give him more information." Boutens and Wildermuth would indeed meet each other in 1919, followed by more meetings in the subsequent years and the exchange of letters about Khayyām, among other things. Boutens did not say much more about his sources in his letters. Wildermuth was writing an essay about 'Umar Khayyām and included several quatrains from Boutens that Wildermuth had translated into English, but he never published this essay nor his own translations.³⁹

Boutens's Khayyām translations had an impact on the literary culture of the time, but also a broader, cultural impact in the arts, theatre and music. About 1916, plans were made for an illustrated edition of Boutens's quatrains. The illustrations were made by the Dutch artist Willem Arondéus. Unfortunately, this edition was never published. The second edition of 1919 did not contain Arondéus's illustrations. They were preserved, however, and were ultimately published in a bibliophile edition, containing ten quatrains by Boutens and the corresponding illustrations by Arondéus, in 1995.⁴⁰

Also in 1916, students at Delft University performed a theatre play about 'Umar Khayyām.⁴¹ The performance took place in the auditorium *Diligentia*, most likely in The Hague, on Tuesday evening February 8th 1916. An extensive report of this performance was published in the *Studenten Weekblad* (a Delft student weekly) of February 17th 1916.⁴² In the course of this play, Khayyām's quatrains were recited in Boutens's translation. As far as I know, this is the first performance of Khayyām's quatrains in the Netherlands. It is interesting to note that the lyrical quatrains are transformed into a drama performance. Although no visual evidence of the performance has survived (unfortunately the report was not illustrated), the account offers some information on the theatrical setting: the stage was set up as a tavern, where 'Umar Khayyām was seated among his guests, drinking wine and ventilating his wisdom. In between the recitals of the quatrains (by Khayyām as well as by other actors such as a potter and a cup-bearer), music was played and young women performed dances. Unfortunately it is not known what music was played. We know of only one composition based on Boutens's Khayyām-translations: *Viif kwatrijnen uit Rubaiyat van Omar Khayyam vertaald door P.C. Boutens [...] voor 4-stemmig gemengd koor a capella* (Five quatrains from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam translated by P.C. Boutens [...] for an *a capella* choir of four voices), by the Dutch composer Willem Smalt. The composition, which was printed in Brussels, was not dated. Various sources give dates varying from 1916 to 1930.⁴³ Therefore it is unlikely – but not impossible – that Smalt's music was used in the students' play.

Boutens continued to be fascinated by Persian literature. In 1926 he published another bibliophile volume entitled *Oud-Perzische kwatrijnen* (Old-Persian Quatrains).⁴⁴ This collection does not contain any of Khayyām's quatrains but Boutens's Dutch translations of other Persian poets, based on the French translations in Hocéyue Âzad's anthology *La roseraie du savoir: Choix de quatrains mystiques tirés des meilleurs auteurs persans* (Leiden/Paris, 1906).⁴⁵ A commercial edition of *Oud-Perzische kwatrijnen* appeared in 1930, using the same cover by Lion Cachet that had been used for Boutens's *Rubaiyat* edition of 1913. In 1932, Boutens published a collection with quatrains of his own invention, entitled *Honderd Hollandsche kwatrijnen* (One Hundred Dutch Quatrains), undoubtedly inspired by Persian quatrains. Finally, the motto of Boutens's last volume of poetry, *Tusschenspelen* (1942) (Interludes), was a Persian quatrain by Jāmī.⁴⁶ We may conclude that Boutens was fascinated by Persian poetry until the very end of his life.

Translators after Leopold and Boutens

After Boutens's translations, it was some time before a new collection of Khayyām's quatrains appeared in Dutch. Instead, poems were written about Khayyām, or were dedicated to him. Several Dutch men of letters such as A. Roland Holst and M. Nijhoff mentioned Khayyām's name in their essays.⁴⁷ Anthonie Donker wrote a poem entitled 'Omar Khayyam' in his collection *Acheron* (1926).⁴⁸ Jacob Israel de Haan wrote numerous quatrains which were inspired by Khayyām.⁴⁹ But neither poet translated Khayyām's work.

In 1931, a volume of one hundred quatrains by Khayyām, translated into Dutch by the poet Willem de Mérode appeared.⁵⁰ Like Boutens and Leopold, De Mérode did not use FitzGerald. He based his translations on the German translations by Maximilian Schenck, among others. De Mérode's volume begins with a sonnet about Khayyām. De Mérode's translations are rather orientated to Christianity.

Not all poets who translated Khayyām felt compelled to translate a hundred quatrains. Some of them only translated a single poem or a limited number of quatrains, and included these in a larger volume of their own work. The poet J. Slauerhoff translated two of Khayyām's quatrains and integrated it in his volume entitled *Archipel* (Archipelago, 1924).⁵¹ J.C. Bloem translated one quatrain and integrated it in his volume *Afscheid* (Farewell, 1957).⁵²

A revival of Khayyām translations and editions can be observed in the Netherlands during World War II.⁵³ Several editions appeared, mostly published clandestinely because of circumstances during the war. In 1941, for instance, a clandestine reprint of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* was published by L.J.C. Boucher. In 1944, A.A. Balkema published an edition of FitzGerald's *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām*. The typography was

done by the famous Dutch typographer Jan van Krimpen. A reprint appeared in 1945. It is remarkable that bibliophile editions of Khayyām translations in the Netherlands mostly appeared during and after World War II and that they were mostly based on FitzGerald.

Although FitzGerald had not been used as a basis for the translations of earlier poets (such as Leopold, Boutens and De Mérode), FitzGerald inspired new translators, such as H.W.J.M. Keuls, Johan van Schagen, Dirk Jorritsma, J.A. Vooren and Joh. Weiland, who did use FitzGerald both during and after World War II. Keuls published a volume entitled *Rondeelen en kwatrijnen* (Roundels and quatrains) in 1941, in which he included ten of Khayyām quatrains (two quatrains were based on the German translation of Klabund and eight were based on FitzGerald's translation). Keuls also published a volume entitled *Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam* under the pseudonym Ponticus in 1944, with illustrations by John Buckland Wright. Johan van Schagen published a volume of FitzGerald's quatrains in 1947. In 1954, an edition appeared with his translations, illustrated by Theo Forrer.⁵⁴ A new edition with Van Schagen's translations and an elaborated epilogue and a bibliography of Dutch translators appeared in 1995. An edition with translations by Dirk Jorritsma and illustrations by Edwin Engels appeared in 1954. J.A. Vooren published a volume with his translations of Khayyām's quatrains in 1955, partly based on FitzGerald.

Joh. Weiland's 1960 Dutch translation of Khayyām, based on FitzGerald, is an important milestone in the popularisation of Khayyām. It was published in a large edition for the Netherlands at that time (24,400 copies) by the Wereldbibliotheek (World Library), which offered literature in cheap editions on a large scale.⁵⁵ Most Dutch Khayyām editions were smaller, and the bibliophile editions (of Boutens and Leopold, and those that were made in World War II) are much smaller. This is why several Dutch Khayyām quatrains are virtually unknown.

Some translations are hidden in journals, or even remain unpublished. This is the case with 'Vier kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam' by the poet Hans Warren (1921-2001), published in the journal *Zeeuws Tijdschrift* in 1964.⁵⁶ Until now, Warren's quatrains have not been mentioned in any of the surveys of Dutch Khayyām translations. Warren used the French translation *Les 144 Quatrains d'Omar Khayyām* by Claude Anet & Mirza Muhammad (Paris, 1920), which had also been used by J.H. Leopold. Recently, I discovered unpublished typescripts and manuscripts in the Hans Warren archive in the Zeeuwse Bibliotheek in Middelburg. These reveal that Warren intended to translate all 144 quatrains by Anet and Muhammad into Dutch. He translated a first set of one hundred quatrains in 1955. He sent a sample of twelve quatrains to the publisher Bert Bakker, but Bakker considered them unfit for publication. In the end, Warren published only four quatrains, in 1964. I hope to discuss this case of Dutch Khayyām reception in a future article.

Very few Dutch translators translated the quatrains directly from the primary Persian sources. An exception is Frits Pijl (pseudonym for J. Slikboer) who published a collection entitled *Kwatrijnen van Omar-i-Chayyām* in 1947, with an introduction by the Leiden Orientalist J.H. Kramers. Another exception is J.T.P. de Bruijn, a scholar of Persian Studies, who translated some quatrains from the original into Dutch in 2002. His new translations of Khayyām were published in 2009.⁵⁷

There is one phenomenon I should mention before dealing with the most recent examples of the impact of Khayyām in Dutch literature: the Dutch Omar Khayyām Society (*Nederlands Omar Khayyām Genootschap*). This society was founded by admirers, collectors and translators of Khayyām in 1990. They have been active in promoting Khayyām’s quatrains in the Netherlands, in cooperation with scholars of Dutch and Persian studies, who are also members of this society. Several members have translated ‘Umar Khayyām into Dutch, including Johan van Schagen and Dirk Jorritsma, who have already been mentioned, and W. Blok, Geert Bremer and Dirk Meursing. Jan Keijser, owner of the Avalon Press, a private press at Woubrugge, has printed several editions of Dutch Khayyām translations, as well as the yearbook of the society (*Jaarboek van het Nederlands Omar Khayyām Genootschap*), which has appeared five times. These yearbooks contain articles about Khayyām and translations of his quatrains.⁵⁸

Kader Abdolah and ‘Umar Khayyām

With Kader Abdolah, a Dutch author of Iranian descent, we see a new and original turn in the reception of Khayyām in the Netherlands. He has not translated the quatrains himself, but in his novels he uses intertextual references to classical Persian literature and more specifically to Dutch Khayyām translations made by others.

Kader Abdolah (the pen name of Hossein Sadjadi Ghaemmaghani Farahani) was born in Iran in 1954. He fled Iran and resides in the Netherlands since 1988. He soon mastered the Dutch language and made his debut with a collection of stories entitled *De adelaars* (The eagles) in 1993. He has published two more collections of stories and four novels since. He writes a weekly column, ‘Mirza’, in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant*. Four collections of his columns have appeared so far. In 2008, his translation of the Koran in Dutch was published, together with a novel about the origins of the Koran.

In his work, Abdolah repeatedly quotes from classical Persian poetry, including Khayyām’s quatrains, using Dutch translations. For example, in his novel *Spijkerschrift* (2000), he cites one of Khayyām’s quatrains in the translation of W. Blok, who in turn based his translation on FitzGerald’s.⁵⁹ The English translation of this novel, entitled *My father’s Notebook* (2006), evidently used FitzGerald’s translation: ‘We are no other than a moving

row / Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go / Round with the Sun illuminated Lantern held / In Midnight by the Master of the Show'.⁶⁰

More references of Khayyām can be found in Abdolah's novel *Portretten en een oude droom* (2003) (Portraits and an old dream). The novel is about Dawoed, a Persian journalist who has lived in Amsterdam for ten years, and his journey to South Africa. The account of his travels is interlaced with fragments of classical Persian literature that introduce each chapter. Khayyām's quatrains are cited in some of those chapters.⁶¹ One of the characters in the novel says: 'The man who was reading the poem I did not know, but the poems he read I knew indeed. They were written by the greatest poet of all times, Omar Khayyām.'⁶² In this case, Abdolah uses translations by J.T.P. de Bruijn and J. Weiland.⁶³ Khayyām appears again in the novel when the main character (Dawoed) is visiting the house of the South African writer and poet C.J. Langenhoven (1873-1932), which has been turned into a museum. In a showcase, he sees Langenhoven's translations of Khayyām.⁶⁴

Abdolah also uses Khayyām in the columns he writes for the national daily, *De Volkskrant*. On March 21, 2003, at the start of the war in Iraq, Abdolah wrote a column asking 'Wat moet ik met de oorlog?' ('What should I do about the war?'). To counter the American violence, Abdolah quotes three quatrains by Khayyām (again using Weiland's translation from 1960). We can conclude that Khayyām is being used for contemporary political affairs.

The popular Dutch writer Jan Wolkers (1925-2007) also cites a quatrain of Khayyām translated by J.H. Leopold, which is about wine-drinking, in his book *Zomerhitte* (Summer-heat) (2005).⁶⁵ Thus we can see that even the early translations are still being used nowadays and have a certain impact on contemporary Dutch literature. Undoubtedly there are more such examples.

Conclusion

I have certainly not offered an exhaustive overview of Khayyām reception in the Netherlands in this short paper. For example, the Flemish, Frisian and South-African (Afrikaans) translations, as well as the parodies and pastiches on or about Khayyām in Dutch, deserve more attention. I have only highlighted the most important Dutch translations of Khayyām's quatrains and pointed out some general tendencies. Van Balen was the first to translate Khayyām, using FitzGerald's translation. Undoubtedly the most important translators of Khayyām's quatrains in Dutch were Leopold and Boutens. Leopold used Whinfield, Rosen, and Anet & Muhammad, while Boutens used Nicolas and McCarthy and others, and even consulted a scholarly friend about the original Persian texts. We have been able to trace some of the sources that Boutens used for his translation, but more

research needs to be done, especially on his German sources. In World War II and beyond, FitzGerald's translations were edited and used again by a growing number of translators, poets, and artists (together with other translations from other languages). Their translations were used by contemporary authors such as Kader Abdolah, while another contemporary author, Jan Wolkers, reached back to Leopold's translations. Roughly speaking, three types of reception can be distinguished: a literary reception by poets, an academic reception by scholars and translators, and a reception by admirers and bibliophiles.

Notes

- 1 This overview is partly based on previous publications: J. Biegstraaten, "Een Pers in druk: Rubāiyāt van Omar Khayyām in de Lage Landen", in *De Boekenwereld* 13, 1997, pp. 112-128; J. Coumans, "Bibliografie", in *De Boekenwereld* 13, 1997, pp. 133-144; J. Biegstraaten, "Omaritis in de polder", in M. Goud and A. Seyed-Gohrab, eds., *De Perzische muze in de polder: De receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse literatuur*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 163-177; W. Spillebeen, "Omar Khayyam en zijn Rubaiyat (bij wijze van inventaris)", *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*, 117, 2007, 2, pp. 191-209. For further information about the reception in Holland see: J.T.P. de Bruijn, "De Perzische muze in de polder", in M. Goud and A. Seyed-Gohrab, eds., *De Perzische muze in de polder: De receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse literatuur*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 13-46; J. de Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten: Oriëntalisme in de Nederlandse cultuur ca. 1800-1920*, Leiden: Primavera Press, 2008.
- 2 A.G. Potter, *A Bibliography of the Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām together with kindred matter in prose and verse pertaining thereto*, London: Ingpen and Grant, 1929, p. 135.
- 3 J. Coumans, *The Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām: An updated bibliography*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010, p. 110-119.
- 4 Chr. van Balen Jr., *Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat: naar het Engelsch van Fitz-Gerald*, met illustraties door Jessie M. King en bandteekening van C.L. van Balen, Amsterdam: Scheltens & Giltay, 1910.
- 5 Biegstraaten, "Een Pers in druk", p. 113.
- 6 J.H. Leopold, *Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam voorafgegaan door een beschouwing over de Perzische dichter*, A.L. Sötemann and H.T.M. van Vliet, eds., Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & van Gennep, 1981, pp. 17-47. See also: J.H. Leopold, *Verzamelde verzen 1886-1925*, H.T.M. van Vliet, ed., Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & van Gennep, 2006, pp. 138-142.
- 7 Leopold, *Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, pp. 9-14.
- 8 Leopold, *Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, p. 77. See also: Leopold, *Verzamelde verzen*, p. 177 (nr. XXV).
- 9 Leopold, *Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, pp. 51-74. See also: Leopold, *Verzamelde verzen*, pp. 204-207.
- 10 See also: D. van Halsema, "Bittere zekerheid. J.H. Leopold over Omar Khayyam", *De Perzische muze in de polder: De receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse literatuur*, M. Goud and A. Seyed-Gohrab, eds., Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 115-135.
- 11 See about his poetry: M. Goud, *Ziende verbeelding. Over zien en (on)zichtbaarheid in poëzie en poëtica van P.C. Boutens*, Leuven: Peeters, 2003.

- 12 J.H. Leopold, Verzen, [P.C. Boutens, ed.], Brugge: Eduard Verbeke, 1912. See for more information: Leopold, *Verzamelde verzen*, pp. 554-555.
- 13 P.C. Boutens, *Rubaiyat: honderd kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, Bussum: C.A.J. van Dishoeck, 1913.
- 14 About the realization of this volume see: M. Goud, "Omar Khayyam onder de loep: Enkele notities over de totstandkoming van Boutens' *Rubaiyat* (1913)", in *Jaarboek 5 Nederlands Omar Khayyâm Genootschap*, Woubrugge: Avalon Press, 2009, pp. 22-25.
- 15 H.G.M. Prick, *Een vreemdeling op de wegen. Het leven van Lodewijk van Deyssel vanaf 1890*, Amsterdam: Querido, 2003, p. 855.
- 16 J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Omar Chajjâm en P.C. Boutens in de nalatenschap van J.H. Kramers", in *Jaarboek 3 Nederlands Omar Khayyam Genootschap*, Woubrugge: Avalon Press, 2000, pp. 38-45, especially p. 42.
- 17 De Bruijn, "Omar Chajjâm en P.C. Boutens in de nalatenschap van J.H. Kramers".
- 18 M. Goud, "Een boek met verzen: P.C. Boutens en Omar Khayyam", in *Jaarboek 3 Nederlands Omar Khayyam Genootschap*, Woubrugge: Avalon Press, 2000, pp. 49-57.
- 19 For further information see: Goud, "Een boek met verzen".
- 20 Other possibilities are: Martinus Houtsma (1851-1943) or T.J. de Boer (1866-1942). See: De Bruijn, "Omar Chajjâm en P.C. Boutens", p. 43 and Goud, "Een boek met verzen", pp. 53-54.
- 21 For further information see: M. Goud, "Honger naar kwatrijnen: P.C. Boutens en de Perzische literatuur", in M. Goud and A. Seyed-Gohrab, eds., *De Perzische muze in de polder: De receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse literatuur*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 95-96.
- 22 See: P. Begheyn, "P.C. Boutens en zijn Engelse bewonderaar Henry Wildermuth", in *Maatstaf*, 40, 1992, nr. 3, pp. 1-17; H.G.M. Prick, "'That fuller understanding, each to each': Lodewijk van Deyssel en Henry Wildermuth", in *Maatstaf* 40, 1992, nr. 10, pp. 48-65.
- 23 [P.C. Boutens], *Een schoone waanzin van de hoogste dichterlijke soort. Tien kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, vertaald door P.C. Boutens, met illustraties van W. Arondéus, [Woubrugge]: Nederlandse Vereniging voor Druk- en Boekkunst, 1995; for more information on this, see the contribution of Jos Biegstraaten in this volume.
- 24 See: M. Goud, "Een drang iets schoons te bieden. Over een toneelopvoering van Boutens' *Rubaiyat*-vertaling in 1916", in *Jaarboek 4 Nederlands Omar Khayyâm Genootschap*, Woubrugge: Avalon Press, 2006, pp. 30-33.
- 25 M.W., "Opvoering in Diligentia van een Perzisch spel 'Rubaiyat' van Omar Khayyam, vertaald door P.C. Boutens", *Studenten Weekblad* 18, 1915-1916, nr. 19 (17 februari 1916), Tweede Blad, p. 145.
- 26 See Goud, "Een drang iets schoons te bieden", p. 31.
- 27 See Goud, "Honger naar kwatrijnen".
- 28 See J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Wie was 'Hocéýne-Âzad'?", in M. Goud and A. Seyed-Gohrab, eds., *De Perzische muze in de polder: De receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse literatuur*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 47-71.
- 29 See W. Blok, "'Ik was bij die vertrouwden': P.C. Boutens' *Tusschenspielen*", in J. Nap e. a., eds., *Ik heb iets bijna schoons aanschouwd. Over leven en werk van P.C. Boutens 1870-1943*, Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & van Gennep, 1993, pp. 61-64. See also: De Bruijn, "Wie was 'Hocéýne-Âzad'?", pp. 63-64.
- 30 Biegstraaten, "Een Pers in druk", pp. 117-118.
- 31 Biegstraaten, "Een Pers in druk", pp. 117-118.
- 32 Jacob Israel de Haan, *Verzamelde gedichten*, Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot, 1952, vol. 2, pp. 355-356.
- 33 Omar Khayyam, *Kwatrijnen*, vertaald door Willem de Mérode, Culemborg: "De Pauw", 1931.

- 34 J. Slauerhoff, *Verzamelde gedichten*, Amsterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar, 1998, p. 154.
- 35 J.C. Bloem, *Verzamelde gedichten*, Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & van Gennep, 1991, p. 246.
- 36 Based on Biegstraaten, “Een Pers in druk” and Coumans, “Bibliografie”.
- 37 See also J. Biegstraaten and J. Coumans, *A Book in the Wilderness: FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: 150 years in print and image*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2009, pp. 75-76.
- 38 Coumans, “Bibliografie”, p. 142.
- 39 H. Warren, ‘Vier kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam’, in *Zeeuws Tijdschrift*, 14, 1964, p. 12. In his *Geheim Dagboek 1954-1955* (Secret Diary 1954-1955), published in 1985, Warren wrote on December 23rd 1955 that he was translating Khayyām and he quoted four quatrains (three of them correspond with the four quatrains that were published in *Zeeuws Tijdschrift* in 1964). See: H. Warren, *Geheim dagboek. Vijfde deel: 1954-1955*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1985, pp. 184-185.
- 40 J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Een karavaan uit Perzië: Klassieke Perzische poëzie*, Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2002, pp. 353-356; idem, *De ware zin heeft niemand nog verstaan: Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyām en andere Perzische dichters*, Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2009.
- 41 Content of yearbooks: <http://www.omarkhayyamnederland.com/omarkhayyamclubs/nederland/index.html>.
- 42 Kader Abdolah, *Spijkerschrift*, Breda: De Geus, 2000, p. 225. Cf. E. FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát van Omar Khayyám*, vertaald en van aantekeningen voorzien door W. Blok, met een inleiding door Johan van Schagen, Baarn: Ambo, 1997, p. 57, nr. LXVIII.
- 43 Kader Abdolah, *My Father's Notebook*, translated from the Dutch by Susan Massotty, Edinburgh/New York/Melbourne: Canongate, 2007, p. 189.
- 44 Kader Abdolah, *Portretten en een oude droom*, Breda: De Geus, 2003, p. 139, 175.
- 45 Abdolah, *Portretten en een oude droom*, p. 139.
- 46 Abdolah, *Portretten en een oude droom*, pp. 186-187.
- 47 Abdolah, *Portretten en een oude droom*, pp. 176-177.
- 48 Jan Wolkers, *Zomerhitte*, [Amsterdam]: Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek, 2005, p. 44.

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Bitter Certainty: J.H. Leopold On ‘Umar Khayyām

J.D.F. van Halsema
(*Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam*)

During the past decades, the reputation of Jan Hendrik Leopold (1865-1925) has grown considerably. In his own lifetime he was a marginalized figure but is now considered one of the most significant poets in Dutch literature around 1900, if not in all Dutch literature. He published much of his work in *De nieuwe gids*, a journal that at that time was the preserve of the “*Tachtigers*,” a group of writers committed to releasing Dutch literature from what was seen as its provincial isolation. Characterized by a shot of Keats and Shelley (also revived in 1880s Britain), a shot of Swinburne and Rossetti, and a shot of Emile Zola, the *Tachtigers* contrived a renewal of Dutch literature that can be compared with the effect of the contemporaneous Symbolist movement in France.

The *Tachtigers*, mostly age-peers of Leopold, started publishing early in life. Some of them had brought out “Collected Works” by 1893, the year of Leopold’s debut. By then the group was beginning to disintegrate. Previously, in the eighties, the highest aim of their poetry (and much of their prose) was to fix into poetic language that complex physio-psychological phenomenon called ‘*stemming*’ (‘mood’), that was understood to be as deep as it is fleeting. This mood was seen as a coming-together of one very specific and complex sensuous gestation with what came to be termed “the movement of the soul.” After 1893 the work of many Dutch poets started to focus on exploring new, fixed and operative connections in the world, life, and literature. Such poets read Spinoza, and then turned if not to William Morris as an intermediate step, then to Karl Marx. Or Plato. Or Neo-Plato. Or Buddha.

The poetry Leopold published between 1893 and 1900 was not yet touched by this development, but neither did it show much affinity with the poetry of the *Tachtigers* before 1893. Most of Leopold’s poetry from this time takes the form of very complex love-lyrics. Often these poems were collected in series in which an almost erased narrative contributes to the overall coherence of these poems. The techniques used to create this coherence showcased a new refinement in Dutch poetry, and testify to Leopold’s acquaintance with contemporaneous French poets such as Verlaine and Mallarmé. The salutary feature of these series is not so much

love itself as a realization of the final impossibility of love. The object of this poetry thus becomes human existence as reflected in poetic art.

All Leopold's work is characterized by the theme of human solitariness. Until 1900, as we have seen, he explores that theme with the assistance of the final impossibility of love. In the period that followed he published no poetry, turning instead to philosophy. From 1906 Leopold began to publish poetry again, for the time being piecemeal, a poetry that in many respects differs from his work prior to 1900. Three long poems, each consisting of about 200 lines, form the main body of his work between 1906 and 1915. During this period he also published adaptations (via French, German or English translations) of Persian and Arabic poets, and wrote a small number of his own poems, which have become extremely well-known, clearly inspired by "the East." When, in 1914, Leopold published his first and only collection, *Verzen*, he gave these adaptations and his own Eastern-inspired work the section title "*Oostersch*" or "*Eastern*."

Central to Leopold's "Eastern" adaptations are his redactions of quatrains from 'Umar Khayyām. They won considerable attention, even among readers for whom, then and now, his own poems are too "hermetic." As a result, Leopold's 'Umar adaptations have a prominent place in the current assessment of his poetry.

I mentioned Verlaine and Mallarmé as inspirations for Leopold's earlier poetry. I should add Rossetti (who brought to general attention Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*). I should also mention Oscar Wilde, along with the Dutch poet and *Tachtiger* Herman Gorter, who around 1890 embarked on a poetic adventure that has become known as "sensitivism": here everything turns on the most intense possible identification of the unique moment. That is the world of the "Conclusion" to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. In it, what is already a heightened fleeting poetic experience can acquire the nature of an epiphany, something apparent in much of Leopold's earlier poetry. It is the poetry itself, poetry as "meta-theme," in complete conformity with Walter Pater, which also plays a key role here. This is a poetry that breeds an internal coherence that one knows has no existence outside the poetry, or the art.

After 1900, Leopold began to read Spinoza and Descartes, as well as Bacon, Locke, Leibniz, Kant and Hume, and even Herbert Spencer, alongside the Stoics and Epicurus. Leopold, a graduate of the University of Leiden, was an outstanding classicist, a specialist in the Stoics, who until recently was the only Dutch scholar to have contributed to the Oxford Classical Texts series, on Marcus Aurelius. The goal of all this reading in philosophy was an attempt to escape the tyranny of passion evident in Leopold's love-poetry. Instead, he would strive after a clear philosophical thought-process, one that can penetrate, with undisturbed serenity, to the core of the coherence between man and world, and the meaningfulness of

human existence itself. The personal, fleeting, and fortuitous must from now on give way to “the universal and permanent,” as Leopold expresses it in a piece on Spinoza. He wrote a book on Spinoza’s Latin (Spinoza’s thought is, for Leopold, in many respects a direct development of Stoicism). During this period even Leopold’s closest friends began to feel some alienation from the fanaticism with which Leopold assaulted the world with the rightness of philosophy.

In 1906, then, Leopold took up publishing poetry again, with the long poem “Kinderpartij.” My reading of this poem (partly based on archival research) is that “Kinderpartij” comprises Leopold’s poetic synthesis of the philosophical systems that he had studied during the previous five years. These systems are central to his basic premise: the problem of human solitariness versus universal coherence. Indeed, it is the reason why, absenting himself from his poetic vocation, he had consulted the philosophical canon. If I may reduce this abundant work (in my view Leopold’s major poetic achievement) to the philosophical statement that it manifestly is not, “Kinderpartij” works in the following manner. The coherence we so eagerly seek in reality is no more than what Thomas Huxley in his monograph about David Hume (a book that is one of the sources for “Kinderpartij”) calls “an orderly phantasmagoria.” Supposed unity is the result of our own *imagination*, it is not epistemological in nature. Every human being is alone in a world of apparent forms. It is impossible to find any definitive connections: there is only a kind of order in *change*. Yet it is that insight that itself legitimizes artistry. If the world is no more than an orderly phantasmagoria that proceeds from the “I,” then the distinction between reality and the work of the imagination disappears, and the work of art is the best that can be made of reality. But the claims of an art that can assume the secrets of the macrocosm in an artistic microcosm that corresponds to it are evanescent. If all knowledge, whether philosophical or religious, that claims absolute validity is unmasked, then the only consolation lies in art and its illusions.

This somewhat lengthy introduction about Leopold leads us to Leopold and 'Umar. It is precisely at this point in Leopold’s development – a release from philosophical purism and a return to the poetic – that his acquaintance with 'Umar Khayyām may be placed. The pessimistic Epicureanism in the direction to which Leopold’s thinking evolves (it says much that his reading as a classicist proceeds from the Stoics to Epicurus and Lucretius) rests seamlessly on the thought-world of 'Umar – at least on the Omar that emerges from J.K.M. Shizari’s short book *The Life of Omar Al-Khayyāmi*, published in London and Edinburgh in 1905. This Omar is not just amenable to Leopold’s new insights: I contend that this 'Umar *contributed* to the articulation of these new insights.

From his correspondence, it appears that Leopold had discovered Omar at the end of 1904. The next year he made diary notes on the Heinemann

edition of FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. In March 1906 Leopold published an article about 'Umar, an article indebted to the portrayal of 'Umar in Shirazi's 1905 monograph. I shall now look more closely at that article.

Leopold compares 'Umar and Spinoza, Leopold's hero since 1900. In the conceptualization of both writers that Leopold develops here, both thinkers move without compromise to the very borders of knowledge. In so doing, both ignored the taboos that were imposed on them by the current religious orthodoxies of their socio-cultural milieus. Both were hated by the masses, and sought and admired only by a few, the cultural élite. Both accepted the final consequences of their thinking – Leopold calls this “determinism” – “with everything that concerns man's destiny that is enclosed there.” For 'Umar this means that he can come to accept the senselessness of human existence, and the bitter certainty that every human longing is both useless and powerless in its achievement. In this way “the cup and the beloved” achieve their status in this poetry: they participate in an existential tragedy, precisely because – while man would so gladly wish it were otherwise – “the fleeting moment” of the beloved “[is] the only certainty man is given” (I'm quoting Leopold in the following):

This is the original sense that [forms] the ground-bass of the at times so expressive Rubáiyát. The inward sorrow, the bitter reality, is audible throughout all the joy, for even as he apostrophizes the Cup and the Beloved, the fleeting moment is the only certainty man is given.

The wine in 'Umar's Cup is, for Shirazi, little wine and much more metaphor. Leopold pursues this view still further.

It is curious that Leopold manages to forge a synthesis between his old hero Spinoza and the newly discovered 'Umar, given the profound difference between the subject-matter of their thinking. 'Umar's insight that the fleeting moment is the only certainty allotted to man would seem completely at odds with the thought-world of Spinoza. But there is a marvellous convergence with what is evidenced in “Kinderpartij,” completed while Leopold was already preoccupied with 'Umar. The sceptical thought that seems in control in “Kinderpartij” is, I think, connected to the thought of David Hume – at least as that was interpreted at the beginning of the twentieth century. And that in its turn permits an effortless connection with the thought of 'Umar as Leopold here summarizes it: only the momentary is certain, beyond that there is nothing, and what is certain is that no profounder sense is to be discerned from anything whatever. The two forms of thought seem to meld with each other in Leopold. The connection Leopold makes between Spinoza and 'Umar concerns not so much the subject-matter of their thought, as the manner in which that thought is experienced

and lived by its thinkers: that is, their refusal to compromise, and their preparedness to antagonize the masses where they deem that necessary. Leopold then directly invokes a third presence, the speaker of Ecclesiastes with its central wisdom "All is vanity." We then come to an interesting postulate by Leopold in the context of a symposium on the legacy of ʿUmar Khayyām. He suggests that these three thinkers, ʿUmar, the Dutch Jew Spinoza, and the speaker of Ecclesiastes, all of them united in their refusal to compromise, must have been driven by an "Eastern life-force" which underpins and accepts "absolute reality." On the other hand Leopold conceives of a "Western spirit" that "sought a compromise and attempted to evade the irrefutable."

I suggest that this distinction Leopold, writing on ʿUmar, makes here between "Eastern" and "Western," is a milestone in his own intellectual history. Western philosophers such as Descartes, Hume and Kant remained, despite all that they achieved in their attempts to reach the unknowable, nevertheless, and counter-productively, able to allow room for the current religious attitudes of their society and culture. In the world of Leopold's Shirazi-based reading of ʿUmar, this was by definition flawed reasoning. In confrontation with *this* ʿUmar, the Kants, and all the other guardians of western thought, appear as opportunists.

It is in this connection, and in the context of ʿUmar, that the term "Eastern" first appears in Leopold. This does not represent the exotic world of heavily aromatic roses and fountains, but a tragic and aristocratic nihilism that consistently accepts its own lack of viability while simultaneously able to drink from the cup. As we have seen, this entails a rejection of the Western thought that Leopold had pursued for years, and that finally evaded him when the least flicker of opportunism could be detected. In the development of Leopold's poetry from this point until his death in 1925, a marked increase in the element of the "Eastern" can be determined. Saʿdī, Ḥāfiz, and Sufi mysticism become incorporated in all kinds of Eastern-minded poetry. And in much of his uncompleted work, Leopold searches for the roots of Christianity in connections with pre-Islamic, Eastern-Hellenistic mystical thought.

I should add that a comparable dualism is to be found in Shirazi himself. Shirazi views the earlier Persia, with its open spirituality, in which religion was kept strictly apart from and science and upbringing, with a kind of nostalgia. The later Islamicized Persia, in which the spirit was subjugated and religious dogma enforced by the sword, was not for him. ʿUmar had continually to flee his persecutors, because he understands God as no more than a blind, relentless force. Such a view was anathema. Against the tide of opinion of most of the ʿUmar scholars of his day, Shirazi believed that ʿUmar was not a Sufi. Admittedly ʿUmar borrowed some of the language of the Sufis, but in contrast to them, agnosticism rather than belief is the key to his work. Human responsibility has no basis for ʿUmar: everything

comes down to “the quarrel of the universe.” The beauty of the evanescent – the rose, the wine, the poetry – is all that remains in a world that exists not in harmony but in strife.

That absolute zero now reached, the poem can begin to bloom again. But it stands for nothing other than what it is. Indeed Shirazi’s ‘Umar takes his place completely fittingly in Leopold’s development, as a catalyst of the first order in that long process that took him away from his attempt to penetrate the inner recesses of reality (in the view that they represent a meaningful coherence) towards the opposite of this attempt, the final recognition of a “given” that is, as he terms it in his best-known poem “Cheops” (1914), “barren desert and idleness.” In that poem the pyramid of Cheops is devalued. Always an art-work of the highest order, “living form,” it lacks from now on the power to point to whatever had legitimized the creation of the art-work. What had appeared in its greatness to represent truth and coherence has had to give way to what should from the very beginning have been small in scale, without pretensions bigger than itself and existing in no profounder sense than that.

How ‘Umar Khayyām Inspired Dutch Visual Artists

Jos Biegstraaten

(Independent Scholar, Chairman of the Dutch Omar Khayyām Society)

Two years ago William Martin and Sandra Mason published *The Art of Omar Khayyām: Illustrating FitzGerald’s Rubaiyat*.¹ The index of this most informative and richly-illustrated book does not mention any Dutch illustrators. Understandably: the authors focused primarily on the various versions of *The Rubáiyát* that have been published in English. Nevertheless, they made some reference to *Rubáiyát* illustrations in other languages, and of versions by translators other than FitzGerald. They did not mention Dutch artists. In my contribution I will discuss some visual artists in the Netherlands who were inspired by quatrains attributed to ‘Umar Khayyām. But first I want to make some preliminary remarks.

To begin with, the title of this contribution needs some explanation. Many scholars have tried to establish which quatrains attributed to ‘Umar Khayyām are authentic. A definitive answer to this question has not been given, and probably it will never be possible to do so. When I speak about ‘Umar Khayyām inspiring artists, I mean the Omar they imagined, from the literature they used. The fact that the artists used various, differing, translations or renditions partly accounts for the variety in the illustrations that I will discuss.

A second remark is that Martin and Mason dealt with illustrations published in books. Of course, visual artists did not only produce drawings and paintings to be published in books. And even if they did, it did not always lead to a publication. To my knowledge, no thorough research has been done in this field and no publications have dealt so far with this subject systematically. In my contribution I will show you some examples of this phenomenon. Most of the works are unknown, or only known by a few people, even in the Netherlands.

I deliberately did not entitle my contribution ‘How Dutch visual artists *illustrated* ‘Umar Khayyām’s *Rubáiyát*’. Although some of them did make illustrations, others, who were undoubtedly inspired by Omar, did not. I will go into this further, when I deal with the artist concerned.

Willem Arondéus (1894-1943)

The first artist from the Netherlands who made illustrations pertaining to Khayyām was Willem Arondéus (1894-1943).² Arondéus is known in our country for his paintings, illustrations, and designs for posters and tapestries. About 1935 he gave up the visual arts to become an author. Although he is not an artist of great reputation here, he is certainly not forgotten. That is not only due to his artistic achievements. Arondéus was homosexual and lived openly as a gay man from a young age. Even in the artistic circles of the early nineteenth century, this was daring behaviour. During the Second World War he showed his courage in the Dutch resistance movement. In 1943 he led a group in bombing the population registry in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, he and the other members of the group were arrested within a week of the attack. Arondéus was executed that July.

As a young man, about twenty years old, Arondéus tried to earn a living by making illustrations for the poems of prominent poets, hoping and expecting his work was to be incorporated in reprints of their books. It all appeared in vain. Among the poets whose poems he illustrated were J.H. Leopold and P.C. Boutens, two of the most famous men of literature at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Netherlands. Both poets wrote translations, or rather, personal renditions of quatrains attributed to ‘Umar Khayyām, generally regarded as works of excellent quality.

Boutens’ “Rubáiyát: a hundred quatrains from Omar Khayyam” was published in 1913.³ The poet used a number of translations for his own rendition, including those of Nicolas (1867), McCarthy (1889), Whinfield (1882) and Heron Allen (1998).⁴ Boutens has often been described as one of the most outspoken Dutch representatives of symbolism. In a thorough analysis of four quatrains from Boutens’ rendition, Rianne Batenburg has demonstrated how Boutens changed more descriptive words from his original sources into symbols that referred to a higher world, supposed to be hidden behind the immediate perceptible.⁵ As a poet, he is initiated into this world, which is only known by a few. Of this higher world he speaks in a suggestive, ambiguous language. That Boutens considered ‘Umar Khayyām as a congenial, enlightened poet is apparent from a quote from Plato’s Phaidros, printed as a motto at the beginning of his book.

That Arondéus felt attracted to this world is clearly demonstrated by his illustrations (see illustration 1 in the full color section). He chose ten quatrains from the 1913 edition for which he made drawings in sepia and he also made a drawing for the cover. The first quatrain he chose, the seventh in Boutens’ collection, is most significant. I will quote it here in the English translation, made by Henri Wildermuth, an Englishman who lived in the Netherlands for many years and who was a great admirer of Boutens, with whom he was acquainted:⁶

<i>Ontwaak, o vreemde knaap, het da- get al!</i>	<i>Bestir thee, boy, and fill with crim- son must</i>
<i>Vul met robijnen most het klaar Kristal.</i>	<i>This crystal cup for see! The dawn has thrust</i>
<i>Want nooit hervindt uw levenlange zoeken</i>	<i>Its arm across the sky and who recovered</i>
<i>Dit sterflijk leen, dit uur in dit aardsch dal.</i>	<i>Ever this mortal feud, this hour of dust?</i>

It is a pity that Wildermuth did not translate the first line more literally. Nearer to the Dutch would have been: "Awake, strange boy, day is already breaking!" The Dutch word 'knaap' is much more meaningful than the English "boy" which is a more common and neutral word. Of course, everybody acquainted with FitzGerald's version will recognize the exclamation "Awake," from FitzGerald's first quatrain. Arondéus choice of this verse as the first to be illustrated suggests that it can be read as the declaration of a young man, becoming aware of his sexual preference. He apparently discovered in Boutens, who was also attracted to members of the same sex, a congenial man.

Arondéus put the first line on top of his illustration. Its style is characteristic for a movement called Monumentalism, which Arondéus himself called 'Neo-Monumentalism'. In this period he admired then famous artists such as Richard (Rik) Roland Holst, Willem van Konijnenburg and Jan Toorop. This movement is characterised by an emphasis on the importance of thought as a means of finding the truth behind the so-called reality. The outer form of an object was only a container for the actual meaning. Impressionism was considered superficial. A striking feature of the monumentalists is their superfluous use of decorative and ornamental elements.

Illustrations 2 and 3 in the full color section accompany Boutens' quatrains 43 and 99:

<i>Voort gaat de nachtelijke karavaan...</i>	<i>In curious guise life's caravan passes on...</i>
<i>Benut de korte rust u toegestaan!...</i>	<i>Be on your guard, for happiness Waits upon</i>
<i>Maal schenker, niet om 't morgen uwer klanten.</i>	<i>No man, nor tarries till to-morrow... Boy,</i>
<i>Reik ons den wijn: want reeds ver- bleekt de maan.</i>	<i>Bring us the wine: the moon grows wan.</i>
<i>Mijn krank hart vond geen kruid; mijn ziel, gestegen</i>	<i>My sick heart finds no herb; my soul, upon</i>
<i>Ten lippen, smacht nog steeds den bruïgom tegen.</i>	<i>My lips now, yearneth still to look upon</i>

*Mijn leven gaat in oude
onwetendheid;
En schaduw-donker blijven liefdes
wegen.*

*The bridegroom: still the ways of
love are dark
Still I am ignorant; and my life is
gone...*

Ger Gerrits (1893-1965)

Let us return to Martin and Mason. Considering the style and content of the illustrations of the *Rubáiyát*, they observe that abstract art had only a limited impact on book illustration (p. 14). The only book they mention containing illustrations with ‘an element of abstraction and symbolism’, is Steven Morris’ limited edition from the Black Night Press (p. 27). To my knowledge likewise, there are no books with illustrations of *The Rubáiyát* of a totally abstract character. That does not mean that Omar did not inspire artists to make abstract paintings. In 1993 I saw an abstract painting in an exhibition dedicated to the painter Ger Gerrits in the Gemeentemuseum Arnhem (Arnhem City Museum). Before the Second World War, his work was figurative. But the war awakened in him the idea that art had to free itself from its prewar language, and he switched to full abstraction. A good example of a non-figurative painting is ‘Compositie 64’ from 1949, considered by Gerrits himself to be one of his best works (see illustration 4 in the full color section). The catalogue gives an explanatory note to this work.⁷ It states that Gerrits was an admirer of ‘Umar Khayyām and that he was inspired by a quatrain, reading:

*Gij vraagt den zin van dit bewogen wonder?
Zoveel omzie ik van den wanklen vlonder.
Een wijd vizioen uit grondloze oceaen stijgt op
En duikt in de eigen afgrond onder.*

The origin of the quatrain is not mentioned in the catalogue, but for every reader of Boutens’ quatrains it is clear that it was the 30th verse in his rendition. I quote one of Wildermuth’s translations of this poem:

*You ask me to explain this strange wonder.
To tell the whole truth would take too long: from under
The bottomless abyss of a vast ocean
Looms up Illusion, and then again sinks under.*

We are lucky to have a letter, written by Gerrits himself in 1960 to someone who wanted to know more about ‘Compositie 64’.⁸ He writes: “One of his (‘Umar Khayyām’s, JB) quatrains gives the same image in words as my paintings do in form and colours.” In his interpretation, the vast

wonder is the universe. Standing before the painting, the spectator should imagine that he is looking into the universe. The lines disappear in different directions: up and down and sideways. It would take us too far to quote Gerrits' whole letter here, I confine myself to establishing that Gerrits wanted to create a painting in which he evoked the infinity of the universe. In circles, lines, blots and colours, he evokes the genesis of a universe, corresponding with the image he found in Boutens' quatrain.

This verse apparently continued to occupy him for some time. A few weeks ago I spoke with Henk Walst, a now 80-year old nephew of Gerrits, who told me that his uncle's friend and fellow-artist, Henk Henriët, used to walk through Gerrits' studio, reciting Boutens' quatrains. Henk Walst still possesses Boutens' 1919 edition, in which Gerrits had written his own name. He also told me that Gerrits made two other abstract paintings, inspired by the same Boutens' quatrain. In both cases Gerrits wrote the lines that inspired him on the reverse of the paintings. Both date from 1961 and are in private collections. The first belongs to Walst himself, and has a small variant on the text of the last two lines (see illustrations 5 and 6 in the full color section):

*'t stijgt op uit grondeloze oceaan
En duikt in eigen afgrond onder.*

The second painting is entitled 'Rode Planeten' (Red Planets – see illustrations 7 and 8 in the full color section). The same variant of the quatrain is written on the back of this, and attributed to 'Umar Khayyām.

To my knowledge, there are no other abstract paintings directly related to quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām. Illustrators such as Vedder and Dulac show us images of 'Umar Khayyām as an astronomer, looking into the universe. Gerrits used pictorial means to express the same feeling of infinity that, he thought, 'Umar Khayyām felt when looking into the universe.

Siep van den Berg (1913-1998)

In January 1993 I bought four silk-screen prints and an original, made by Siep van den Berg, a Dutch painter, who lived from 1913 to 1998. They were accompanied by silk-screen prints of five quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām in the rendition of the poet J.H. Leopold (1865-1925).⁹ The style of the prints had much in common with the works of Mondriaan (see illustrations 9 and 10 in the full color section). I remember that, looking at the prints, I wondered how these quatrains could have inspired Van den Berg in the making of the prints.

As I was curious to know more about it, I made an appointment with Mr. Van den Berg in his studio in Amsterdam, later in 1993. He then told me that the images on the prints were not directly related to Leopold's

quatrains at all! When he had painted them and decided to publish them in print, he had chosen five quatrains of Leopold that he had known by heart for many, many years, because they had the same rhythm and evoked the same feeling as the paintings. Publishing images and poems together was a good means to bring both to the attention of the public.

Van den Berg had a great interest in the poetry of 'Umar Khayyām and joined the then three-year old Dutch Omar Khayyām Society that year, of which he remained a member until his death in 1998. During that period he surprised the members of the society with a small print of a quatrain by Leopold, illustrated by himself and two other artists in 1993. In 1997 he made the frontispiece for Jaarboek 3 (Year Book 3) of the society, which was published by the Avalon Press in 2000.

Theo Forrer (1923-2004)

The work of the last visual artist I will discuss today, Theo Forrer, is of a totally different character. Forrer was born in Batavia, in Indonesia. As a young man he was taken prisoner-of-war by the Japanese, who forced him to work on the Burma railway and afterwards to work in the coalmines near Nagasaki. From there he was liberated by the Americans, more dead than alive. In 1946 he went to the Netherlands, where he became a fairly well-known artist. He had exhibitions in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and in the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem.

In 1949 Forrer obtained a book with a Dutch translation of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát*, given to him by its translator, Johan van Schagen (1920-2005). They had become acquainted when they worked for the same magazine, Van Schagen as a poet, Forrer as an illustrator. The poems had a strong appeal to Forrer, who made drawings for all 83 quatrains, which, in 1950, were shown in an exhibition in Amsterdam. Afterwards Forrer gave them to Van Schagen. A friendship developed between the two, which was to last until Forrer passed away in 2004.

Van Schagen, one of the founders of the Dutch Omar Khayyām Society, was to suffer from the 'Omar fever', as he once called it, all his life. He passed something of the virus on to Forrer. When Van Schagen published a new FitzGerald translation in 1953, Forrer made eight lithographs for the book (and two special editions for Van Schagen and himself with eight linocuts).

In 1997 Van Schagen published a third FitzGerald translation, now containing 115 quatrains. Again Forrer, who was an extremely prolific artist, made drawings for each of the quatrains, which he also gave to his friend Van Schagen.

I have already said that Forrer's work differs completely from that of the other artists I discussed. His images are figurative, but the most striking feature is that they all are deeply influenced by the horrors he had

experienced during the war. Suffering men and women, signs of transitoriness and death appear in almost every drawing. As Forrer's widow once said to me: drawing prevented him from going mad.¹⁰

In a recently published article in *Jaarboek 5* of the Dutch Omar Khayyām Society I wrote a rather extensive article about Forrer, Van Schagen and 'Umar Khayyām. Here I confine myself to four examples of images, created by Forrer. The first and third are drawings for Van Schagen's translations of 1947 and 1997 (see illustrations 11 and 12 in the full color section), the second is a lithograph from the 1953 edition (see illustration 13 in the full color section). The last illustration is a portrait of 'Umar Khayyām, drawn by Forrer in 1997 to illustrate an unpublished story he had written, in which 'Umar Khayyām played an important role (see illustration 14 in the full color section).

To my knowledge, all images I have shown today are unique illustrations or creations, related to or inspired by poems of 'Umar Khayyām. I had never seen sepia drawings in the monumental style of Willem Arondéus. Nor have I seen abstract paintings or prints like those made by Ger Gerrits or Siep van den Berg. And I have never seen Rubáiyát illustrations deeply influenced by the war, like those of Forrer. That these visual artists could create works that were so completely different, undoubtedly has to do with the character of 'Umar's poems. No matter whose translation or rendition they read, all artists were inspired by his words about 'human Death and Fate.'

Nobody knows if any of the quatrains we now read was indeed written by 'Umar Khayyām. If we speak about his legacy nowadays, we only know that poems ascribed to him inspired many men and women. Centuries later, we can only be grateful to him and to Edward FitzGerald, who gave him a new life, so that 'Umar could inspire many men and women, even those gathered here today.¹¹

Notes

- 1 *The Art of Omar Khayyam: Illustrating FitzGerald's Rubaiyat*, William H. Martin & Sandra Mason, London and New York, 2007.
- 2 For information on Arondéus see Marco Entrop, *Onbekwaam in het compromis*, Amsterdam, 1993 and Rudi van Dantzig, *Het leven van Willem Arondéus / 1894-1943*, Amsterdam 2003.
- 3 P.C. Boutens, *Rubaiyat: honderd kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam*, Bussum 1913. It never came to an illustrated edition during Arondéus' and Boutens' lifetime. The illustrations were published for the first time in a limited edition, entitled *Een schoone waanzin van de hoogste dichterlijke soort*, for which I wrote a short introduction. Woubrugge, 1995.
- 4 For more information see the articles written by J.T.P. de Bruijn and M.Goud in *Jaarboek 3*, Nederlands Omar Khayyam Genootschap, Woubrugge 2000, pp. 38-45 and 49-57.
- 5 Rianne Batenburg, *Op hun gevleugelde gedachten*, (graduation thesis), Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 2004.

- 6 For more information about Wildermuth see the articles written by Paul Begheyn S.J. and Harry G.M. Prick in *Maatstaf*, Amsterdam, 1992/3, 1992/10, 1993/9 and 1994/1. Wildermuth's translations in unpublished manuscripts and typescripts are in the Library of Amsterdam University (collection Wildermuth Hs XXXII A 3, 1-5).
- 7 *Ger Gerrits 1893-1965*. Amhem 1993. See for 'Compositie 64' p. 22. For more information about Ger Gerrits see also www.gergerrits.com, which among other works also contains an image of 'Compositie 64'.
- 8 The painting is in the 'Instituut Collectie Nederland', which possesses a copy of this letter (nr. AB 6827).
- 9 The portfolio is dated '14 januari 1993'. It was published by Forma Aktua, Groningen. The poems are the numbers 14, 15, 19, 23 and 24 of Leopold's series 'Omar Khayam' (for the first time published posthumously in 1926 in *Verzen*. Tweede Bundel, 1926, pp. 79-84). When I received the portfolio, I discovered that Van den Berg committed an inaccuracy in the second line of quatrain 14. Instead of: 'dat in den morgenspiegel hij zag staan' it had the text 'dat in *de vroege* morgenspiegel hij zag staan'. When I pointed this out to Van den Berg, he had a new, improved print made, which he sent me a few days later.
- 10 See *Jaarboek 2*, Woubrugge 1995 (frontispiece and p. 27); *Jaarboek 4*, Woubrugge 2006 (p. 41) and *Jaarboek 5*, Woubrugge 2009 (frontispiece and pp. 30, 33, 36, 38 and 40). The Year Books of the Dutch Omar Khayyám Society published some drawings of Forrer.
- 11 I am very grateful to Mr. Theo van de Bilt who scrutinized my text and made a number of most valuable remarks, and to my grandson Emiel Hoogetboom, whose computer skills were very helpful when I prepared the beamer presentation of the displayed works.

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The Legacy of ʿUmar Khayyām in Music of the Netherlands¹

Rokus de Groot
(University of Amsterdam)

■ The Sound of the Cup

How does ʿUmar Khayyām sound in music? We may try to answer this question by probing the quatrains ascribed to him for sound.² By investigating a predominant figure in Khayyām – the drinking of wine – we may find a musical cue in the sound of cups. This is exactly the line Dutch composer Sylvia Maessen has followed. For her *Rubáiyát* (2006), she requires a soprano who accompanies herself on six tuned wine glasses. By passing a moist finger along the rim of the differently filled glasses, or striking the rim with a stick, she produces a musical scale. The composer does not prescribe the kind of liquid, so we do not know whether to use wine or vinegar.³

Musically it is interesting to note that the wine glass sound prescribed for the first song as a drone, provides a fundamental pitch for the voice to relate to. However, the vocal part of none of the quatrain's lines ends on a primary consonant to that fundamental pitch. In fact, the quatrain finishes with a harmonic pitch interval that has been considered in the European music tradition as the maximum of dissonance, the *tritone* (three whole tones).⁴ So, interestingly, in this song of inebriety, the sound of the wine glass does not lead to a stable music at all.

■ Introduction

This chapter explores how composers in the Netherlands responded to Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* and other Khayyām renditions. A wide array of textual interpretations of this work has been published. Some point to its basic spiritual meaning, hidden though it may be at first sight. Others read this poetry as a summons to enjoy life, or as a testimony to fatalism.

What perspectives and meanings do composers emphasize in their musical settings and how? To what extent does, on the one hand, the dwelling on the moment (the single *rubā ʿī*), and, on the other hand, linear temporality (FitzGerald's large-scale ordering of *rubā ʿīyāt*) play a role? Are these

orientations shaped into any form of polarity, by means of musical structures and processes? Is it possible to position the musical settings between spirituality and secularity? Are there traces of orientalism in the composers' dealing with these perspectives and orientations?

■ Composers' Interest in Khayyām/FitzGerald

The 'Umar craze in the United Kingdom and the USA, following Dante Gabriel Rossetti's discovery of FitzGerald's 1859 rendition of *Rubáiyát*, also affected music. Among the composers worldwide who set the quatrains, we find many great names within consecutive generations up to the present day, such as Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), Virgil Thomson (1896-1989), Boris Blacher (1903-1975), Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000), Kara Karayev (1918-1982), Franco Donatoni (1927-2000), Sofia Gubaidulina (*1931), Krzysztof Penderecki (*1933), Elena Firsova (*1950), and Thomas Adès (*1971).

Obviously we encounter quite some short song-like compositions. This is to be expected, given the conciseness of the *rubā'ī*. However, it is striking that quite a number of large-scale works have been composed, often involving extended ensembles of voices and instruments, and even choirs and orchestras. Such large works have been created from the beginning of the Western Khayyām craze. Cases in point are Liza Lehmann's *In a Persian Garden* of 1896, and Granville Bantock's *Omar Khayyam, the Rubáiyát* of 1906. Also cantatas, operas and symphonies have been based on Khayyām, such as Henry Houseley's *Omar Khayyam: A Dramatic Cantata* of 1917, Robert Blum's *Symphony nr. 1* of 1924, and Firus Bachor's *Omar Chajjam* of 1942.⁵

We may view this trend of creating large-scale works as the effect of FitzGerald's 19th-century narrative rendering, which transformed a corpus of individual *rubā'īyāt*, not handed down thematically, into a convincing order, spanning human life from tender youth to death, while covering the seasons of the year from spring's new beginning to winter's oblivion. In this setting, the individual *rubā'īyāt* function as stanzas of an extended poem.

Apparently both the conciseness of the original quatrain and the later large-scale thematic ordering of them have been attractive to composers.

■ The Reception of 'Umar Khayyām's Poetry by Composers in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands I have not found a real 'Umar cult among composers. This does not mean that they did not pay attention to poetry hailing from the Orient. They showed a considerable interest in the work of Rabindranath Tagore, especially after 1913 when the Nobel Prize for

literature was awarded to him, the first Asian author to receive it. Tagore was one of the main poets to be set to music in the Netherlands during the interbellum. I found 66 Dutch compositions on his work within the same period as the Dutch 'Umar Khayyām pieces. We should take into consideration here that Tagore was a living poet, who actually visited the Netherlands in 1920, to speak before huge audiences.⁶ Yet Dutch composers did produce several fine examples of musical settings of *rubā'īyāt* ascribed to 'Umar Khayyām. I have found some 14 compositions between 1916 and 2009, to which can be added several others, by foreign composers, published or commissioned in the Netherlands (see Appendix I).⁷

I would like to underline the important role of poetic mediators in the Dutch reception of oriental poetry. One of the factors in Tagore's popularity in the Netherlands was the fact that one of the most esteemed poets of the time acted as his spokesman and translator: Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932). 'Umar Khayyām also had authoritative mediators who were not just translators, but great poets in their own right. Several of them can be found in relation to Dutch Khayyām music compositions: J.H. Leopold (1865-1925) in three cases, with the composers Daniël Ruyneman, Robert de Roos, and A. van Peski; P.C. Boutens (1870-1943) three times, with K. van der Knoop, R. de Roos and W. Smalt. The other composers set FitzGerald's text, except for J. Röntgen, W. de Haan and Ruyneman (on one occasion), who used German translations. A special case is De Roos, who in his *Cinq quatrains* [sic] *d' Omar Khayyam*, employs translations by FitzGerald, Boutens, and Leopold, and had these selected *rubā'īyāt* translated into French.

Between 1916 and 2009, I have found compositions in every decade of the 20th and 21st centuries, except between 1950 and 1973. There is a slight concentration in the 1920s. However, the number of compositions is small, so that these figures have limited significance.

Six of the Dutch compositions have been published, as have all those by foreign composers; the other pieces are in manuscript or private print.⁸

Setting 'Umar Khayyām to Music

This contribution began by investigating the sound aspects in Khayyām's poetry. Let us now assess the musical potential of the *rubā'īyāt* from the perspective of the way the quatrains are edited, as well as their verse structure and meaning. In Dutch compositions, as in Khayyām musical settings worldwide, we encounter two extremes. On the one hand we have the briefness of the single quatrain, and its compactness in terms of meaning. On the other hand, where FitzGerald's rendition is used, we meet a large-scale narrative, spanning man's life and the seasons of the year. In the Dutch musical settings of the *rubā'īyāt*, we find examples ranging from

the epigrammatic to the drama of the grand story. This is reflected in their duration, which varies from about 4 minutes to roughly 28 minutes.

The choice of a grand narrative frame does not preclude poetic-musical reflection on the momentary. After all, a strong consciousness of the passing of time is the backdrop of FitzGerald's sensitivity to *carpe diem*, 'seize the day.' In that sense the narrative frame fits well with the 19th-century preoccupation with linear time, both in the sense of evolution and, especially in the case at hand, of involution and decay.

The Dutch 'Umar Khayyām settings that adopt the narrative frame, with the many *rubā'īyāt* as 'stanzas,' fall into two types: those with and without instrumental interludes between quatrains. Settings of both types are usually 'through-composed,' that is, though the composition is based on several stanzas, it is relatively continuous, and does not typically employ repetition (except for the end, to be discussed below).

Musical procedures of overall structuring and closure are explicit where the composer responds to FitzGerald's narrative ordering, but even where the quatrains are treated as separate 'songs' there may be larger ordering principles in the music, often drawn from musical conventions in the European classical-romantic tradition of multi-movement compositions. One such convention is to present the lighter and quicker tempos at later stages in the concatenation of individual songs. Another is the application of a familiar overall shape: the reiteration, at the end of the composition, of musical data from its beginning, in order to attain closure. Of course, such musical procedures affect the interpretation of the texts. I will come back to this later.

Finally, there are wide differences of style in the Dutch 'Umar Khayyām compositions. Their are examples of musical orientalisms, but also of the converse, for example in the final song of Ruyneman's *Four Songs on texts by J.H. Leopold* from 1937. After the preceding two, extremely lamentative, poems set to chromatic music, we hear in contrast the defiant voice of 'Umar Khayyām to a vocal line which is largely diatonic, with sudden transpositions. No orientalism here, but the triumphant declaration of mental freedom:

*Wijn en een vroolijk wezen zijn mijn wet
Mijn godsdienst dat ik op geen godsdienst let
De wereld is mijn bruid; wat wil ze als gift?
"Op uw blij hart heb ik mijn zin gezet."*

*(Wine and a happy existence are my law,
My religion is that I do not care for one,
The world is my bride; what does she want as a gift?
"I have set my mind on your happy heart.")*

■ Case studies: Ruyneman and van Delden

Among the Dutch Khayyām settings, I have chosen an epigrammatic and a large-scale composition for closer inspection.

When Daniël Ruyneman wrote his *Drei Persische Lieder* for voice and piano or cembalo in 1950, he was also engaged in composing *Quatre Chansons Bengalies*, for flute and piano on Tagore melodies. Moreover he had already completed earlier pieces on texts by Khayyām and Tagore, in 1937 and 1915 respectively.

Drei Persische Lieder consists of three separate songs, the first two, both called “Rubaiyat,” on Khayyām quatrains; the final one, “Diwan,” on a quatrain by Ḥāfīz. These Ruyneman songs reflect the compactness and incisiveness of the *rubāʿiyyāt* quite well.

The first song typically opens the cycle as an invocation, as in countless other Western Khayyām compositions. We find the recurrent “come.” The night is fading to make place for the morning, and the beloved is invited to drink well before life is gone. The opening song is characterized by the composer as “mit Betrachtung” (“in contemplation”).

I

*O komm, Geliebte, komm, es sinkt die Nacht,
Verscheuche mir durch deiner Schönheit Pracht
Des Zweifels Dunkel! Nimm den Krug, und trink,
Eh mann aus unsern Staube Krüge macht.*

*(O come, Beloved, come, the night is vanishing,
By the splendour of your beauty, frighten off for me
The darkness of doubt! Take the jar, and drink,
Before one makes jars out of our dust.)*

The second and third songs are in stark contrast with each other. The former, “mit Bitterkeit” (“with bitterness”), offers a nihilistic view on life, going so far as to wish not to have been born at all. The latter, “Extatisch” (“ecstatic”), on a Ḥāfīz quatrain, speaks of the total surrender to love as life’s single destination, regardless of one’s condition, be it one of darkness or of light. In this way an opposition is built between a song of utter nothingness and one of utter fullness.

Though the work consists of individual songs, the composer arrives at an overall structure of his own invention, by pairing an invocation, which contrasts night and day, doubt and beauty, with the dark and bright sides of life respectively.

II

*Was kann das Leben uns denn nun noch weiter frommen?
 Was es uns nur etwa bringt, wird auch gleich genommen!
 Wüssten die Ungeborenen nur, wie wenig uns dies Erdenleben gibt,
 Sie würden nicht erst kommen.*

*(What further advantage can life yield us?
 Whatever it brings us, is just taken away!
 If the unborn only knew, how little this life on earth has to offer,
 They would not come in the first place.)*

III

*Liebe ohne Masz entflammt, Lieben ist mein einzig Amt;
 Ob sie meine Bitte hört, ob sie meinen Trieb verdammt,
 Ob sie mich in Dorne legt, oder in der Gnade samt:
 Liebe ohne Masz und Ziel, Lieben ist mein einzig Amt.*

*(Love inflamed without measure, to love is my only occupation;
 whether she hears my pleading, or whether she condemns my lust,
 whether she lays me on thorns, or bathes me in grace:
 Love without measure and aim, to love is my only occupation.)*

These three songs are set without a fixed musical metre, which allows for a flexible temporal interpretation. This invites an open reading of the text.

The first song, the invocation, is encased in a piano texture of sonorous richness and harmonic uncertainty – there is no clear reference tone to function as a tonic, fundamental pitch or drone. We hear reminiscences of Claude Debussy's music, such as the striking use of the harmonic intervals of major thirds, structured into segments of the whole-tone and chromatic scales. As in Debussy, these intervals bring with them a touch of orientalism and strangeness.

The harmonic situation creates an impression of between-ness, which lends itself, in its lack of a fixed point of reference, to be related to a sense of drunkenness. The second song, in strong contrast to the first, is firmly bound to a fixed pitch identity, multiplied in positions of two or more octaves. During the song this octave interval is filled in, in several ways, but intermittently. Finally, it just remains as such, without any other pitches being stated: it is 'empty.'

In this way the music strikingly underlines the theme of the text, the emptiness of life, setting the second song off against the mysterious richness of the first. By reiterating the same empty octave interval, it emphasizes the idea that the emptiness of life is something which is inalterable, and indifferent to human efforts to change it.

Finally, the last movement is modeled after Stravinsky's energetic folk-orientalism, such as in his *Pribaoutki* songs (1914), with melodic lines descending stepwise from high pitches, and with a characteristic static drone harmony, based on the interval of the fifth plus dissonant tones.

To conclude this section I should like to note several other ways of creating an overall structure to the composition, both textually and musically. Robert Sims's *Quintessence* orders 21 *rubā'īyāt* into five groups, named after the five elements of nature. The texts range from the first to the last quatrain of FitzGerald's collection, that is, from "Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night / Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight" to "And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot / Where I made one – turn down an empty Glass!" To this depiction of the course of human life, however, we hear a musical context in which the beginning returns at the end: the music sinks back into the same drone A from which it arose.

We encounter a similar musical course in Sylvia Maessen's *Rubaiyat*. Though it is composed of separate songs, with clearly distinctive melodic lines and accompaniment, we hear an overall structuring of cohesion and closure. Songs 3 and 4 are interrelated by accompaniment (with melodic inversion).⁹ The final song recapitulates the texture of the beginning, with the same drone, and proceeds with going back the accompaniment of song 3.

Lex van Delden's *Rubā'īyāt* also deserves attention in this context. This large-scale piece for soprano and tenor solo, 4-part mixed choir, 2 pianos and percussion dates from 1948. It not only uses a selection from FitzGerald's translation, but also closely follows its overall narrative. The piece traces a course between an initial joyous "Awake!" and a final subdued "gone," – repeatedly sung to different minor triads –, the first and last words of the text. It may be heard as a story of life in the sense of a development of consciousness. The initial emphasis on the enjoyment of life 'now' gives way to a sense of linear time, in the growing realization that life will soon be gone. However, the piece does not end on the low and soft tones of "gone," but at the very end brings back the same *fortissimo* joyous piano chord that opened the piece, announcing the possibility of a new round of *Rubā'īyāt*, and a new "Awake!"

All these examples may be viewed within the perspective of the powerful Western classical-romantic music tradition of closure (and re-opening!), by returning to the main key or main reference tone or chord at the end of a composition. At the same time, this musical procedure has an effect on the interpretation of the 'Umar Khayyām poems: the course of life is expressed as not singular, but recursive. After one cycle of *rubā'īyāt*, the next is already audible. This may be a typically musical contribution to Omar

Khayyām readings, basically a positive, life-affirming one. There is a coming and passing away of individual lives, but life goes on.

■ Appendix I

List of compositions by Dutch composers on texts ascribed to ‘Umar Khayyām and their translations

Abbreviations:

MCN Muziekcentrum Nederland, Amsterdam
NMI Nederlands Muziekinstituut, The Hague

S soprano
A alto
T tenor
B bass

Delden, Lex (A.) van, [Lex Swaap] (1919-1988),
Rubáiyát, for soprano and tenor solo, 4-part mixed choir (SATB), 2 pianos and percussion, opus 19, 1948.

Text: ‘Umar Khayyām, transl. Edward FitzGerald. Dedicated to Lex van Delden jr.

Amsterdam: Les Éditions Internationales Basart, 1948; Amsterdam: Donemus [MCN], 1996.

Autograph at NMI.

Groot, Rokus de (*1947),
Bee bade mast!–Drunk without wine! for 12-part choir [3S, 3A, 3T, 3B], 2009.

Text: ‘Umar Khayyām, transl. E. FitzGerald [8 quatrains]; Jalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî, *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi* [4 quatrains].

Dedicated to the Nederlands Kammerkoor and Leo Samama, at the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the publication of Edward FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát*.

Amsterdam: MCN, 2009.

Haan, Willem de (1849-1930),
Ein Cyklus von sieben Zwiegesängen / aus dem Persischen von Omar Chajjâm, for soprano and alto voice, and piano, n.d. [before 1930].

Text: ‘Umar Khayyām, German transl. G. D. Gribble.

Dedicated to A. Noordewier-Reddingius and P. de Haan-Manifarges.

Autograph at NMI.

Hekster, Walter (*1937),
Six Persian songs, for baritone and piano, 1981.
 Text: 'Umar Khayyām, transl. E. FitzGerald.
 Dedicated to Peter Goedhart.
 Amsterdam: Donemus [MCN], 1981.

Knoop, Karin van der,
Kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam, based on texts by J.H. Leopold [P.C. Boutens],¹⁰ for 4-part choir [SATB], soprano solo, three flutes, bass clarinet and percussion, 1995.
 Composer's autograph.

Maessen, Sylvia (*1959),
Rubaiyat for soprano and six tuned wine glasses, 2006.
 Text: 'Umar Khayyām, transl. E. FitzGerald [9 quatrains].
 Dedicated to soprano Irene Maessen on the occasion of the music festival of Tharaux, France.
 Composer's autograph.

Peski, Aad van,
Oostersche kwatrijnen en verzen, for soprano voice, and alto or tenor recorder, n.d.
 Text: 'Umar Khayyām, transl. J.H. Leopold.
 Composer's autograph.

Röntgen sr., Julius (1855-1932),
Persischer Divan / Aus dem "Rubajjat" (Vierzeiler), for baritone, flute, horn and piano, 1923.
 Text: 'Umar Khayyām, German translation.
 Two autographs at NMI.

Roos, Robert de (1907-1976),
Cinq quatrains [sic] d'Omar Khayyam / avec une introduction instrumentale; Vijf kwatrijnen van Omar Khayyam / met een instrumentale inleiding, for alto voice and orchestra, 1928.
 Also extant in a version for alto voice and 8 instruments.
 Text: 'Umar Khayyām, Dutch transl. P.C. Boutens, J.H. Leopold, English transl. E. Fitzgerald; French transl. J. W. F. H. Roëll and R. de Roos.
 Sketch of score in autograph, and four autographs of a piano four hands reduction at NMI.

Rossum, Alfred J. van (1917-1991),
Rubáiyât of Omar Khayyâm (rendered into English verse by Edward FitzGerald), 7 Quatrains with instrumental prelude, interludes and post-lude, for mixed choir, 2 oboes, harp and percussion, 1973.

Text: 'Umar Khayyâm, transl. E. FitzGerald.

Autograph at NMI.

Ruyneman, Daniël (1886-1963),
Vier Liederen op teksten van J.H. Leopold [Four songs on texts by J.H. Leopold], for tenor and small orchestra, 1937.

Text: J.H. Leopold; Omar Khayyâm (last of the four songs, transl. J.H. Leopold).

Dedicated to Albert Dana.

Amsterdam : Alsbach, piano reduction [1944].

Autograph of 1937 (with German transl. by A. Jonckers) and one of 1939, another one with a fragment and a sketch, all at NMI.

Ruyneman, Daniël,
Drei Persische Lieder, for voice and piano/cembalo, 1950.

Text: 'Umar Khayyâm (Rubā'īyāt), Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfiẓ (Dīvān).

– Rubā'īyāt ['Umar Khayyâm]

– Rubā'īyāt ['Umar Khayyâm]

– Dīvān [Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfiẓ]

Amsterdam: Donemus [MCN], print 1951, with hand-written corrections.

Autograph at NMI.

Staak, Pieter van der (1930-2007),
Three Quatrains of Omar Khayyam, for voice and guitar, s.d.

Composer's autograph.

Smalt, Willem,
Vijf Kwatrijnen from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, translated by P.C. Boutens, for 4-part mixed choir (SATB).

Text: 'Umar Khayyâm, transl. P.C. Boutens (Ed. Bussum: van Dishoeck).

Amsterdam: De Nieuwe Muziekhandel, n.d. [1916?].

List of compositions on texts ascribed to Omar Khayyâm and their translations, published in the Netherlands

Hidayat Khan (*1917),

Awake for morning, on a melody of my father [Inayat Khan]; and from the words of Omar Khayyam, 1975.

Several versions, all published in Amsterdam by Annie Bank, and dedicated to Inayat Khan.

1. opus 20, TTBB *a cappella*;
2. opus 21, choir *a cappella*;
3. opus 22, choir *a cappella*;
4. opus 27, TTBB *a cappella*;
5. opus 31, choir and organ;
6. opus 32, choir and organ.

Sims, Richard (*1961, U.K.),

Quintessence, for chamber choir, 1998.

Text: 'Umar Khayyām, transl. Edward FitzGerald.

Dedicated to Truike van der Poel and the Nederlands Studentenkoor (Student Choir).

1. Gaia
2. Agua
3. Aeola
4. Pyra
5. Stella.

Amsterdam: Donemus [MCN], 1999.

Composition by an Iranian composer commissioned by the The Nederlands Kamerkoor (Dutch Chamber Choir)

Kambiz Roshanravān, *Asrār-e-avan*, for choir *a cappella* (3S, 3A, 3T, 3B).

Text: 'Umar Khayyām (Persian) [2 quatrains].

Composed for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát*.

Private composer's edition, 2009.

Appendix II

Compositions on texts by 'Umar Khayyām commissioned by The Nederlands Kamerkoor (Dutch Chamber Choir).

The Nederlands Kamerkoor (Chamber Choir) commissioned two compositions for its concerts in 2009, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Edward FitzGerald's rendering of *rubā'īyāt* ascribed to 'Umar Khayyām. They are *Asrār-i-azal* by Kambiz Roshanravān, and *Bee bade mast!—Drunk without wine!* by Rokus de Groot.¹¹ The performance of the former, in particular, requires some training in Persian classical music and the pronunciation of Persian poetry, besides Western choral expertise. Earlier the Kamerkoor commissioned *Rubā'īyāt*, the piece by Lex van Delden discussed in the main text.

Because these pieces represent quite different attitudes towards Khayyām's poetry, some observations about them will be made here. Van Delden's work represents an epicurean interpretation, Roshanravān's a mystical one. De Groot's composition combines them in counterpoint.

1. Lex van Delden, *Rubā'īyāt* (1948).

Van Delden was familiar with 'Umar Khayyām due to the age in which he lived, and through his family and social environment. The composer belonged to a family of enlightened socialists, striving for a paradise on earth, 'now.' Orientation on German literature with its strong tradition of orientalist had acquainted them with poetry from, or modeled after, Eastern literary traditions. They read Khayyām in various Dutch translations. In this socialist context, the quatrains ascribed to Khayyām were neither read as 'spiritual' literature, nor as 'oriental.' With his Khayyām rendition, FitzGerald had already made the quatrains part of 'world literature.' In an age of secularization, they could serve as a reference point for a non-religious outlook on life.

There are indications that 'Umar Khayyām's quatrains played a special role during, and shortly after, the Second World War – a time in which both the power and the nothingness of life were experienced in an exceptionally intense way. *Rubā'īyāt* translator J.A. Vooren has testified that Khayyām's quatrains saved him from mental destruction in a Japanese concentration camp. The theologian L.J. van Kolk is reported to have given a memorable Khayyām lecture in the German camp for Dutch hostages, St. Michielsgestel, in 1943.¹² In 1944 Lex van Delden obtained a copy of the *Rubā'īyāt* through a friend of the Dutch anti-German resistance. He kept it with him, and a few years after the War he wrote his *Rubā'īyāt* composition.¹³

Van Delden composed his *Rubā'īyāt* in a short time, between March 10 and May 18, 1948. On the one hand it was a happy period, as the

composer was just married, and was blessed with a son to whom the composition is dedicated. Against the joy of this new-born life, he felt the grief of loss: about thirty persons from his Jewish family and close environment had been killed in the Second World War. This background illuminates the composer's basic concept of the *Rubáiyát*: "Seize the day, enjoy life – because it is so short." The quatrains he chose from FitzGerald's Khayyām rendition emphatically move between "Awake!" and "gone," the first and last words of the selected poems.

The instruments are offered ample opportunity to manifest themselves, in extended purely instrumental episodes, exuberant in the beginning, more subdued later on. The tension between "Awake!" and "gone" which characterizes the composition as a whole, may also be heard on a smaller scale. While the first half of the quatrain "Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring" is fixed on one fundamental tone as a bass drone, the second half, "The Bird of Time has but a little Way to fly," wavers from one bass tone to the other, making it harmonically unstable.

An intimate moment is created with "Wilderness is Paradise enow," as the music becomes very delicate.

Van Delden's *Rubáiyát* attracted a lot of attention immediately after its first performance. It received the "Muziekprijs van de Gemeente Amsterdam" (the Amsterdam Municipal Music Prize) in 1948. In the following year it was performed in the Holland Festival with much acclaim.

2. Kambiz Roshanravān, *Asrār-e-avan* (2009).

This composition may be seen in the context of the considerable Iranian interest in 'Umar Khayyām's *rubā'īyāt* due to FitzGerald's rendition, which caused a re-assessment of Khayyām's position. The same has happened in the Arabic world; for example FitzGerald has inspired Aḥmad Muḥammad Rāmī to translate Khayyām into Arabic, and Umm Kulthum to make his work immensely popular in the Near East.¹⁴

This appreciation is quite different from the past. If Khayyām is mentioned in Persian *tadhkiras* (biographical dictionaries) at all, it is in a negative way. Khayyām is denounced as an unbeliever, heretic, blasphemer, scepticist, materialist, hedonist and the promoter of a *carpe diem* mentality. It is quite probable that his relative obscurity as a poet is due to the rise of orthodoxy in Iran in his age, which tried to silence his voice. Indeed, it was precisely this orthodoxy which was the target of Khayyām's critical intellectual response.¹⁵

In Iran there have been several breaks in this process of revaluation and rehabilitation, especially after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, when Khayyām was all but banned, even though Khomeini himself wrote poems about wine. One of his critics was the philosopher 'Abd al-Karīm Surūsh, who received the Dutch Erasmus Prize in 2005.

However, during his presidency, Mohammad Khatami launched a veritable 'Umar Khayyām rehabilitation. Due to his Western popularity, this 'lost son' of Persian poetry was reclaimed as an object of national pride. This process clearly had a political motivation, in order to create a new image for Iran.

It should be added that in this rehabilitation, Khayyām's *rubā'īyāt* were re-read in a way completely different from FitzGerald's epicuraneism. Some defenders praised Khayyām's freedom from prejudices and his rejection of hypocrisy. However, his poems were now mainly conceived in an Islamic mystical way, and great pains were taken to soften the sharp edges of the *rubā'īyāt* through the mediation of Quranic interpretation. This is probably the last thing Omar Khayyām would have expected.

Roshanravān's interpretation of Khayyām's text confirms that his piece *Asrār-e-avan* may be understood in this more recent Iranian perspective of mystical interpretation.¹⁶ The title means "Secrets of Pre-eternity." The first of the two selected Khayyām *rubā'īyāt* refers to the Quranic *sura* 7 verse 171.¹⁷ This text speaks of the so-called Day of the Covenant (*Alast*), when God assures man of his primordial love, asking "*Alastu*," "Am I not your Lord?", and man responds with "*balā*," "yes."¹⁸ In the Sufi way, to which Roshanravān refers, tasting "the goblet of *alast*" refers to the longing to recover this original love. So the first *rubā'ī*'s opening, set by Roshanravān, may be read as:

Neither you nor I can fathom the Secrets of Pre-eternity.

Musically, *Asrār-e-avan* closely relates to Iranian classical music. It is based on the *dastgāh*'s (melodic modes) *Shur* and *Dashti*. Common to both is the minor third and the half flat second, that is, a $\frac{3}{4}$ tone above the final note. These pitch intervals are especially evident in the cadences, as *b flat*, *a $\frac{1}{4}$ flat* and *g*.

Roshanravān also makes use of *tahrir*, vocal yodel-like trills which are distinctive for Iranian classical music.

This melodic and sonorous framework is paired to homophonic and polyphonic choral writing hailing from Western classical music traditions. In this way the piece bridges very different cultural traditions, so that its performance requires various ways of schooling. In the first performance, conductor Klaas Stok was responsible for the Western components of the composition, while the choir's mastery of both the subtleties of *dastgāh* tuning and *tahrir* were supervised by the composer himself at rehearsals; Asghar Seyed Gohrab tutored the pronunciation of the Persian language.

3. Rokus de Groot, *Bee bade mast!–Drunk without wine!* (2009)

This composition is about a key notion in Omar Khayyām's poetry, drunkenness, intoxication, ecstasy (*mast*).

The fact that Edward FitzGerald published his Khayyām-rendition *Rubāiyāt* 150 years before the commission to the present composition, originally inspired the composer to investigate the theme of "translation." Initially the original Persian *rubā'īyāt* ascribed to 'Umar Khayyām were to be used alongside FitzGerald's English versions. However eventually the composer chose to develop something more radical: "translation" became "counterpoint."

The composition sets out to create a counterpoint between two interpretations of 'Umar Khayyām, one epicurean and the other mystical. The epicurean interpretation has been brought into Western consciousness by its promoter, Edward FitzGerald. This interpretation was also known in Iran, where it used to be heavily censured. The mystical interpretation was, and is, also found in Iran, and has become dominant since around 2000, as has been noted above. It was fostered in Europe, in contrast to FitzGerald's conception, through *Les quatrains de Kheyam*, the 1867 translation of J. B. Nicolas, chief interpreter of the French Embassy in Persia.¹⁹ We also find these two readings in the Netherlands, the epicurean one in translations by Johan Hendrik Leopold (1865-1925), and the mystical one in those by Pieter Cornelis Boutens (1870-1943).²⁰

The counterpoint between the two interpretations involves two kinds of drunkenness from different wines. As the Persian poetic tradition has it: *bāda-yi angurī*, "wine from grapes;" and *bāda-yi manšūrī*, "the wine of love." The former is usually connected with a *carpe diem* mentality. As for the latter, *bāda-yi manšūrī* means literally "the wine of Mansur al Hallaj," the 10th century Sufi mystic and martyr – that is: spiritual love and self-negation in absolute surrender to *dūst*, the Beloved.

As a side remark it should be added that the *carpe diem* mentality need not be considered as superficial. In fact, it is by no means easy to enjoy life without any thought about past or future. However, there is a difference between *carpe diem* drunkenness and love drunkenness, for the former involves an enjoyer, while in the latter the enjoyer has ideally been dissolved into *dūst*, the Beloved.

The two kinds of drunkenness each involve their own language and music in *Bee bade mast!–Drunk without wine!* The epicurean one is connected with the English narrative of FitzGerald and a continuous, cyclical, largely homophonic music in straight notes. It is motivated by fascination with time's passing, and the urge to find moments of enjoyment. On the other hand, mystical intoxication is represented in quatrains in Persian from Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, for text, with a polyphonic texture with ornamented melodic lines for music.

The latter music breaks into the former one, both vertically (when all voices interrupt the English FitzGerald narrative) and horizontally (when single voices sing in counterpoint to that narrative). These ruptures occur at key words shared by the poetry in both the FitzGerald/Khayyām and Rūmī poems, like “wine”/*mey*, and “Paradise”/*khāna-yi dust*.

Two *rubā'iyāt* may illustrate the counterpoint of intoxications:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
 The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
 The Bird of Time has but a little way
 To fly – and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.
 (Omar Khayyām/FitzGerald, *Rubāiyāt* nr. 7)

Bee daf bar maa mayaa, ke maa dar-sooreem
Barkheez-o dohol bezan, ke maa mansooreem
Masteem, nah mast-e baadeye angoreem
Az harche kheeyaal borde'i, maa dooreem

(without a frame drum to us don't come for we are in festivity
 get up and the drum play, for we are victorious
 we are drunk not drunk of wine of grapes
 of any thoughts you have we are far)

Appendix III

(S.T. Shiva, *Rending the Veil. Literal and poetic translations of Rumi*, Prescott: Hohm, 1995, p. 177. After B. Furuzanfar, *Kulliyat-e Shams*, Tehran: University of Tehran, 1963, Vol. 8, nr. 1322.)

Concerts by the Nederlands Kamerkoor (Dutch Chamber Choir) to celebrate the 150th anniversary of FitzGerald's rendering of *rubā'iyāt* ascribed to Omar Khayyām.

Conductor Klaas Stok

Program

1. Ton de Leeuw, *Car nos vignes sont en fleur* (1981)
2. Friedrich Cerha, *Zehn Rubaijat des Omar Khajjam* (1949/1988)
3. Rokus de Groot, *Bee bade mast!–Drunk without wine!* (2009)
4. Kambiz Roshanravān, *Asrar-e-Azal* (2009)
5. Paul Hindemith, *canon "Oh threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!"* (1945)
6. Lex van Delden, *Rubāiyāt* (1948)

July 1, Haarlem, Philharmonie (Large Hall), International Choir Biennale.
 July 5, Amsterdam, Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ.
 July 9, Amsterdam, Conservatory of Amsterdam, Bernard Haitinkzaal.
 Congress International Musicological Society (IMS), and International Association of Music Librarians, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML).

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Dr Asghar Seyed-Gohrab and Jos Biegstraaten for sharing their most engaging inspiration by, and extensive knowledge of 'Umar Khayyām's legacy.
- 2 When the expression *rubā'iyāt* "by 'Umar Khayyām" is used later in this chapter, it should be taken as "ascribed to" this name.
- 3 This 'instrument' is also known as glass harmonica or glass harp. Composers who wrote for it include Mozart, Beethoven, Donizetti and Richard Strauss. It is already described by European Renaissance music theorists in the late 15th century. The use of tuned glasses, metal cups or bowls in Asia predates that.
- 4 The pitch intervals between the voice and the wine glass sounding at the end of the consecutive quatrain lines are: *E flat–A* (tritone); *E flat–B* (augmented fifth); *E flat–F* (major ninth); *E flat–A* (tritone).
- 5 See B.N.S. Gooch and D.S. Thatcher, *Musical Settings of early and mid-Victorian Literature. A Catalogue*, New York & London: Garland, 1979, pp. 245-52; J. Coumans, "Khayyām in Uitvoering," in *Omariana* 4/1 (2001).
- 6 R. de Groot, "Rabindranath Tagore and Frederik van Eeden: Reception of a 'Poet-King' in the Netherlands," in J. Bor e.a. eds., *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries*, Delhi: Manohar/Rotterdam: Codarts, 2010, pp. 521-76.
- 7 Of the composers involved, De Groot, De Haan, and Ruyneman also set Tagore poems to music.
- 8 Most of the latter are easily accessible through the Nederlands Muziek Instituut in The Hague (Dutch Music Institute, NMI), or through composers, performers and CD's.
- 9 The first quatrain is to be recited, and is not counted as a song here.
- 10 I thank Jos Biegstraaten for this comment.
- 11 See data about the performances in Appendix III.
- 12 J. de Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten. Oriëntalisme in de Nederlandse Cultuur, ca 1800-1920*, Leiden: Primavera Press, 2008, pp. 169-72.
- 13 Personal communication Lex van Delden jr., March 10, 2009.
- 14 See the contributions by J.J. Witkam and M. Alsulami.
- 15 See the contributions by Mehdi Aminrazavi
- 16 Personal communication, Amsterdam, July 2, 2009.
- 17 Texts in Persian, corresponding to FitzGerald's *Rubā'iyāt*, nrs. 32 and 20.
- 18 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, *passim*.
- 19 First published in *Revue de l'Orient, de l'Algerie et des Colonies*, 1859.
- 20 J. de Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten*, p. 167-68.

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The Russian perception of Khayyām: from text to image

F. Abdullaeva (University of Cambridge), N. Chalisova (State University of Moscow), Ch. Melville (University of Cambridge)

In the frequently cited words of A. Lefevere, “translation involves trust. The audience, which does not know the original, trusts that the translation is a fair representation of it.”¹ A translation of a great work of literature not only creates a broader basis for research in depth but also – and it is equally important – shapes the image of the original in the receiving culture. That is why translation also involves responsibility. The readers, however well informed of the possible shifts and losses, still tend to take a beautifully edited rendering with the name of a genius on the dust jacket for a creation of his/her own pen. A history of translations is also instructive; it brings to light some truths hidden not only in the original but in the receiving culture as well. We shall now try to trace the reception and appropriation of the *Rubaiyat* in Russia and to show at least partially what kinds of textual and visual images are in circulation all over the country nowadays under the extremely popular brand name of ‘Umar Khayyām.

It seems that the heritage and fame of ‘Umar Khayyām (1048-1131) are more a paradox than a logical reality. Quite a few people in the West might know that the calendar he devised as the head of the Academy of Sciences in Isfahan (which he also established with significant funding from the government) was more precise than the one we are using now, but almost everyone has heard of him writing poetry: obviously everyone who has heard of him at all. Khayyām’s fame in the West comes and goes in waves, sometimes it is like a tsunami, sometimes like the still waters before the next storm in world literature.

According to L.P. Elwell-Sutton,² Persian literature, one of the richest in the world, became famous due to someone who might have never written a single verse. However, now we have to deal with the phenomenon of the extreme popularity of poetry that can be called Khayyamic, a product of the collective mind not only in Persian or English but also in other languages.³ This paper will try to reveal the secret of its popularity in Russia, which can be witnessed even by the fact that a Russian astronomer, L. Zhuravleva, called an outer main-belt asteroid, newly discovered by her in 1980, *Omarkhayyam*.

Khayyām's poetry (or what is ascribed to him)⁴ achieved glory far from home after the "Victorian invention" of Khayyām by Edward FitzGerald (31 March 1809–14 June 1883). It was the English perception that initiated the Persian poet's tremendous fame outside and even inside Iran. Khayyām as an English poet was born by an Anglo-Irish eccentric from Cambridge, who "developed agreeable oddities in dress and manner, wearing indoors a top hat and a silk dressing gown and out of doors a plaid shawl and very short trousers up to his knees."⁵ At the age of 47 he married Lucy Barton, but they separated after six months of discord and tension as his own life lacked any obvious purpose, and he found her social ambitions highly distasteful. While his old friends Thackeray and Tennyson became prominent figures in London society, he preferred the company of farmers in Suffolk. All the features of his peculiar nature: his love of point and paradox, of sharp epigram and lyrical wit, his luxurious melancholy and romanticism of Victorian affection for strange names and places⁶ (what we now call sub-conscious Orientalism) have found their way into the *Rubaiyat*. The result is well known: his book was crowned with a resounding success in the English speaking world; it turned Khayyām into the symbol of Persia, its literature and culture, and all the exotic East in general.

To be fair, FitzGerald had several children like Khayyām, speaking other languages: Greek (Aeschylus, Sophocles) and Spanish (Calderon). His approach to translation was also 'eccentric'; he used to omit passages that did not appeal to his own taste or even merge different texts into one, obviously producing a work more of his own than of the author he was translating. The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus and the two tragedies of Sophocles, *Oedipus at Thebes* and *Oedipus at Athens*, were adapted for English readers by FitzGerald with considerable creative freedom.⁷

In 1852, FitzGerald took up the study of Persian in Oxford under the supervision of Edward B. Cowell. It took Cowell a year to teach him Persian, and very soon FitzGerald started to work on his version of Jami's poem *Salaman and Absal*. He compacted that allegorical romance with its numerous inserted stories into a dramatic poem in Miltonic blank verse and published it in 1856 as a first tribute to his Oriental studies. Poetry ascribed to Khayyām had a similar fate under his pen. FitzGerald used the Persian originals of the quatrains contained in the Ouseley manuscript,⁸ which Cowell had discovered in the Bodleian Library, as well as Cowell's transcripts and he made his own creation out of it all. But FitzGerald is hardly responsible for inventing such an unrestricted method of translation. The translators of his time, at least those who had some literary goals, shared the free creative approach in their perception of the original. The opinion prevailed that exotic Oriental material had to be adapted to European tastes for the public to digest it with appreciation. As a translator of Hāfiz and Khayyām, Richard Le Galienne (1866-1947) put it, "the music of Persian verse may be more captivating than the music of our English

lyric poetry, but it could hardly seem so to English ears, and, at all events, English ears crave English music. Surely the only service of a translation is for it to make the foreign poet a poet of one's own country – not to present him as a half-Anglicised foreigner speaking neither his own language nor our own.”⁹

The Anglicised Khayyām turned out to be a freethinker and skeptic as eccentric as FitzGerald himself. His brilliant puns on the pointlessness of asking unanswerable questions inspired many poets in Europe, in the United States and in Russia, and continue to influence modern writers and artists. The impact of that masterpiece upon the Western perception of Khayyām has been so tangible that nowadays we have to discuss Khayyamiana in any European language (in our case Russian) in terms of FitzGerald-connected and FitzGerald-independent translations.

Text: translations and pseudo-translations

Khayyām became known in Russia at the end of the 19th century, when the very first attempts at translation were made. The various types of the ‘original text’ that have been used, and the various modes and strategies of translation that have been applied, brought forth strikingly different collections of what is called *Rubaiyat*, and conflicting images of its author.

Two general tendencies in the ‘Russian response’ to Khayyām can probably be explained by Stolypin’s famous definition of Russian cultural identity, two-headed like the eagle of the national emblem: one of its heads looks to the East and the other – to the West.¹⁰ The approach to the *Rubaiyat* translation in Russia follows that pattern, and we can witness both the attempts to confront the original Persian poems (look to the East) and the attempts to render FitzGerald’s or rarely some other European version (look to the West). In some cases the translators worked with the Persian *Rubaiyat* but followed the creative example of FitzGerald and produced Russian Khayyamitic imitations with an Orientalist feel to them.

During the 19th century the keen interest in the religion and culture of her southern neighbour, Iran, was constantly increasing in Russian society. It is remarkable that despite Russia’s strong Orientalist traditions and quite a few translations from Persian poetry (Hāfiz, Sa’di, Firdousi) produced during the 19th century, there is no evidence of the popularity of Khayyām *before* the age of FitzGerald (d. 1883) and his largely posthumous celebrity. If the awareness of Khayyām was triggered by the incredible success of the *Rubaiyat*, however, the very first Russian ‘translation’ was not from FitzGerald’s English, but directly from Persian. The writer, poet and traveller E.M. Belozersky, who had studied Persian in the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow and wrote a book of letters from Persia,¹¹ is supposed to have translated 153 *ruba’i*, ca. 1886, but if so they were never published.

When the Western fame of Khayyām the poet reached Russia it attracted the attention of Valentin Alekseevich Zhukovskiy, Professor of St. Petersburg University, a great reformer in scholarship and education, an archaeologist, dialectologist, folklorist, specialist in Babism and Bahaism, and in Sufi literature.¹² He was frustrated by Omar's exaggerated glory and wrote a brilliant article on the wandering quatrains, proving that many *rubā'is* ascribed to Khayyām had been written by other, 'real' poets.¹³ Of course, it was too late: Zhukovskiy could not 'undo' FitzGerald's discovery, or better say invention. The cult had been already established, and the Western readers who worshipped Khayyām as a poet did not want to be disillusioned about their idol. His forename Omar familiarized him for his New Age followers, those who had nothing to do with either science or even literature: by the end of the 19th century, the cult of Omar in the West was spread mostly among elite consumers of material and intellectual production.¹⁴ However, it took almost a whole century to shape the similar cult in Russia (see below).

Zhukovskiy's work was the first scholarly study of Khayyām's literary heritage in Russia. It inspired and influenced the first generation of the poet's translators.¹⁵ Although both FitzGerald and Zhukovskiy were 'orientalists' (Zhukovskiy clearly more so), and were working with the original (i.e. Persian) texts, one difference between them was that FitzGerald made his famous amalgam of passages from different quatrains and produced a poetic mosaic, whereas Zhukovskiy attempted a straightforward word by word translation of the poems he considered to be authentic, to be turned into more poetic form by one of his friends, the poet Vasiliy Velichko. He presented his set of 16 poems "From Omar Khayyām. From Persian"¹⁶ to the Russian public; Velichko's collection of 1903 included 52 poems.¹⁷ His 'translations' obviously did not suffer any influence of the original in form.

Thus in both England and Russia, the success of Khayyām was due to the fact that the translators (FitzGerald and Velichko) were themselves poets. They started a trend of raising the 'translations' above the level of philological study and producing literary works in their own right. There were, however, differences. The impact of the Velichko's work on the subsequent tradition is surely incomparable with that of FitzGerald. Velichko's Khayyāmīc poems acquired just a modest and transient fame in Russia.

One of the secrets of FitzGerald's success was the unusual combination of a recognizable content based on a set of universal poetic ideas and a very exotic but purely authentic shape: a true *rubā'i* (AABA). That was not the case with the first Russian versions. The poets felt free to compose poems in Russian classical strophic forms and only use the imagery understood to be that of Khayyām. Thus Velichko's poems consisted of between 5 and 16 lines, with a flexible rhyme scheme.

The poets who followed Velichko at that prerevolutionary time (P. Porfirov, T. Lebedinskiy, I. Umov, A. Danilevskiy-Alexandrov, V. Mazurkevich)¹⁸ also used to give free versions of the poems, ignored the four-line form of the ruba'i and its strict rhyme scheme and paraphrased the content of the quatrain in 8 or even 16 or 20 lines¹⁹. Konstantin Balmont was the first to pay attention to the formal features of the poems. His 11 quatrains from Khayyām²⁰ attracted some attention, but mostly because he was already one of the dominant poets of the Russian Silver Age.

The tradition of presenting the *Rubaiyat* as a whole collection started curiously enough with a literary mystification, where the name of Khayyām was not even mentioned. In 1901 a poet and music critic Konstantin Mazurin (b. 1866) published a small book "Strofy Niruzama" (The stanzas of Niruzam) under the pseudonym K. Gerra. Niruzam, which sounds rather Persian, is in fact a palindrome, in which the poet's name Mazurin is written backwards. In the Introduction the author told his story: during his travels in the East he had found some old and defective manuscript of an anonymous Persian poet from Khorasan and translated it into Russian. The book was first greeted as a serious edition, then as a literary forgery and an Oriental stylization, authored by Mazurin himself. Z. Vorozheikina showed that in fact 110 ruba'i of Khayyām had been rendered in "Niruzam" in one way or another.²¹ The influence of FitzGerald's masterpiece in Niruzam is also evident, so we can add that Mazurin pioneered the rendering of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* in Russian. He also followed FitzGerald in applying his 'fusing' technique. Although Mazurin's stanzas were allegedly based on a Persian manuscript, his 168 emulations created a free paraphrase of the original. The poet blurred the borders between the quatrains and made a colourful Russian mosaic out of separate Persian pieces, mixing them up and putting them in his own order, in 8 or 12 line poems (some of them count up to 46 lines). However, some pieces emulated the original not only in meaning and style but also in shape, following the specific ruba'i rhyme and even introducing the *radif*.²²

During the subsequent decades (that is the 1920s and 30s) Khayyām translation went in two directions. On the one hand, FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* at last found its way into Russia.²³ In 1922 Osip Rumer (1883–1954) published in Moscow a full and accurate translation of the *Rubaiyat* under the title "FitzGerald. Omar Khayyām". The book was based on the third edition (1872) of the *Rubaiyat* and thus included 101 poems. Later Ivan Tkhorzhevskiy (1878–1951), who had worked in the Ministry of Justice at the time of the Russian Revolution and emigrated first to Finland and then to Paris, published his freely paraphrased 194 poems of Khayyām (1928).²⁴ The collection actually includes direct translations from FitzGerald and free poetic improvisations inspired by his *Rubaiyat*. That brilliant fusion of English and Russian poets' creativity was a great success

and its impact on Russian literary culture is somewhat comparable with FitzGerald's in English. Here too, to use FitzGerald's idiom, old Omar Khayyām rings like true metal.²⁵ Tkhorzhevskiy applied a form of quatrain and special ruba'i rhymes, and his masterful imitations shaped the first distinctive and recognizable image of a Khayyām poem for Russian readers as laconic and sententious in form, hedonistic and impious in content and penetrated with the sorrowful witticism of a man of wisdom.²⁶

On the other hand, Russian scholars and translators of the prewar decade (1930s) turned their attention to the original texts in Persian and it was through their works that the textual base for the Russian Khayyāmiana first started to take shape. An Iranologist Leonid Nekora used the famous Bodleian manuscript of 1460 that had been used by FitzGerald and presented 144 poems in an accurate and high quality verse translation,²⁷ following (as Vorozheikina put it) the logic of the Khayyāmian poetic discourse. At the same time S. Kashevarov published his collection of 122 quatrains ("Literary Uzbekistan" 1935), based on the texts of Khayyām in the editions by Nicolas (1867) and Christensen (1927).²⁸ However, his rhymed translations sound more like "word by word" prose renderings and are mostly of only historical interest now. A much more serious and influential book appeared in 1938, when Osip Rumer published his "Omar Khayyām. Quatrains". Rumer was a polyglot linguist; he translated poetry from many European languages and only from the original. On publishing his version of FitzGerald's poem in 1922, Rumer felt inspired and decided to learn Persian and translate the original *Rubaiyat*. He chose 300 quatrains from the Nicolas edition and turned them into brilliant Russian verse. Rumer's work is extremely faithful; he was the first to introduce not only the form and spirit but also the true leading motifs and images of Khayyām into the Russian literature. His book counts as the crowning achievement of the first half-century of Khayyām translation.

From the 1930s, Khayyām enjoyed considerable attention in Russia or rather in the Soviet Union. This could be at least partly explained by the ideological situation in the country. Very often translating was the only way of earning some financial support for those highly educated and talented people. Furthermore, translating Khayyām was also a way to share his freethinking wisdom for those scholars and poets who internally refused to follow the pattern of the Stalinist propaganda principles. Numerous intellectuals were rejected by the regime and repressed at that time, with quite a few Iranologists among them. For instance, V. Tardov and K. Chaykin, who had both contributed to the collection of Khayyām's translations published in 1935 for the Third International Congress of Persian art and archaeology,²⁹ were arrested and executed by firing squad during the Stalin repressions three years later.³⁰

The next and influential attempt to understand Khayyām was made by philologists. In 1959 N. Osmanov and R. Aliyev with the help of E.

Bertels published a facsimile of the Cambridge University Library manuscript supposedly written in 1207. At the time there was a good reason to believe the given date and thus consider that earliest manuscript as a crucial argument for the authenticity of the poems it contained. Regrettably, it later turned out that it had been a forgery contemporary with the publishers of the 'great discovery'. If the manuscript itself was a fake the poems it contained were mostly 'authentic', i.e. chosen from already existing collections. The edition of the unfortunate facsimile was followed by an accurate philological translation of 293 poems with due commentary.³¹ That corpus of texts came to be in great demand a bit later, when poets who did not know Persian started to use it as a word for word intermediary text and naturally followed a mode of understanding proposed by Osmanov and Aliyev.

Quite a number of poets with little or no knowledge of Persian turned Osmanov's word by word translations³² into Omarian lyrics; some of them (like Vladimir Derzhavin, Semen Lipkin³³, Il'ya Sel'vinskiy) had already achieved fame for their renderings of Persian classics. Their output differs in terms of literary merit and aesthetic value but accords in being much closer to Russian hedonistic poetry than to the original Khayyām.³⁴ The poet-translators were not well versed enough in Persian medieval culture and literature; they merely poeticized the mostly anonymous literal renderings. Ruba'i imagery is rather simple compared with the intricate conceits of the *qasida*. Thus at first sight the *ruba'i* looks more translatable. But with antinomy and paradox of thought as features of the genre, ruba'i is nevertheless highly associated with conventional imagery. Khayyām is famous for his ingenious use of the classical topoi as the preconditions or necessary implications of his poetic argument. As he had often resorted to the allusive technique, some of these topoi rested unidentified by the authors of literal renderings and unnoticed by poet-translators. In other cases the poets themselves used to adapt and simplify the correct rendering, thereby trying to avoid 'cultural misunderstanding'.

It is true that some images can be rather misleading, due to the difference of perception of various cultural realia; it is the task of the translator to make them understandable to his reader. However, in some cases this mission is almost impossible. For example, the Persian image of the parrot, which is a symbol of eloquence, wisdom and even spirituality, bridging the link between the human and divine world due to its double nature: being a bird and yet able to speak (a continuation of the ancient perception of a bird as a symbol of the human winged soul or a part of divine charisma), would be associated in Russian cultural tradition with a complex of opposite characteristics: a silly person unable to generate his own ideas but repeating anything he was taught. The paired image of the butterfly and candle would also usually be perceived with the meaning opposite to that in the original: the Persian butterfly as a symbol of the lover who sacrifices

himself in the flame of his beloved for the sake of his love would usually be perceived by the Russian audience as a flighty light-hearted creature incapable for any constant strong feeling towards one person. Apart from the whole complex of rather puzzling metaphors, this is a real battlefield for a translator into Russian: for example, the comparison of a beloved's face with the round moon won't do any justice for his or her beauty in the opinion of a Russian reader.³⁵ The poet-translators did their best to compose the rubā'is in a classical poetic idiom that appealed to the Russian taste. They tended to omit the incomprehensible poetic ideas and replace them by more customary ones, so the result was good Russian poetry with a nice and delicate oriental flavour.

However, it was German Plisetskiy (1931–92) who was mostly responsible for shaping the national attitude towards Khayyām. Plisetskiy did not know Persian but he worked in cooperation with and (one may say) under the professional and friendly guidance of Iranologists and translators – M.-N. Osmanov, M. Zand, N. Kondyreva. In fact it was a *qiran as-sa'dayn* (fortunate conjunction of the stars) for Khayyāmic poetry in Russia. The result was 450 poems³⁶ (around 300 from Osmanov's edition, the rest chosen from the Furughi and Swami Gowinda Tirtha collections).³⁷ Plisetskiy used only one meter (an anapaest tetrameter), observed rhymes and *radifs* and found his way to grasp and reproduce in Russian verse an unattainable simplicity of the Khayyāmic ruba'i and its paradoxical wisdom. His Khayyām took on a special 'flying' quality, and very soon almost everyone knew some of it by heart.

Plisetskiy had rather a dissident reputation. One of his best poems, written after the funeral of Boris Pasternak, begins with a line famous for its bitterness: "Poets, the bastard sons of Russia..." (*Poety, pobochniye deti Rossiyi*). He was among those who put their careers at great risk and signed the letters of support for Josef Brodsky when the KGB initiated his baiting. His poem "Tube" (Truba), composed in memory of those who had died in a crush at Trubnaya Square (*lit.* "Tube's Square") in Moscow during Stalin's funeral, was first published in "Grani" (Frankfurt am Main, 1967). That publication in a clearly anti-Soviet journal made Plisetskiy an unwanted author in the official Soviet literary magazines, but it brought him the fame of a real poet. The finale of this poem is written on his gravestone: "Avant, avant! Retreat has been cut off, closed like a hatch, not liftable by hand... And that is all we're let to understand" (*Vpered, vpered! Obratniy put' otrezan, zakryt, kak l'uk, kotoriy ne podn'at'... I eto vse, chto nam dano pon'at'*). Created before G. Plisetskiy turned his attention to the poet from Nishapur, those lines strangely have a distinctive Khayyāmic feel.

Omar Khayyām Plisetskiy (German used to sign the copies of his book for friends in that way) became a cult poet first for intellectuals and then for 'reading public' in general. By the late 1970s the *Rubaiyat* had really

come into fashion and never went out of it since. The main reason here is doubtless the strict accuracy and breathtaking beauty of poetic argument peculiar to “Plisetskiy Khayyām”. Among wider reasons for such popularity the political situation could be mentioned. In the 1970s and early 1980s feelings of bitter disappointment and helplessness penetrated Soviet society, and the poetry of Khayyām *maybe* helped people to maintain a healthy skepticism about any possible course of events. His “Jug of wine” philosophy and his call to sacrifice the whole empire for a delicious cup of wine happened to be congenial to the Russian cultural atmosphere during the last years of the Soviet Empire.

One of the best examples of Plisetskiy’s skill in making Khayyām sound like a fighter with the Soviet reality is the following ruba’i:

*Chem za obshcheye schast'ye bez tolku stradat' –
Luchshe schast'ye komu-nibud' blizhnemu dat'.
Luchshe druga k sebe priv'yazat' dobrotoyu,
Chem ot put chelovechestvo osvobozhdat'.³⁸*

*Instead of uselessly suffering for the common happiness,
It's better to give happiness to someone who is close to you.
It's better to tie someone to yourself with your kindness
Than try to free the whole mankind from their ties.*

In those four lines he managed to play on two clichés of Soviet ideological terminology: *obshcheye schast'ye* “common/communal happiness” and *ot put chelovechestvo osvobozhdat'* “to free mankind from ties”, which immediately takes a poem to the level of the ‘anti-Soviet propaganda’. The rubā’i was considered by many as one of the best at that time (it was the favourite of I. M. Steblin-Kamensky³⁹ for that matter).⁴⁰

In 1983 Cecilia Banu-Lahuti published quite another version of Khayyām. A knowledgeable iranologist and brilliant translator from Persian,⁴¹ Banu presented her selection of 38 ruba’is,⁴² which is unique in combining excellence and simplicity of style with closeness to the original, both in form and meaning. Regrettably her collection was small, and the book, published in Tajikistan, was hard to find, so her translations did not attract proper attention at that time.

Despite its enormous popularity, editions of Plisetskiy Khayyām were few, and people had to spend time and effort to find one. The situation changed after Perestroika, when the publishing houses started to monitor what was indeed in popular demand. They began to republish Plisetskiy’s Khayyām yearly under catching colourful jackets, but the public wanted more.

The ever-growing demand for Khayyām poems caused two mainstream publishing policies. The first was to encourage the lovers of Khayyām both inside and outside academic circles to collect some or even all of the

existing translations in one book. The pioneer work of this kind appeared as early as 1986, edited by Z. Vorozheikina and A. Shakhverdov in the “Library of the poet” Series,⁴³ where the 100 years’ experience of Khayyām’s translations in Russia was summarized.⁴⁴ Since then, all the old and forgotten renderings have been revived in numerous editions; the Butromeyevs’ “Omar Khayyām and the Persian poets of the X-XVI cc”,⁴⁵ and Omar Khayyām, *Rubaiyyat* (Moscow, 2008)⁴⁶ could serve as good examples here. The Butromeyevs’ “Omar” contains not only old Russian versions from the first third of the 20th century (V. Velichko, K. Gerra, I. Tkhorzhevskiy, I. Umov, T. Lebedinskiy, K. Balmont, V. Mazurkevich, N. Vlasov, A. Gruzinskiy) but also FitzGerald’s English text with a Russian word for word prose translation.

The latest publications reveal a strong tendency for comparative studies. A physicist Roald Sh. Malkovich is known to have compiled a unique collection of 5,000 ruba’i translated by 78 authors. He published some part of it in the series of books:⁴⁷ The *Garden of Desires* includes a set of ruba’i, in word for word rendering and three different verse translations each. In “*Omar Khayyām*”, the editor compares 2,833 translations of 292 ruba’i made by 55 poets from 1891 up to the present time. “Ruba’i: Russian translations” also gives the reader a panoramic view of translations (1891–2006) and presents the output of 61 poets. A passionate lover of Khayyām, Malkovich also fulfilled a task unachieved by professional Orientalists and established the originals for multiple poetic versions. In this book, published in 2007, he presented 3,331 translations of 292 ruba’is along with the Persian originals given for comparison. Such editions obviously contain a number of double, triple and sometimes up to a couple of dozen variants of the same poem and tend to confuse the reader about the content of the *Ruba’iyat* ascribed to Khayyām. However they contain precious material for those interested in translation studies. Cataloguing the perception of the Russian Khayyām is done and ready for its researchers. Subjected to thorough analysis they could reveal specific stages in the cultural appropriation of the *Ruba’iyat*, the changes in the image of Khayyām the poet and in the main message of his poetry, and maybe even the correlation of the stylistic shifts in translation with the ideological shifts from Tsarist monarchy to Soviet state communism and newborn democracy in recent Russian history. In an interview with the correspondent of the St Petersburg University *Newsletter*, Malkovich concludes with the ruba’i written by the famous Soviet poet S. Marshak, which seems to express not only Marshak’s, Malkovich’s and indeed the Russian view, but also a universal attitude to Khayyāmic poetry:

*Chetyre strochki istochayut yad,
Kogda zhivet v nikh zlaya epigramma,
No rany serdtsa lechat “Rubayat” –
Chetverostishya starogo Khayyama.*

*Four lines pour poison
 If a bitter epigram lives in them
 But the Rubaiyat will cure wounds of heart –
 [If they are] the quatrains by old Khayyām.⁴⁸*

(See illustration 15 in the full color section)

The second tendency is publishing new translations, naturally enough. Regrettably, Russian scholars have not paid much attention to Khayyām studies recently, and the new translations have been made by *amateurs* infatuated with their love for the *Ruba'iyat*. The most revealing example here is the work of Igor Golubev, who had got his PhD in technical sciences and learned Persian on his own. He versified 1,300 poems of what he considered to be Khayyām, working with original Persian texts in the Swami Govinda Tirtha (1941) collection and even using some manuscripts.⁴⁹ His criteria (mostly stylistic and subjective) for separating the authentic poems and the false ones are given in some detail in the Introductory article to his edition. That collection has become extremely popular and re-edited with different publishers. Golubev enriched the Russian Khayyāmiana with one other image of a great poet: in his lengthy Introduction and numerous other publications the author claims to present his own deciphering of the Khayyām's secret philosophic message.

The boom in Khayyām does not seem to stop in Russia: every half a year at least one or two new editions appear. The popularity of Russian Khayyām, compared with the European and especially with the English one, has been strikingly stable during the second half of the 20th century: once it appeared, it has always been a fashion of the day for those interested in poetry. But since the early 1990s a new tendency started to gain momentum as the first signs of Omar's cult under formation appeared. And very soon Khayyām the poet entered the Pantheon of the modern Russian mass culture idols.

Nowadays Khayyām is a uniquely readable poet. The editions of his *Rubaiyat* are multifarious and easy to find everywhere. The poetry shelves in any bookshop of a large or small city in Russia would have at least a couple of different editions of Khayyām, together with Shakespeare and Dante, Pushkin and Akhmatova (see illustrations 16 and 17 in the full color section). At the same time, Khayyām is a uniquely saleable and marketable poet. In Moscow and St Petersburg people use to buy press and paperbacks at the underground stations' book-stalls, and one can always find there some volume by Khayyām surrounded by crime and love stories, books on astrology and cooking, and other kinds of popular and trash literature. What does it mean? It means that 'ordinary people in the street' or the general public actually buy books entitled "Khayyām" and that his *Rubaiyat* counts as a market product bringing good profit.

That widespread Russian passion for a Persian poet's wisdom has been recently authorized at the highest possible level. In 2007 (February 1) the president Vladimir Putin during his annual news conference answered the question of a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* correspondent, about the times when he was in a bad mood. Putin said: "The Russian president falls in a bad mood as often as any other individual. I usually try to consult my dog Koni. Besides, my wife recently presented me with a book of poetry by Omar Khayyām, which is always a help too" (indeed, one of the famous poems starts with *zahr ast gham-i jahan-u may taryak-at* "The sorrow of this world is poison and the cure for you is wine").⁵⁰ The meeting with reporters was broadcast by the official presidential website, Russian TV-channels and radio stations.⁵¹

V. Putin chose to quote the following ruba'i (in Plisetskiy's translation) as his argument:

*Don't mourn, oh mortal one, your yesterday's losses,
Don't measure your today with tomorrow's measure
Don't trust the moment that has been or will be,
Trust the current moment, be happy now!*⁵²

Be it Putin's personal literary taste that had defined the choice of Khayyām for his official meeting with the media, or the smart decision on the part of his speechwriters – in any case the event testifies to the common opinion that Khayyām is a poet of high standing and thus his name and poetry would appeal to people.

Putin's short remark triggered a striking reaction in Russia and in some close neighbouring Republics. Within a year a collection of Russian translations of the *Rubaiyat* appeared in Kazan city (Tatarstan) under the title "Khayyām and Putin" (2008, 112 pp., 1,000 copies). In his introductory article Bobojon Ikramov, a journalist from Tajikistan, wrote: "The president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has been the first among modern politicians to turn his face to Oriental poetry. He publicly declared his love and respect for the poems of Omar Khayyām [...]. He stressed: in my spare time I study the legacy of Omar Khayyām."⁵³

A reciter from Tajikistan, Mahmanabi Jaborov, produced a *Rubaiyat* CD titled "For a worthy one there is no worthy reward",⁵⁴ and dedicated it "to the president of Russia Vladimir Putin for his love of the great Omar Khayyām". M. Jaborov recites the ruba'is both in Tajik and Russian (in Plisetskiy's translation), to the accompaniment of Jivan Gasparyan, a famous Armenian duduk player.⁵⁵

A new wave of Khayyām's glory has hit the Russian provinces. For instance, in Ekaterinburg quotations from the *Rubaiyat* appeared in the shape of a tiny book one could use as a keychain or charm (see illustration 18 in the full colour section).⁵⁶ In a bookshop attendant's words "Khayyām has

always been a good seller, but nowadays [after Putin's press conference] it is a real boom. Both cheap and fancy editions are being sold out in a wink".⁵⁷

Already in the early 2000s several large publishing houses launched a new type of Khayyām publication; they have been and still are announced on the booksellers' websites as exclusive or luxury editions. Their descriptions include such particulars as Italian *Old Mill Avorio* paper, natural leather or silk binding, relief stamping, gold spattering and gold edges, leather tassels and other kinds of ornamentations and embellishments, such as a special prop or device to keep the book standing on the desk top. The advertisement of the contents of such books are not so eloquent and expressive; some just mention that the reader "will enter the magic world of the Great Khayyām's poetry" and forget to indicate the names of the translators. For example, the Belyi Gorod Publishers (Moscow) have recently produced a whole series of Khayyāms. According to their latest catalogue, the range of prices is enormously wide: from about ten UK pounds for the cheapest version to several thousand for the top quality exclusive copies (the most expensive was on sale for 245,000 roubles, or ca. £ 5,500/EU 6,300).⁵⁸ Putin's interview has only multiplied the number and variety of such luxuries. Thus a book of Khayyām has acquired an additional function. It has now become a gift appropriate for a high-ranked official's jubilee and for a private family anniversary, an object of art suitable to adorn a desktop or bookshelf.

Thus at the present time Khayyām editions are being released non-stop both in modest and fancy design. They mostly reprint the already popular translations, like the Plisetskiy Khayyām, the Butromeyevs' collection of old renderings or the new versions by I. Golubev. Along with those mainstream sets of translations some exotic flowers also appear in response to the high level of public interest. In 1997 a famous painter and book illustrator, Pavel Bunin, published a book that contained the German translation (still well-known today) of the *Rubaiyat* by Friedrich Rosen (1909), versified renderings of the German poems made by Bunin and his brilliant graphic illustrations in erotic style (see below).⁵⁹ In all other editions he was illustrating the translations by other poets.⁶⁰ In 1999, A. Ivanova produced a Russian version of the curious commentaries by Paramhansa Yogananda on the 'meanings' of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* in the interpretation of J.D. Walters.⁶¹ Any such translation can serve as just one more layer of interpretation of Khayyāmic ideas, whatever those interpretations are.

Khayyām also continues to inspire new mystifications. In 2000 a "literary sensation" was published in Moscow.⁶² Its author, Dmitriy Serebryakov, claimed the poet's true name to be Amir Khayim, placed Khayyām's native town in Tataria, in the south of ancient Russia and presented 143 poems in unrhymed quatrains from a "newly found manuscript". Serebryakov's book has nothing to do with any kind of

scholarship: the author has no idea of the basic facts of Khayyām or FitzGerald studies, and his style of “translating” fictitious poems combines a rather vulgar modernization with a very artificial archaisation. That “sensational” would be hardly worth mentioning at all but for the fact that Serebryakov has produced a literary forgery and used the name of Khayyām for the deliberate provocation of the readers’ interest in his amateurish efforts. Such a strategy could be successful only if it involved a poet whose writings have an established national value.

The perception and appropriation of the *Rubaiyat* in Russian literature and modern culture has some very specific overtones. On the one hand, Russian scholarship on Khayyām up to the beginning of the 21st century has been rather modest. M.N. Osmanov and R. Aliyev’s philological translation made in 1959 still gives the most accurate approximation to the original Khayyām poems,⁶³ and Plisetskiy Khayyām is almost the only poetic translation based on a scholarly literal rendering (also Osmanov’s). On the other hand, nowadays the *Rubaiyat* surely counts as an integral part of Russian poetry. V. Zhukovskiy once found what he called “moral ugliness” in Khayyām’s poetry;⁶⁴ he could not believe that one poet would have expressed such contradictory views on love, life, death, success and failure.⁶⁵ But maybe it is just that paradoxical mixture, as well as the idea of living for and enjoying the present, that explains the secret of Khayyām’s glory in the country. Like FitzGerald’s Omar before and during the World War I, Russian Khayyām came to be a strong tool of psychotherapy during the periods of turmoil in Russia’s eventful history.⁶⁶

Up to the present moment around 80 Russian poets have produced translations and renditions of the *Rubaiyat*, with only a few persons knowledgeable of Persian among them. Nowadays more than 40 different editions with the favourite name of Khayyām on the jacket are simultaneously on sale in the largest bookstores in the Russian capitals. Those jackets cover sets of poems that differ greatly in number, content and literary merit. What we really need is a next step in philological studies on the legacy of Khayyām. It would help to bridge the gap between Russian images of the poet and a true knowledge of his poetry.

Illustrating Khayyām: Wine, women and song

A further level of the Russian perception of Khayyāmic ideas is reflected in the illustration programme of the so-called “artistic” editions of Khayyām. This concluding section of the paper is intended to develop the approach taken by B. Martin and S. Mason in their recent study of *The Art of Omar Khayyām*,⁶⁷ which deals chiefly with Khayyām publications in English. One particular aspect of the Russian Khayyām concerns the illustration of the ruba’is and in particular its semi-erotic or titillating element.

Martin and Mason include a brief “note on eroticism and interpretation”, and remark that “over the whole of the period since 1884 there have been publishers and illustrators who have introduced a strong element of nudity and mild eroticism in their *Rubaiyats*.” They note, quite rightly, that there is little or no sexuality in either FitzGerald’s version or the underlying Persian texts, and remark that the cynical view would be that the publishers and artists have “chosen to interpret quatrains in an explicit manner to encourage the popularity of their editions.”⁶⁸ By ‘explicit’ is meant sexually explicit, rather than ‘literal’ or realistic – for as noted, there is no literal or for that matter allegorical reference to sex at all – in which case the ‘realistic’ meaning of the verses would rather require a philosophical depiction.

In other words, sex sells books. Nevertheless, the examples that Martin and Mason give, of E.H. Garrett and G. James,⁶⁹ G.T. Tobin,⁷⁰ E.J. Sullivan,⁷¹ W. Pogany,⁷² and more recently J.Y. Bateman⁷³ and E. Karlin,⁷⁴ are modestly few and far between, and on the whole rather give the impression that apart from a few bare breasts or more or less naked beauties, the erotic element is rather a minor aspect of the visualisation of the Khayyāmīc message.⁷⁵

This is surely to underestimate this very striking part in a great many illustrations and also to ignore the wider context in which these pictures should be located. We will do no more than make a few observations about the erotic in the Russian Orientalist discourse and attempt a very preliminary categorisation of the types of scene to be found. It is worth mentioning that the predominance of the sensual over the spiritual in Russian exotic Romanticism became obvious only by the end of the 19th century. One of the best examples is the series of works that belonged to the artists of the World of Art (*Mir Iskusstva*) group (see illustration 19 in the full color section).

Khayyām and the Orient. At the time when FitzGerald published his first Khayyām translation,⁷⁶ Britain was heavily involved in the Middle East and India, and European artists were routinely concerned with exotic Romanticism, a romantic depiction of the Orient, among which the theme of the harem was prominent, especially in French work, for example, ‘*Odalisque*’ (1814) and ‘*Le Bain Turc*’ (1862) of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), and the work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) being particularly prominent, if not notorious (see illustration 20 in the full color section). Such images were thus common fare by the time of the first illustrated Khayyām (1884),⁷⁷ and provided a model for the figure of a naked girl in the company of fully clothed men, also found readily enough, of course, in the realisation of classical narrative paintings, like Gérôme’s ‘*Phryne before the Areopagus*’ (1861), but also in the revolutionary and, in its time, shocking, picture of Manet’s ‘*Déjeuner sur l’herbe*’ (1863).

The incorporation of titillating images in the illustrations to Khayyām should be seen not only as a cynical way to sell books but also to respond

to a taste in late Victorian society for oriental fantasy, an active ingredient of which was the scent of exotic pleasures denied by the social restraints of contemporary Britain.

Many of the 'erotic' paintings in the English volumes include either a single [semi-] naked girl, dressed if at all in a lot of wild plumage or billowing skirts, or more than one together, hence recalling the harem interiors. Occasionally, the girl(s) desport with a wine glass or an earthenware jug, or flowers. Sometimes a man is also in the scene, often dressed in contrast to the girl, but in this case also generally young and attractive, making for a romantic scene. The Butromeev edition noted below assembled most of these pictures, presenting them together with a Russian translation of an accompanying ruba'i (see illustration 21 in the full color section).

What can be identified as the Russian feature of illustrating Khayyām is the reflection of the two-headed nature of Russian cultural identity, mentioned above. This feature of the Russian Orientalism reflects the influence of both traditions: the Western tradition is naturally dominant, as the bulk of the Russian editions have been produced in the two capitals: Moscow and St Petersburg. Moreover, most of the provincial editions, even though lacking the glamour of the capital, follow European taste, sometimes including some modest elements of the Oriental: in costumes, architecture, or details of the interior. The 'Eastern' style proper, on the other hand, is identified first by a direct borrowing of the new-wave book art of a type perceived in the West as classical kitsch (see illustration 22 in the full color section). Such a style of illustrating the Khayyām and other Oriental lyric poetry (such as the work of Hafiz) in Russian translations was introduced in the late 1960s and became especially popular in the pocket editions in the Soviet Central Asian Republics. Secondly, some editions, despite being cheaply produced, tried to use original Persian miniature paintings, although usually with no connection whatsoever to the text. This is not surprising, as manuscripts of Persian poetic anthologies containing quatrains ascribed to Khayyām were very rarely illustrated. Some editions demonstrate a combination of both these 'Eastern' elements, the 'kitsch' and the 'indigenous' Persian style,⁷⁸ or a combination of Eastern and Western.⁷⁹

Recently a phenomenal edition was prepared due to the efforts of the Butromeev's family enterprise (under V. Butromeev),⁸⁰ which can be recognized as a catalogue, similar in result but different in conception to that of Martin and Mason. This edition gives a rather unsystematic mixture of styles used in English, Iranian and Russian publications of Khayyām's poetry. This particular edition is prominent for presenting both pictorial (1019 images of Western and Persian styles of the last Pahlavi period) and ornamental decoration (in the Persian marginal arabesque style originating in the Middle Ages). It clearly indicates that the erotic element is not

negligible (see illustration 23). The painting on the cover binding represents an embracing couple of man and woman dressed up in Oriental costumes.

This particular style has been used by publishers in their products of several levels of quality, from the cheapest, mainly due to the level of polychrome colour reproduction and quality of paper, to the most luxurious, competing only with the famous F. Sangorski's Great Khayyām which tragically sunk together with the doomed Titanic of the White Star Line in 1912.⁸¹ The most expensive copies of this product usually feature a coloured crocodile leather binding with precious and semi-precious stones and enamelled painting on its front cover. The quality of the text accompanying the poems does not, however, depend on the quality of the binding.

The work of a contemporary Russian illustrator, Pavel Bunin, is not included in the Butromeev edition.⁸² Bunin is famous as an illustrator of Russian and Western European classics, not only Khayyām. The very recognizable style of Bunin's graphics can generally be identified by quite a strong erotic flavour. One could agree that it is impossible to avoid such a flavour when illustrating Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but the choice of pieces of literature to illustrate is obviously consistent with Bunin's preference.

The case of Khayyām is, however, different, and this difference made Khayyām one of the mature Bunin's favourites: the absence of a developing story to follow in his sequence of illustrations gave him the opportunity to develop his own imagery using several milestones of Khayyāmic ideology. Wisdom, old age (an old bearded, often turbaned, man) and education (books) in combination with beauty or youth (a young curvaceous girl) with the pleasures of human life (wine) are the dominant features of his pictorial interpretation of Khayyām. In his first collection of 1990⁸³ in economical and expressive black line, naked women are present in 6 out of the 12 pictures, the rest showing the poet alone, drinking or contemplating. We might also note many suggestive details, such as phallic minarets and cliffs, and the spouts of ceramic vessels (see illustration 23). The later collection (2000), far more substantial, illustrates an anthology of translations by all the famous Russian poets who translated Khayyām (Balmont, Rumer, Plisetsky, Tkhorzhevsky, Kushner), 101 of FitzGerald's *rubaiyat* and a small number of unattributed translations. The ratio of the contents (which include all the drawings in the first collection) on a broad distinction between 'erotic' (denoted by a naked or semi-naked woman) and 'non-erotic' (which includes not only pictures of the poet/philosopher, but some group scenes and buildings), is 116:99, i.e. just over half could be called titillating.⁸⁴ The pictures are enhanced by some washes of colour. This time, apart from the girl on her own (often with a phallic background), there are two main types of contact, the girl and the clothed poet (an old man) and the girl with a younger, balder but muscular man,

generally also naked. Illustration 23 depicts a naked girl lying on the ground and listening to a fully dressed man who is reading from his book. The tower or minaret in the background gives a very explicit phallic suggestion. The two quatrains above the picture are about arrogant fools (left) and the poet's state of intoxication, in which he does not care about the falling moon (right).⁸⁵ It is worth mentioning that the Ukrainian version of the same edition gives a different quatrain to accompany the same illustration.⁸⁶ In neither case, as usual, does the illustration have any specific relevance to the quatrain reproduced on the same page. In other pictures, there are a few props such as glasses and earthen pitchers, but also books, setting up a common contrast between the contemplative sage/scholar and the figure of the girl, who could perhaps be taken as muse, pleasure, or distraction.

Another peculiar feature, which distinguishes modern Russian illustration traditions,⁸⁷ is that the style of rather restrained eroticism is represented by women artists working with Khayyām's poetry. Among these are I. Stepanova,⁸⁸ E. Derbilova,⁸⁹ and N. Kumanovskaya.⁹⁰ Stepanova in particular has followed the lead of Bunin and is responsible for the illustrations in a new edition of Bunin's 2000 publication (see illustration 24 in the full color section), imitating it in style and following the layout of the earlier work (see illustration 25 in the full color section).

A completely different, abstract approach in her interpretation of Khayyām is used by another female painter Irina Starzhenetskaya,⁹¹ which she demonstrated at her exhibition 'Omar Khayyām. Wandering Spaces' in December 2006 in Moscow Modern Art Centre M'ARS. Starzhenevskaya's paintings do not suggest any obvious eroticism, on the contrary they give only the emotional, may be only the spiritual flavour of the poetry she illustrates, i.e. the famous first ruba'i:

Vstavay! Svoy kamen' v chashu t'my
Rassvet uzhe metnul...
Awake! For Morning in the Bowl of Night...

As already noted in connection with more figurative works, however, it is difficult to suggest any real link between the text and the image.

Among many others there should be mentioned a very recent publication of Khayyām's poetry in Kh. Manuvakhov's translation illustrated by Vladimir S. Vasil'kovskiy (1921-2002).⁹² His style is very distinctive, influenced by his main specialisms: architecture and ceramics, which perfectly matches Manuvakhov's poetry, their deep emotional dimension underlying the rhythmic quietness of the narrative. His illustrations contain all the usual features of eroticism but restrained by good taste even when some of the scenes depict more than just a semi-naked girl, like a fully naked girl ('White Beauty', see illustration 26 in the full color section),⁹³

and the scene in the House of ill repute ('Brothel in Desert') (see illustration 27 in the full color section). Another attempt to combine two arts in one: this time, Russian poetry and French art could be seen in the book produced in Sergiev Posad, some 40 miles from Moscow, where the publisher used Henri Matisse's works to illustrate Irina Evsa's translations, which usually have no relevance to each other (see illustrations 28 and 29).⁹⁴ It is remarkable that the author of the afterword, Natalya Belchenko, never mentioned Matisse in her text.

This can be interpreted as a further evolution of book culture after the collapse of the Soviet Empire and its rather puritan illustration tradition, from the first products of the free market of the post-Soviet publishing industry, when the *nouveaux riches* were the target of not always tasteful and unreasonably luxurious (or simply very expensive) editions with lots of gold, extraordinary glossy paper and unbearably bright colours, strengthened by the erotic component. This was not only dominant but in some cases crossed the border with pornography, as in the case of the illustrations by M. Romadin of the Russian translation of *Vis and Ramin* by S. Lipkin (see illustrations 30 and 31).⁹⁵

In conclusion it would be enough to say that the main aspect of the illustration of the Russian Khayyām is obviously just as 'explicit' as the earliest British illustrations of the Art Nouveau period (if not more so), ranging from the rather restrained 'classical' interpretation by, for example, H. Cole (1901)⁹⁶ to quite aggressive eroticism by M.K. Sett (1914)⁹⁷ and R. Balfour (1920)⁹⁸, and more in keeping with 20th-century conventions. As with other aspects of Khayyām and FitzGerald, the erotic element is an enduring part of the interpretation of the work, with its apparent invitation to licence, and one that rests on a long tradition. Khayyām, having been absorbed by the Russian culture many years ago, became a national cultural phenomenon in both its literary and visual aspects. If the illustrations are not overtly 'Orientalist', they continue to reflect Russia's double Western and Asian face; it is mainly in the work of Bunin that we find a fresh element of 'Western' eroticism combined with 'Oriental' flavour.

A study dedicated to the text and image of the Russian Khayyām similar to the publication by Martin and Mason would be welcomed by the academic world and the wider public. Good material has been collected and prepared by the Butromeev project. The fact that the interest in Khayyām and Khayyāmic ideology in Russia has never disappeared and now seems to be rejuvenated means that the seeds of such a study would land on well prepared ground and achieve success. The signs of such interest are everywhere: from digital games for mobile phones and personal computers to masterpieces of material book art for the non-reading audience.⁹⁹

Notes

- 1 S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere (eds), *Translation, History, and Culture*, London and New York, 1990, p. 15.
- 2 L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *Introduction to Ali Dashti*. In *Search of Omar Khayyām*, London, 1971, p.11.
- 3 One should keep in mind that the question of the authenticity of the Khayyām quatrains is still open. Many prominent Iranologists both in the West and in Iran (V. Zhukovskiy, D. Ross, A. Christensen, Ch. Rempis, Ali Dashti, M.A. Furughi, Q. Ghani to mention just the few) tried to determine the historical Khayyām and establish the genuine quatrains; it was even proposed to split Khayyām into halves (as some scholars do in a moment of desperation, as in the case of Asadi Tusi, or Fazel Khan Garrusi): one would be a famous scientist, the other an obscure poet, see F. de Blois, *Persian Literature. A Bio-bibliographical Survey. Vol. V: Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period*, 2nd, revised ed., London-New York, 2004, p. 300. On Khayyām as a fictitious character see F. de Blois' article in this volume. See also M. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom. The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyām*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 6-7.
- 4 de Blois, *Persian Literature*, pp. 299-318, rightly prefers to call him Khayyāmi (a name unknown among the popular audience) as he is mentioned in the medieval Persian anthologies.
- 5 M. Bowra, "Edward FitzGerald," in *Iran* (Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies), vol. 1, 1963, p. 1 (originally the lecture given on the occasion of the BIPS' inaugural ceremonies on 11 December 1961 by Sir Maurice Bowra, Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and President of the British Academy).
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 7 See *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, 18 vols. (1907–21), vol. XIII. The Victorian Age, Part I, p. 33.
- 8 Ouseley 140, copied by Mahmud Pirkudagi in *Safar* 865/November 1460.
- 9 R. Le Gallienne, *Odes from the Divan of Hafiz*, London, 1905, pp. xiv-xv. When much earlier the fashion for Oriental tales reached its peak in Europe (late 17th c.), its secret was basically the same: the Oriental tales were 'fake', created by the Europeans who had been inspired by the original sources and felt free to improvise and entertain the reader. One of those who established that fashion was a French scholar and court hanger-on, Antoine Galland, the author of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, generally considered to be a translation of the Arabic version of the famous fairy tale cycle, see R. Irwin, *The Arabian Nights. A Companion*, London, 1994, esp. pp. 14-21; *Fables of the East. Selected Tales (1662-1785)*, ed. R. Ballaster, Oxford, 2005, p. 7.
- 10 From the speech of P.A. Stolypin (Russian Prime-Minister, 1906-11) on 31 March 1908 in the Duma/Parliament: "Our eagle, the heritage of Byzantium, is a two-headed one. Of course, eagles with one head are strong and powerful as well, but if you cut off the head of our eagle which is turned to the East, you will not turn him into a one-headed eagle, you will only make him bleed".
- 11 See М. Белозерский, Письма из Персии, С.-Петербург, 1886.
- 12 See F. Abdullaeva, *Zhukovskii*, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zhukovskii-valentin-alekseevich>.
- 13 В.А. Жуковский, "Омар Хайям и странствующие четверостишия", *Al-Muzaffariyya* (Festschrift for Baron V. Rosen), С.-Петербург, 1897, cc. 325-63. Zhukovskiy's contribution to Rosen's *Festschrift* was originally the speech he gave to the annual assembly of St. Petersburg University in 1895. Later it was partly translated into English by D. Ross ("Fresh Light on Omar Khayyām," *JRAS*, 1898, pp. 350-366), and was warmly

- welcomed by his colleagues in the West (E.G. Browne, "Some Notes on the Poetry of the Persian Dialects," *JRAS*, 1895, pp. 773-825 [784]).
- 14 J. Biegstraaten, "Omar with the Smile: Parodies in Books on FitzGerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām", in *Persica* (Annual of the Dutch-Iranian Society), No. XX, 2004-2005, pp. 1-39.
 - 15 Data on the prerevolutionary and Soviet stages in Russian Khayyām translations have been summarized by Z.N. Vorozheykina and A.Sh. Shahverdov in their introductory article, "Омар Хайям в русских переводах", в *Омар Хайям, Рубаи*, под ред. З.Н. Ворожейкиной и А.Ш. Шахвердова, Ленинград, 1986 (серия "Библиотека поэта").
 - 16 See "Вестник Европы", № V, III, cc. 319-323.
 - 17 See В. Величко, *Арабески. Новые стихотворения*, С.-Петербург, 1903, cc. 160-168.
 - 18 All those early translations (except Danilevskiy-Alexandrov's poems) have been recently reprinted in *Омар Хайям, Рубайиат*, Москва, 2008; see also А.Н. Данилевский-Александров, *Из рубаи Хайяма. В мире песни*, С.-Петербург, 1910, I, cc. 221-223.
 - 19 See, for example, 8-line poems in Umov's translation in *Персидские лирики X-XV веков*, С.-Петербург, 1916.
 - 20 "Русская мысль", 1910, IV, cc. 1-2.
 - 21 Ворожейкина-Шахвердов, p. 45.
 - 22 *Radif* in Persian poems is a repeated element that follows the rhyme at the end of each verse; it could consist of one word or a whole phrase; being a decorative addition *radif* is nevertheless semantically engaged in a verse.
 - 23 Actually A. Lunacharskiy (1875–1933), future minister of culture of the Soviet Republic, ambassador in Spain, writer, and member of the Soviet academy, rendered a small portion of the *Rubaiyat* supposedly from an Italian translation of FitzGerald as early as in 1908, and published it in the journal *Problems of Marxism* (by this date, FitzGerald's version was already available in most European languages).
 - 24 Reprinted in Г. Гулия, *Сказание об Омаре Хайяме*, Москва, 1975; *Омар Хайям и персидские поэты X-XVI веков* (иллюстр. изд.) под ред. В.П. Бутромеева, Н.Н. Бутромеева и Н.В. Бутромеевой, Москва: Белый город, 2007.
 - 25 Ворожейкина-Шахвердов, с. 49. Recent editions show that his translations are still popular. The connection between FitzGerald's and Tkhorzhevskiy's renderings of the *Rubaiyat* has been reestablished in a 2004 edition of Omar Khayyām, in which English translations of FitzGerald and Russian of Tkhorzhevskiy are put together, accompanied by numerous Edmund Sullivan illustrations.
 - 26 Among those who followed that style was A. Gruzinskiy, see his *Из четверостиший Омара Хайяма (XI-XII вв.) в "Памяти П.Н. Сакулина"*, Москва, 1931, cc. 50-55.
 - 27 Омар ибн Ибрахим Нишапури Хайям. *Рубайиат*. Пер. Л.Н. [Леонида Некоры] в «Восток» (посв. III-му Международному Конгрессу иранского искусства и археологии), ч. II, Москва-Ленинград, 1935, cc. 177-242.
 - 28 *Les quatrains de Kheyam*, tr. par J.B. Nicolas, Paris, 1867; A. Christensen, *Critical Studies in the Ruba'iyat of 'Umar-i-Khayyām*; a revised text with English translation, Copenhagen, 1927.
 - 29 See Омар Хайям. *Рубайиат*. Пер. О. Румера, В. Тардова, Л.Н., К. Чайкина. Пред. А. Болотникова, Ленинград: Academia, 1935.
 - 30 On Chaykin see *Archival documents of the 'Memorial' Society* (K.I. Chaykin, File No 89, resolution signed by Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Zhdanov: shot down on 27 April 1938).
 - 31 'Омар Хаййām. Рубā'ийāt. Подготовка текста перевод и предисловие Р.М. Алиева и М.-Н.О. Османова\'. Под ред. Е.Э. Бертельса: Памятники литературы народов Востока (тексты: Малая серия). Ч. I (факсимиле) & Ч. II (предисловие и перевод), Москва, 1959

- 32 In many cases there is no way to find out who was responsible for the work with the original. Actually there was a rule at that time to put only the name of Khayyām's (as well as any other foreign poet's) versifier in an edition and to omit the mention of the author of the literal translation from the original (that kind of work was not considered by the publishers to be serious enough). So one of the two co-authors of a given translation remained anonymous.
- 33 Semen Lipkin was a translator of the next generation of those who were dissatisfied with the situation in the Soviet Union; in 1979 he quitted the official Writers' club ("Sojuz Pisateley") together with V. Aksenov to show his solidarity with the dissident writers E. Popov and V. Erofeev.
- 34 See, for example, Derzhavin's renderings of Khayyām in *Избранные четверостишия персидско-таджикских поэтов-классиков*, Душанбе, 1965, pp. 52-99; Semenov's "From Omar Khayyām" – in Г. Семенов, *Сосны*, Ленинград, 1972, сс. 125-140. Identifying the exact source for each poem in those and many other versions remains a problem: what is needed is an equivalent of Heron-Allen's analysis of the 'originals' of the poems of FitzGerald for the Russian versions.
- 35 Н. Кондырева, «Загадка Хайяма» в: Омар Хайям, *Рубайат, Трактаты*, Москва, 2007, с. 99.
- 36 Омар Хайям, *Рубайат*, пер. Г. Плисецкого, подстрочный пер. И комментарии М.-Н. О. Османова, Москва, 1972; 2-е изд. Москва, 1975.
- 37 1943 تهران حکیم خیام نیشابوری به اهتمام جناب آقای علی فروغی, Swami Govinda Tirtha, The Nectar of Grace, Government Central Press, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1941.
- 38 Плисецкий, Москва, 1975, *ibid.*, с. 182, № 287. However, this version could be treated as yet another example of poetic imitation, the 'original' being unclear.
- 39 I. M. Steblin-Kamensky (b. 1945), St Petersburg Iranologist, head of the Iranian Philology Department (1991-2007), dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies (1995-2005), member of the Russian Academy.
- 40 The idea of Khayyāmic poetry responding to the needs of the dissidents and rebels of modern societies can be thought to originate in the biography of historical Khayyām himself: after the death of Malik Shah in 1092 he was refused the patronage of the court and was even in physical danger, so that he was in exactly the same emotional state as his Russian translators during the period of the Stalin's repressions or post-war KGB persecution of Soviet dissidents; cf. above, note 30.
- 41 Banu's main achievement is the Russian poetic translation of the *Shahnama*, see N. Chalisova, *Shah-nama translation into Russian*, in Encyclopaedia Iranica (<http://www.iranica.com/articles/sah-nama-translations-xiv-into-russian>).
- 42 *В сад я вышел на заре*, пер. Ц. Бану, Душанбе, 1983, сс. 58-66.
- 43 See above, n. 15.
- 44 See also Омар Хайям, *Как чуден милой лик: Рубаи*, под ред. М Рейснер, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 1999. For a rather full bibliography of Russian Khayyām translations see <http://www.khayyam.nev.ru/literat.shtml>.
- 45 See above, n. 24; numerous later editions, some of them in luxury design.
- 46 See above, n. 18 (translations by K. Balmont, I. Tkhorzhevskiy, O. Rumer, M. Vatagin, V. Velichko, S. Umanec, T. Lebedinskiy, K. Gerra, A. Lunacharskiy, V. Mazurkevich, I. Umov, A. Gruzinskiy, L. Nekora, S. Kashevarov).
- 47 Омар Хайям, *Сад желаний*, Москва: Азбука, 2004; Р.Ш. Малкович. *Омар Хайям, С.-Петербург: Наука*, 2004; Омар Хайям, *Рубаи: Русские переводы, С.-Петербург*, 2007.
- 48 Е. Голубев, «Санкт-Петербургский университет», № 30 (3689), 29 декабря 2004 (<http://www.spbumag.nw.ru/2004/30/21.shtml>).
- 49 1st ed. Moscow 2000, many other exclusive and luxury editions since.
- 50 See 'Омар Хаййām. *Рубā'īyāt*, 1959, II, с. 66 (Persian text), no. 221.

- 51 See www.regnum.ru/english/775851.html (05/06/2009).
- 52 “Не оплакивай, смертный, вчерашних потерь, / Дел сегодняшних завтрашней меркой не мерь, / Ни былой, ни грядущей минуте не верь, / Верь минуте текущей, будь счастлив теперь.” (Омар Хайям, *Рубайат*, пер. Г. Плисецкого, 1975, *ibid.*, с. 24, № 14). The Persian original seems to be “بر خیز و مخور غم جهان گزان”. The call ‘to be happy nowadays’ in this poem should have been of special importance for the Russian president in those last months of his presidency.
- 53 See <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1210928340>.
- 54 “Для достойного нету достойных наград”, the first line of ruba’i no. 370 in Plisetskiy’s tr., Moscow, 1975, p. 232.
- 55 See http://www.russianamerica.com/common/arc/story.php?id_cat=24&id=418066.
- 56 Plisetskiy Khayyām even took a form of a cell phone game advertised in the Net for Motorola V535 model, see <http://cubez.ru/game-43623-model-747.html>.
- 57 See the article “Владимир Путин заставил екатеринбуржцев полюбить Омара Хайяма” (Екатеринбург: Новый Регион, 05.03.07, <http://nr2.com.ua/ekb/107618.html>).
- 58 See the online Белый город catalogue <http://www.labirint.ru/pubhouse/418/>; <http://www.belygorod.ru/catalog/23984/>.
- 59 Хайям, *Рубаи на русском и немецком языках, с иллюстрациями П. Бунина*. Москва: Орбита-М, 2006.
- 60 See for example, Омар Хайям, *Как чуден милой лик*, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2000.
- 61 *Rubayat of Omar Khayyām* with commentaries by Paramhansa Yogananda on the first translation of E. FitzGerald, edited and commented by J.D. Walters and his disciples, Chelyabinsk, 1999.
- 62 See Эмир Хаим (Омар Хайям), “Рубаи” (*литературная сенсация!*), пер. и комментарии Д. Серебрякова, Москва: ОЛМА-ПРЕСС, 2000.
- 63 See above, p. 31.
- 64 Жуковский, 1897, с. 1.
- 65 This was used by Zhukovskiy to confirm his theory of Khayyām’s forged authorship of the majority of the poems ascribed to him. We are not touching here on the theme of what poems could belong to Khayyām, but A.N. Boldyrev in his lectures in Leningrad University explained that such a diversity of subjects in the ruba’is ascribed to him was the result of the fact that very different professional and amateur poets were ready to sacrifice their own authorship and fame for the sake of the immortality of their poetry.
- 66 There is some documental evidence that the prisoners of the 80s in Russia used to “cure their bad moods” (just like V. Putin 20 years later) with the poems of Khayyām. Irina Ratushinskaya, a Russian poet and writer, and a member of International PEN spent four years (1982-86) as a political prisoner in a labour camp; in her prison memoir: Ирина Ратушинская. *Серый - цвет надежды* (New York: Knopf, 1988, in English; Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., London 1989, in Russian), Ratushinskaya describes a message from a fellow prisoner: “Hello, Irina, I am Volod’a. I will be released in three years. I love poetry and my favourite poet is Omar Khayyām. I have put down the poem I remember by heart for you. You will love it too”. And attached to the letter was a separate piece of paper with a ruba’i written in tiny letters (http://lib.ru/MEMUARY/RATUSHINSKAYA/ratush_gch.txt).
- 67 William H. Martin & Sandra Mason, *The Art of Omar Khayyām: Illustrating FitzGerald’s Rubaiyat*, London, 2007; see also their article in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online (**Khayyam, Omar** ix. illustrations of English translations of Omar Khayyām’s Rubaiyat).
- 68 Martin & Mason, p. 28.
- 69 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, Boston, 1898.
- 70 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, New York, 1899.
- 71 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, London, 1913.
- 72 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, Philadelphia, 1942.

- 73 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, London, 1958
- 74 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, New York, 1964.
- 75 See also the comments of Gary Garrard, *A Book of Verse. The Biography of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, Stroud, 2007, pp. 197, 199, 206, 211, 217, 219.
- 76 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām, the Astronomer-Poet of Persia*, London, 1859.
- 77 The first illustrated edition of the FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* was published with the prints by E. Vedder: *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, Boston, 1884
- 78 Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*, в Избранная лирика Востока, сост. Ш.Шамухамедов (Laureate of the international Firdousi prize), ред. Б. Пармузин, Ташкент: Издательство ЦК КП Узбекистана, 1978. This pocket size, very popular edition of the Soviet era, claims that this book is the first attempt to publish the best Russian translations of Khayyām by Rumer, Tkhorzhovsky, Derzhavin, Plisetskiy, Strizhkov and S. Ivanov. This is mentioned in Russian and Persian (in *nasta'liq* and *nasta'liq-i shikasta*) on the flyleaves at both ends of the book. This publication also opens with a portrait of Khayyām in colour.
- 79 One of the EKSMO's editions also contains Russian translations of Hafiz's *ghazals* but the cover has a P. Bunin illustration of a completely naked girl, an old turbaned man and a jar of wine and mentions only Khayyām's ruba'i: Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*. Хафиз, *Газели*, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2000. Khayyām's translations are accompanied by Bunin's images (see below); Hafiz is illustrated with black and white images from medieval Persian manuscripts.
- 80 See above, n. 24.
- 81 Sangorski's unique Khayyām book (binding), completed in 1911 was decorated with over a thousand precious and semi-precious jewels and thousands of separate leather inlays; it took the firm Sangorski & Sutcliffe (est. 1901) two years of continuous work to finish. The book was the most ambitious project ever undertaken in the history of bookbinding. Several months after the Titanic disaster Sangorski drowned, following the fate of his creation, which before its final demise had survived a crucial financial disaster.
- 82 P. Bunin (1927-2007), member of the Russian Union of Artists, studied at Surikov Institute, in 1978 emigrated to Austria, came back from Vienna to Moscow in 1987 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Organized about 60 personal exhibitions in Moscow, Paris, Cambridge, Vienna, Pyatigorsk, Sakhalin and other places; author of many graphic series, illustrating poetry of Homer, Sophocles, Boccaccio, Pushkin, Lermontov, Shevchenko, Shakespeare, Kipling, Heine, Goethe, Voltaire, Moliere, Hugo, Mérimée, Charles de Coster.
- 83 Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*, Москва: Орбита-М, 1990.
- 84 Омар Хайям, *Как чуден милой лик*, 2000.
- 85 Омар Хайям, *Как чуден милой лик*, 2000, сс. 46-47 (translations by Rumer and Plisetsky).
- 86 Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*, Кизэв: Грамота, 2002.
- 87 The first editions appeared in the late 1990s.
- 88 Омар Хайям, *Как чуден милой лик*, под ред. В. Коркина, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2007; Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*, пер. И. Евсы, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2008; Омар Хайям, *Вином любви смягчай неправды жизни*, под ред. М. Синельникова, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2008.
- 89 Омар Хайям, *Рубаи*, пер. И. Евсы, 2008.
- 90 Омар Хайям, *Сад истин*, пер. И. Евсы, Москва: ЭКСМО-ПРЕСС, 2008.
- 91 Irina Starzhenetskaya (born 1943), member of the Russian Fine Art Academy, laureate of several state awards, participated in many Russian and international personal and group exhibitions, from 1989 is involved in Russian Orthodox church interior painting. For her Khayyām paintings, see <http://marsgallery.ru/calendar/archiveexhibitions?version=RU&exhibition=137>.

- 92 Omar Khayyām in Manuvakhov's translations (*Омар Хайям в переводах Х. Манувахова, Рубаи*, к 960-летию со дня рождения Омара Хайяма, С.-Петербург: Новая Нива, 2009).
- 93 A very similar image was used for the cover.
- 94 Омар Хайям. Рубаи. Рисунки, картины и декупажи Анри Матисса, Сергиев Посад: Фолио, 2010, с. 113. The publication makes no reference to Matisse's works or their provenance.
- 95 Фахриддин Гургани, Вис и Рамин, Петрозаводск, 1996.
- 96 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, London: John Lane Publisher, 1901. Although his black and white illustrations express exactly the same idea of a fully dressed old sage and a handsome naked youth, in his case this is almost always a boy instead of the usual curvaceous girl, indicating that his illustrations served the same function but for slightly different audience.
- 97 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, Cambridge: Galloway and Porter, 1914.
- 98 E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyām*, London: Constable, 1920.
- 99 In Cyberflix's PC game, called *Titanic: Adventure out of Time*, the object is to save three important items: the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyām, one of Hitler's paintings, and a notebook that proves German officials were attempting to gain geo-political advantage by instigating communist revolution in Russia.

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The Translation of ‘Umar Khayyām’s Poetry into Georgian – a Touchstone of Translators

T. Shurgaia

(Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University)

The history of translation of ‘Umar Khayyām’s poetry into Georgian dates back to 1924, when a well-known Georgian iranologist Justine Abuladze published a word for word translation of Khayyām’s 24 quatrains in the journal of the Union of Georgian writers *Caucassioni*.¹ At first sight, it may appear that this fact is of historical significance only, as this is not a literary translation; but if we think back to the centuries-old practice of translating Persian literature into Georgian, it acquires a new meaning. The popularity of Khayyām in Georgia had been rekindled through the resonance, in Europe and worldwide, of Edward FitzGerald’s English translation of *The Rubáiyát*. Following Justine Abuladze’s word for word translation, nine Georgians, representing every generation of Georgian translators in the 20th-21st centuries, have produced translations of Khayyām’s quatrains, the most recent of these a group of 14 Rubáiyát published in 2007.²

Parenthetically, one should note another literal Georgian translation of 36 Khayyām quatrains, by the distinguished Georgian iranologist Konstantine Paghava (1919-1994). This was produced for purely scientific purposes, for his paper *Šādiq Hidāyat and Persian Classic Literature*.³ Most of this paper concerns Šādiq Hidāyat’s publication of ‘Umar Khayyām’s quatrains (Šādiq Hidāyat, *Tarānahā-yi Khayyām*, Tehran, 1311/1934) and his introduction to the quatrains. Paghava evaluates Hidāyat’s scientific reasoning regarding the authenticity of ‘Umar Khayyām’s quatrains and the principles he used to identify Khayyām’s authorship. With these purposes in mind, Paghava deliberately did not use the literary translations of Khayyām’s quatrains that existed by then.

Persian poetry in Georgian translations

Obviously, it is impossible, in one paper, to survey nine hundred years of translations of Persian literature into Georgian. It will be enough to touch on some facts that are a matter of common knowledge for the Georgian academic community but are less known to foreign investigators.

I start with a citation from a distinguished Georgian scholar and public figure, one of the founders of the first Georgian University, Ivane Javakhsishvili (1876-1940):

*If in political life Georgia fought against different Muslim kingdoms and Persia, poetry and culture created Georgian-Persian spiritual unity and sowed love instead of hostility. Persian Muslim culture had never been alien to Georgians. Thus they highly respected writers, scientists and artists of their political enemies.*⁴

Dozens of examples could be cited in support, but I will begin with one special case: the Georgian prose translation of the 11th century poet Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī's *Vīs and Rāmīn*. The prose translation has traditionally been attributed to Sargis Tmogveli, but whoever the translator is, his genius and craftsmanship are still an example to be imitated. The outstanding Georgian iranologist and famous investigator of *Vīs and Rāmīn* and its Georgian translation, Al. Gvakharia, describes it as "the pinnacle of the Georgian art of translation" and says "Nowhere in the history of medieval literature has there been such a faithful and – in terms of artistry – adequate prose translation of a poetic work."⁵ "Despite some cuts (basically a shorter prologue and deliberate omission of the epilogue), the Georgian "Visramiani" presents a faithful literary translation, neither a word for word nor a free translation, of the whole Persian poem (9038 beits – 18076 lines). It has come down to us entirely complete, and its prose translation (in the age of the triumph of verse) testifies to the translator's attempt to reproduce, faithfully and with complete adequacy, the peculiarities of the contents and the artistic world of the poetic original, in the way that does not destroy the specificity of the original language and figurative speech."⁶

The translation is not only of great literary value, it was prepared soon after *Vīs and Rāmīn* was written (in the first half of the 12th century). In 1970 the Georgian scholars Magali Todua and Alexander Gvakharia established and published the critical text of the original poem, using Persian manuscripts and all 21 surviving manuscripts of the Georgian translation.⁷ In fact, for some time Georgians had doubted the Persian origin of *Visramiani*, considering it as an original Georgian monument. The Georgian *Visramiani* has always been popular in Georgia, while Gurgānī's original suffered undeserved critiques in Iran. This, too, points to the high artistic value of the translation. The world community became familiar with Gorgani's poem via Oliver Wardrop's English translation of the Georgian *Visramiani* (1914).⁸ It is safe to suggest that there can be few examples of a translation that has rendered the original such vital service.

Another particularly important Persian work translated into Georgian is Firdowsī's *Shāh-nāma*. Georgian translations exist from the 15th-18th centuries, but Georgian academics have suggested that Georgian translations

must have existed from the 12th century, as evidenced by repeated mentions of the heroes of the *Shāh-nāma* in Georgian historic and literary works. Separate parts of the mythological and heroic stories of the *Shāh-nāma* have been translated into Georgian, but these can hardly be described as true translations. The Georgian critical literature has recognised that the verse versions in particular are far from the *Shāh-nāma*, and could be called Georinized versions rather than translations, while the prose versions are closer to the original (D. Kobidze).⁹

Both these examples illustrate a tendency to translate Persian poetry into Georgian first in prose, followed later by poetic translations. The king-poet Vakhtang VI (1675-1737)¹⁰ had already noticed that, “but a verse translation of Persian verse into Georgian is not common, it is retold as a story...” This tendency is thought to be one of the reasons why Persian lyric poetry was not translated into Georgian until the 20th century.

Georgian translations of Khayyām

The examples of the translation of Persian literature into Georgian above confirm the accuracy of Pavle Ingoroqva's (1893-1983) editorial, preceded the first publication of 'Umar Khayyām's quatrains in Georgian in the journal *Caucassioni*:

*Surprisingly, in Georgian literature (in spite of the great impact of Persian writing on it), 'Umar Khayyām's poetry seems to have escaped notice. Even his name went unmentioned in Georgian. This passing reference is the first in this regard.*¹¹

The editorial staff of *Caucassioni* considered the absence of Georgian translations of Khayyām's quatrains – against the background of his worldwide popularity – to be grave disadvantage to be remedied as quickly as possible. They asked iranologist Justine Abuladze to make a complete translation of Khayyām's quatrains. P. Ingoroqva edited this word for word translation and wrote an editorial giving readers brief information about 'Umar Khayyām and his worldwide popularity, identifying appropriate scientific literature, and providing guidance to help future translators understand 'Umar Khayyām's poetry better. He wrote: “'Umar Khayyām's poetry is justly called the Bible of pessimism and skepticism. But it is not at all a pedantic misanthropy; the live spirit of a human being is quivering in 'Umar Khayyām's poetry, and his melancholic wisdom often turns into hedonistic and epicurean hymns. 'Umar Khayyām is as unpredictable as poetry itself; in his quatrains lyrism often changes into irony and the smell of flowers is suddenly transformed into the decay of death. Sometimes he appears as a mystic, sometimes as an uncompromising skeptic – he looks fate in the eyes with desperate valor and tries to drive away all the

apparitions that man's fear and cowardice have populated the heavens with. There is hardly any other poet in whom the flame of the human spirit thrills with such integrity."¹²

The Georgian translators of 'Umar Khayyām have generally perceived the philosophy of his poetry in just this way, but they have used a variety of ways and techniques to transmit the philosophy.

Abuladze's word for word translation accomplished what Ingoroqva had intended: it aroused an inextinguishable interest in 'Umar Khayyām's poetic works that later developed into something like a competition among Georgian translators.

It is appropriate at this point to note that another tendency in Georgian translations of Khayyām's poetry seems to have originated from Abuladze's word for word translation. Here I mean the tendency to use the vocabulary and phraseology of Shota Rustaveli's poem *The Knight in Panther's Skin* (12th century) – the masterpiece of Georgian literature. In the translation published in *Caucassioni*, the first quatrain begins exactly as in Rustaveli's poem:

1. (Romelman shekmna samqaro dzalita mit dzlierita)

"He who created the world, almighty, all powerful, breathed into all living creatures the breath of life from on high."¹³

Compare this to Abuladze's translation of Khayyām's quatrain "ānka ki zamīn u charkh u aflāk nihād..."¹⁴:

(Romelman shekmna samqaro da tsata usazghvrobani...)

He who created the world and the unbounded Heavens...

Or with the translation of the same quatrain by V. Kotetishvili:

(Romenlman shehkmna es samqaro da tsis taghebi)

He who created the world and the arches of Heaven.

Phrases and allusions from *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* in Georgian translations of 'Umar Khayyām occurs in translations by nearly every generation of translators. *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* has:

2. (Khams mijnuri khanieri, ar medzavi, bilts'i, mrushi)

He who loves should be constant, never lewd nor faithless.¹⁵

In M. Todua's translation we meet the same phrase:

(Khams mijnuri iqos mtvrili sasmelit da vnebit)

He who loves should be drunken with wine and passion.

In *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*:

3. **(Sitsrue da orp'iroba** avnebs khortsā, merme – sulsa...)

Falseness and double-dealing are destroyers of body and soul¹⁶

And in Lobjanidze's translation of the Rubáiyát:

(Sitsrue da orp'iroba tsutis kveqnis tvisebaa)

Falseness and double-dealing are common to the Universe...¹⁷

The first poetic translation of 'Umar Khayyām's quatrains was by Ambako Chelidze (1878-1940). Unlike later Georgian translators of Khayyām's poetry, he had no special education in Iranian studies; however he became highly proficient in Persian while working in Iran for a long time, and translated the masterpieces of several Iranian poets (Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ, Nizāmī, Sa'adī, Jāmī, etc.). In the 1933 collection of *Persian Lyrics*, he published translations of 212 quatrains attributed to Khayyām.¹⁸

In a brief introduction, the translator speaks about 'Umar Khayyām as poet and scientist, about his philosophy and worldwide popularity. He remarks that the English so love Khayyām that they have scattered FitzGerald's grave with grass seeds brought from Khayyām's grave.

Chelidze's principle in selecting quatrains to translate, knowing as he did that Khayyām's authorship was in some cases doubtful, was to translate the verses which he thought best, and which gave the best picture of Khayyām as a poet and philosopher.¹⁹

Chelidze's translations are of historical rather than artistic significance. Perhaps it was precisely their aesthetic weakness that prompted other translators to believe that they could do better. With respect to faithfulness to the original the translation cannot be rejected, and even in terms of artistry, some quatrains have been translated perfectly. By and large Chelidze faithfully follows the quatrain form, but sometimes he replaces it with an eight-line verse, where the rhyme pattern (aaba, aaaa) is observed either partly or not at all. The language is simple, not overloaded with neither archaisms or colloquial Georgian patterns.

One should note here the essential difference between Persian and Georgian versification: while Persian verse is based on patterns of long and short syllables, Georgian verse is grounded on a correlation between the stress arrangement and the number of syllables. Obviously the Georgian translator has to seek adequate means to compensate for the difference.

Persian literature, and especially Persian poetry, has influenced Georgian literature for centuries. Our ancestors were well aware of the Arabic-Persian versification system, and many terms relating to that system can be found in Georgian. But the borrowing of terms does not prove the identity of Persian and Georgian verse forms. For example, "dubeit" is a term

known in Georgia, of which the distinguished researcher into Persian literature D. Kobidze (1906-1981) remarks: “The first four lines of a Georgian “dubeiti” correspond to a quatrain of the sort in which the third line is not rhymed. Other parts of it are far from Persian quatrains and even from the types of four line Persian verse as a whole. Georgian “dubeiti” cannot be divided into four line stanzas. It follows that the Georgian “dubeiti” totally differs from Persian forms, it has undergone a process of development different to that of the Persian dubeit.”²⁰

Consequently, the Persian quatrain pattern (together with its metrics) is not familiar to Georgian speakers (to say nothing of *radīf*). Thus a translation of a quatrain that retains its form presents a specific problem for the translator.

It may be safely said that ‘Umar Khayyām’s widespread popularity in the Georgian community is due to Magali Todua’s translations. His Georgian translations of Persian poetry were published in literary periodicals and were later included in various collections. At various times he has translated more than a hundred quatrains. Of all the Georgian translators, his method is closest to that of FitzGerald. In translating Khayyām’s poetry he has made abundant use of the vocabulary and metrics common to Georgian folk poetry (in some critics’ opinion – even excessively) and “Georgianises” the text rather much. Another translator of Khayyām, Tamaz Chkhenkeli, considers this method an experiment and shares the critics’ view that Todua’s excessive use of Georgian folklore elements in translating Persian poetry is inconsistent with the existing view of the poet. However Chkhenkeli considers the patterns of Persian poetry in Todua’s translation to be a new stage. He characterises the translator’s method as follows:

*In translating Persian poetry, M. Todua has placed the main emphasis on poetic expressiveness, and he has been the first to use the wide experience of Georgian poetry in creating the double of the original. He has tried to bind together organically the translation and contemporary poetic speech and has achieved much success in this regard.*²¹

It might be well to point out that the translation method used by M. Todua has done much to popularise Khayyām in Georgia.²² Every so often when an ordinary Georgian begins to cite Khayyām, he refers to Todua’s translation. This is most pronounced at the Georgian festive meals where, for better “decoration” and “approval” of the proposed toast, participants refer to Khayyām’s philosophy, wrapped in a national dress. The reciter in such a setting needs original Georgian forms content, to match the toast proposed. It should also be pointed out that some quatrains translated by Todua without the “excessive Georgianisation” are excellent patterns: these do not

merely encourage later translators to be better. Todua has great expertise in Persian classic literature and, in the course of nearly 60 years, he has translated masterpieces by Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ, Niẓāmī, Sa'ādī, and many other Iranian poets.

Some other Georgian translators have also attempted to translate Khayyām using Georgian folklore, but they have done so with great care.

Difficulties in Translating Khayyām

Georgian translators of Khayyām's poetry face several problems:

1. Moderation in using archaisms. Matching the language of the source text is a general problem in literary translations. Does one use modern language, or the language of an age corresponding to the original?

It is obvious that the free use of archaisms will burden the text. Khayyām's poetry cannot bear that burden. Georgian translators have found two solutions. The first I have already mentioned – drawing on *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. To clarify, a few words must be said about the significance of this monument for Georgians. *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli is a literary monument of the 12th century. It is believed to be the acme of Georgian literature, “the chief book of Georgians” it was given to ladies as a dowry, together with the Gospel. Rustaveli's aphorisms, written in 12th-century Georgian, are still actively used side-by-side with popular proverbs. Tropes of *The Knight* largely defined figurative thinking in Georgian literature in the following centuries. *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* is an organic synthesis of the literature, world-view and cultures of oriental and western literature, exhibiting all the potentialities of the Georgian language. It is taught in full at secondary school, and there are people in Georgia who know this 1587 stanza poem by heart. Thus the phraseology and archaisms of the poetic characters in the poem do not grate on the ears and do not burden the text. This advantage of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* has been applied by Georgian translators of 'Umar Khayyām's poetry. To locate their translation in an ancient world, they refer to Rustaveli's poem. I have already given some examples of this method.

An alternative way for translators to achieve a moderate archaisation of Khayyām's quatrains in Georgian is to use archaic conjunctions and time adverbials rather than vocabulary and phraseology whereas from archaic vocabulary verbs are used in excess. But relatively few translators use this method. The time distance between the reader and the text, in Georgian translations of Khayyām, is mostly created at the expense of the vocabulary and phraseology established in Georgian poetry.

In this context it is worth mentioning a suggestion made by the connoisseur of Persian poetry, and the best translator of Khayyām's quatrains, Vakhushti Kotetishvili: “...The original has no age, it never becomes out of

date whereas a translation often becomes old, thus a new epoch calls for new translations of the work of a genius. This excludes congenial translations that already have a firm place in the midst of original literature. *Visramiani* and Shakespeare in Machabelis's²³ translations are good illustrations."²⁴

I venture to predict that Kotetishvili's translations of Persian poetry will be among those that never become out of date.

2. Moderation in the use of persianisms (and arabisms) is the second problem facing Georgian translators. Georgia's long and close relationship with Iran means that Georgian is rich in oriental vocabulary, especially from Persian and Arabic. If we approach the Georgian translators of Khayyām's quatrains with this in mind, we can say that none of the translators have taken an easy way out by using this vocabulary, even where they have retained the vocabulary used in the original text.

3. The third problem is not to repeat the rhythmic elements and poetic means employed by previous translators. To illustrate the approaches taken, I will make brief analysis of several Georgian translations of a single quatrain. It is evident that all but the first translator had the best existing translation in front of him (or in his mind), and seeks to make his own translation distinct from the existing one, and better. Consider this well-known quatrain by Khayyām:

Lab bar lab-i kūza burdam az ghāyat-e āz

Tā zu ṭalabam vāsiṭa-yi 'umr-i dirāz

Lab bar lab-i man nihād u mīguft ba rāz

Mey khur ki bidīn jahān nimī' ā-ī bāz²⁵

This quatrain was translated by A. Chelidze: one of the key words of the quatrain "lab" (lip) has been translated into Georgian as "*t'uchi*" ("lip").²⁶ Two Georgian words can translate "lip": "*bage*" used in poetic speech and *t'uchi* used in everyday Georgian respectively.

Kotetishvili uses "*bage*" in his translation of the quatrain, which has been recognized as a masterpiece of the art of translation. There are people in Georgia who do not know Persian but, thanks to the translation, have memorised this quatrain in Persian. Kotetishvili's translations are widely believed to surpass the original, and much of this is due to his translation of this quatrain:

Bagit davtsvdi dokis bages, bage gadavibadage

Dghegrdzelobas vedziebdi, žamta srbolit davidage,

Dokma mitkhra saidumlod: momagebe bages bage,

Kveqnad gana k'idev mokhval, dalieo, ras kadageb.²⁷

This translation is not only faithful to the original (the second line is a fairly free translation), it shows an excellent use of alliteration and assonance. It is hard to argue with Professor Kobidze's judgment:

*"Why are we fascinated by Vaxushti Kotetishvili's translation? Because the translator has thorough knowledge of the writing, verse or poem to be translated as well as all its poetic potentialities, images, style; he has a brilliant gift for poetry and translates works of great poets without a misstep. It can be said with confidence that, with regard to translations of classic poetry, V. Kotetishvili's translations are the pinnacle of translation artistry."*²⁸

For a long time after the publication of this translation (1963), nobody else made the attempt. Eventually, two translators plucked up the courage. The first is Alexander Elerdashvili whose translations ('Umar Khayyām, *Rubais*) were twice (1997, 2005) published as a separate book. In the second edition, the text of the *Rubáiyât* established by Muḥammad 'Alī Furūghī was translated completely and in an orderly sequence (204 quatrains). Obviously Elerdashvili realized that he could not use "bage" for alliteration (such attempts would be doomed to failure from the outset). Instead he chose the disyllabic (two consonants and two vowels) noun "k'ide" (meaning "edge") and verbal forms derived from it as a rhyming element.²⁹ The result is a good translation but not to be compared to Kotetishvili's masterpiece.

The next translator of this quatrain is Zezva Medulashvili who used neither "bage" nor "doqi" for "kūza" ("jug") found in all the previous Georgian translations; he chooses another Georgian synonym, "khelada,". Medulashvili chooses "tuchi" and uses it as a rhyming element for alliteration.³⁰ In spite of strong alliteration and assonance, this translation is not comparable to that of Kotetishvili.

Medulashvili's translations of Khayyām's quatrains are outstanding with regard to faithfulness to the original. He tries to use city dialect (though not everywhere) but in moderation. His translations are also distinguished by skilful use of the vocabulary (sometimes even phraseology) taken from *Kakheti* and highland dialects of Georgia. As he has translated only 32 quatrains, the quantity of dialect vocabulary is not large. An excessive predilection for this technique would be harmful for translation.

Later Translators

Four other translators have translated some of Khayyām's quatrains, over three generations: Tamaz Chkhenkeli, Nomad Bartaia, Giorgi Lobjanidze and Nino Mgaloblishvili. Of these, I would like to mention only the translation of one quatrain made by G. Lobjanidze. This young and gifted

translator translates from Persian and Arabic, and produced the first complete Georgian translation of the Quran from the Arabic. He is a very experienced and well-recognized translator of both classic and modern Persian poetry. His translation of 28 quatrains, drawing on nearly all the traditions of Georgian translations of Khayyām's poetry, is brilliantly executed. One quatrain in particular stands out among all the Georgian translations of Khayyām's quatrains. In it, Lobjanidze has used the rhythm of the original as a framework, and has even managed to create acoustic harmony with the vocabulary of the original. The quatrain concerned has been less popular among Georgian translators and few are likely to try to better Lobjanidze's version in the future. The Persian original reads:

Man mey na z-i tangdastī **nakhuram**
 Yā az gham-i rusvā'ī u mastī **nakhuram**
 Man mey z-i barā-yi khushdilī **mīkhuram**
 Aknūn ki tu bar dilam nishastī **nakhuram**.³¹

Georgian translation:

Ukonlobisa ara mesh'irs sapikral-savag**lakho ram**,
 An gana mit'om ar vtvrebi, vinmes ar shevudz**rakho ram**,
 Ghvinoa chemi salbuni, mosalkhen-sain**akho ram**,
 Me, chemo, shengnit davbrmavdi, shen ikneb dain**akho ram**.³²

I could drawn on statistics to show how often each quatrain has been translated into Georgian, and in which generation of translators it has been done. But for brevity's sake I will simply summarize what I have found: the translation of Khayyām's quatrains into Georgian has assumed the form of a healthy competition, in which the participating translators try to reproduce the wisdom of Khayyām's poetry within four lines better than their predecessors have been able to. Khayyām's quatrains have become the touchstone of a translator's talents.

Notes

- 1 'Umar Khayyām, "Rubayat," translated from Persian by J. Abuladze, *Caucassioni, Journal Mensuel de l'union des Écrivains de la Géorgien Littérature, Arts, Philosophie, Sciences*, N1-2, 1924, Tiflis, p. 171-175.
- 2 www.lib.ge/body_text.php?1047
- 3 K. Paghava, "Şādiq Hidāyat and Persian Classic Literature," in *Works of Stalin Tbilisi State University*, v. 9, 1960, pp. 99-123.
- 4 Iv. Javakhishvili, *The History of Georgian Nation*, v. 2, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 1965, p. 305.
- 5 Al. Gvakharia, "The Peak of Georgian Translation Art" in *Essays on the History of Georgian-Persian Literary Contacts*, v.2, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 2001, p. 250.

- 6 *ibid.*, p. 253.
- 7 *Vīs u Rāmīn az Fakhr al-Dīn As'ad-i Gurgānī, Taṣṭīḥ-i Magalī Tudūā va Aleksander Gwākhārīā*, Tehran, Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1349.
- 8 *Visramiani*, translated from the Georgian version by Oliver Wardrop, London: Royal Asiatic Society (Oriental translation fund, N. S. v. 23), 1914.
- 9 There are several important investigations into Georgian versions of the *Shāhnama*. These Georgian versions are often mentioned under the title of *Rostomiani*. Georgian prose versions include the *Pridoniani* ("The Story of Feridun"), translated in the 15th-16th centuries; *Utrutian-Saamiani* ("The Story of *Feridun* and *Sām*"), translated in the 16th century; and *The Book of Sām Pahlavan*, translated in the 18th century. Verse versions include the *Rostomiani*, most of which was prepared in the 15th-16th centuries; *Zaakiani* ("The Story of *Zahāk*"), from the first half of the 17th century; and the *Utrutian-Saamiani*, from the 17th century.
- 10 Vakhtang VI himself was the author and pioneer of several translations (word for word, literary, and scientific). Apart from a word for word translation of Kashefi's *Kalila and Dimna (Anvār-i Sohaili)*, he prepared an abridged and free translation of the 11th century monument *Qābūs-nāma* (Georgian title: *Amimasariani*; which he has recently versified), the astronomic treatise *Zija* by Ulugh Beg (15th century), and several manuals of astronomy. Vakhtang VI appended a vocabulary to his translation of the treatise. This was the first terminological glossary in Georgian.
- 11 P. Ingoroqva, "Umar Khayyām," *Caucassioni, Journal Mensuel de l'union des Écrivains de la Géorgien Littérature. Arts, Philosophie, Sciences*, N1-2, 1924, Tiflis, p. 170
- 12 *ibid.*, pp. 169-170
- 13 Shota Rustaveli, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, translated from Georgian by Venera Urushadze, Tbilisi: Publishing House "Sabchota Saqartvelo," 1968, p. 15.
- 14 *Rubā'iyāt-i Khayyām az nuskhā-yi Muḥammad 'Alī Furūghī, ba khaṭṭ-i Falsafī Amīr*, Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp va Intishārāt, 1374, p. 71
- 15 Shota Rustaveli, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, p. 17
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 117
- 17 This quatrain differs greatly from all those usually attributed to Khayyām and there are considerable doubts about its authenticity. I have never come across this quatrain in Persian originals published in Iran or elsewhere. Lobjanidze says that he has used the text of a Tajik edition published in the Soviet period. But the question of authenticity does not affect the point made here: Lobjanidze employs Rustaveli's vocabulary and phraseology. The Persian text of the 3rd line of this quatrain (*ārām bāsh, ey barādar, bas ast durūgh u jang*) is as follows: "Dorough o do-ruyi kheslat-e in donyā ast."
- 18 Omar Khayyām, in *Persian Lyrics. Classics*. Translated by A. Chelidze, Tbilisi: Federation, 1933, pp. 11-60.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 20 D. Kobidze, "From the History of Georgian and Persian Poetics," in *Georgian and Persian Literary Relations*, II, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 1969, p. 252.
- 21 T. Chkhenkeli, "The Translator of Persian poetry," in *Poetry – A Branch of Wisdom*, Tbilisi: Sabchota Saqartvelo", p.39
- 22 When we speak about Khayyām's popularity in Georgia it is impossible to avoid mentioning the parodies on his quatrains by the famous Georgian writer Nodar Dumbadze (1928-1984). He produced a series of humorous sketches, published in several parts: "Omar Khaliani" (the root of "khaliani" is "khali" which entered Georgian from Persian with the same meaning; "khaliani" means "having a mole") – 10 quatrains with an introduction; "Once more about Omar Khaliani-Zemeleli" (Zemeli was a popular place in the centre of Tbilisi in the 20th century, where young people and 'bad guys' gathered – 10 parodies with an introduction that analyzes Omar Khaliani's "creative art;" "From the notes of Omar Khayyāmi" – 10 parodies. These humorous verses and stories have been published

- with an introduction in the collected works: N. Dumbadze, *Works* in four volumes, v.3, Tbilisi: Merani, 1990, pp. 381-388. N. Dumbadze's character, Omar Khaliani, is a "bad guy" fond of drinking and women, who gets into trouble with the police, has problems with his ex-wives, at high school, etc. Khayyām's philosophy and the quatrain form (rhyming *aaba*) is used to satirize pressing problems of the day. The parodies gained enormous popularity in the Georgian community.
- 23 Ivane Machabeli (1854-1898) – a famous translator of Shakespeare's plays into Georgian.
- 24 V. Kotetishvili, *West-Eastern Divan*, Tbilisi: Diogene, 2002, p. 12
- 25 *Khayyām's Quatrains* (Bilingual Series), Translated from the Persian by Edward Fitzgerald, compiled and edited by Roshanak Bahreini, Tehran: Hermes Publishers, 2008, p. 52, robai 34. ("Then to the lip of this poor earthen Urn...")
- 26 Dokis **t'uchs t'uchit** davets'ape ashllilis vnebit,
Msurda sitsotskhilis žinis mok'vla chemis shegnebit,
Man **t'uchi t'uchze** damak'ona, mitkhra – dalie,
Kveqnad meored veghar mokhval shen shenis nebit. (*Persian Lyric*, p. 52, robai 171)
- 27 V. Kotetishvili, *West-Eastern Divan*, p. 47, 16.
- 28 D. Kobidze, "Iranian Poetry" (Review), in *Georgian-Persian Literary Relations*, I, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 1983, p. 473.
- 29 Dokis bages bage **vk'ide**, vnebis tsetskhli movik'**ide**,
Dghegrdzeloba vedzie da dokis qelshi chevek'**ide**;
Dokma mitkhra: "am tskhovrebas, dzmao, prtkhilad moek'**ide**,
Ghvino svi da nu ggonia, rom am kveqnad mokhval **k'ide**.
(Omar Khayyām, *Rubais*, translated by Alexander Elerdashvili, Tbilisi: Saari, 2005, robai 193)
- 30 Mdzapri survilit kheladasa dav**t'uche t'uchi**
Rata niadag net'areba mkonoda **quchi**,
Kheladac chamit'**uchit'uchda** da chamchurchula:
Ertkel mosulkhar, svi, sats'utro ariso **puchi**.
'Umar Khayyām, "Robais," translated by Zezva Medulashvili, *Chveni Mtserloba* (Literary magazine), N21, 2000.
- 31 *Rubā 'iyāt-i Khayyām az nuskhā-yi Muḥammad- 'Alī Furūghī*, p. 145.
- 32 'Umar Khayyām, *Rubais*, *Chveni Mtserloba* (Literary journal), N11, 2006, p. 48.

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- 'Umar Khayyām, *Robaiebi [Rubais]*, translated by Al. Elerdashvili, Tbilisi: Saari, 2005
- 'Umar Khayyām, "Robaiebi" [Rubais], translated by G.Lobjanidze, *Chveni Mtserloba* (Literary journal), N11, 2006, p.48-49.

- 'Umar Khayyām, "Robaiebi" ["Rubais"], translated by Z. Medulashvili, *Chveni Mtserloba* (Literary magazine), N21, 2000.
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The Reception of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* of 'Umar Khayyám by the Victorians

Esmail Z. Behtash

(Chabahar Maritime University)

FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* appeared unnoticed at a time of great material prosperity in England in 1859. The copies remained on Quaritch's shelves for almost two years. No one approached them. The bookseller reduced the price to half; still no one wanted them. Finally they were moved to the penny-box outside the shop. Who would have foreseen that "seventy-five years later a copy of the *Rubáiyát* in original wrappers and containing a note by Swinburne would be offered for sale by Quaritch for nine thousand dollars"?¹ The long wait for the discovery of the *Rubáiyát* made FitzGerald weary at heart and he began to feel "a sort of terror at meddling with Pen and Paper. The old *Go* is gone – such as it was. One has got older: one has lived alone: and, also, either one's Subjects, or one's way of dealing with them, have little Interest to others."² 'Umar's freedom of thought on religion and morality were perhaps too daring for the conservative climate of the mid-Victorian period. Then, according to Terhune,³ FitzGerald's biographer, one day early in 1862 a friend of Dante Gabriel Rossetti caught sight of the *Rubáiyát* in the penny box. He found the book interesting and gave Rossetti a copy. Rossetti showed it to Swinburne. The two friends bought some copies and gave them to their friends. Swinburne took a copy to George Meredith. They returned to buy more and found that due to the demand the price had been raised. William Morris took pleasure in it. Swinburne gave a copy to Burne-Jones who showed it to John Ruskin in 1863. Ruskin became so impressed by the book that he wrote a letter to the unknown author:

My dear and very dear Sir,

I do not know in the least who you are, but I do with all my soul pray you to find and translate some more of Omar Khayyám for us: I never did – till this day – read anything so glorious, to my mind as this poem – (10th. 11th. 12th pages if one were to choose) – and that, and this, is all I can say about it – More – more – please more – and that I am ever gratefully and respectfully yours.

J. Ruskin⁴

The letter remained with Burne-Jones to be passed to the author of the *Rubáiyát* when he was recognised. FitzGerald did not receive the letter until ten years later in 1872, when the third edition of his *Rubáiyát* was published. Ruskin refers to quatrains 44-58 in the first edition. In these quatrains there are some crucial points that seem to have appealed to Ruskin as a Victorian. For example, that we are “Phantom Figures” who come and go without any intention of our own; that man is subject to predestination and moves like a ball in polo, struck from one side to another without any power to resist. We are impotent before fate and cannot do anything to change it:

*With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man's knead,
And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed,
Yea, the First Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.*

(No. LIII, 1st ed.)

The “Nights and Days” are a “Chequer-board” on which destiny is the player and we the pieces (No. XLIX). So why are there punishments for us who have been made of “baser Earth,” along with all kinds of evils?

*Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give – and take!*

(No. LVIII, 1st ed.)⁵

Given that everything, even what is dear to us, ends in “nothing,” why not seize the day?

*And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in – Yes –
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be – Nothing – Thou shalt not be less.*

(No. XLVII, 1st ed.)

FitzGerald's frank fatalism appealed to only a select few at first. This *carpe diem* attitude towards life was not the earned disinterest of a learned man, but something more wistful:

*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 wither flown again, who knows!*

(No. LXXII, 1st ed.)

This was the aspect of the *Rubáiyát* that appealed to the Pre-Raphaelites, who tended to prefer exotic and unfamiliar subjects as a reaction against the scientific spirit and conventional tasks of the period. The exoticism of the *Rubáiyát* and its introduction of "fatalism" as a new attitude probably made the poems catch their imagination, and their praises were enough to advertise it. According to Edmund Gosse, the form of the Persian quatrains and the hidden beauties of FitzGerald poem charmed Swinburne and led almost immediately to the composition of *Laus Veneris* which has the aura of the *Rubáiyát*.⁶ Swinburne's poetry in its treatment of sexual aberration and its anti-Christian tone and view of life, as in "The Garden of Persephone" ("That no life lives for ever/That dead men rise up never"), is reminiscent of FitzGerald's voice in such places as quatrain no. XV in the first edition of the *Rubáiyát* (1859):

*And those who husbanded the Golden Grain
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.*

The speaker openly states that there is no life after death, and that no man is precious enough to dig up again. Swinburne, with his deliberately shocking language and theme, threw Victorian religion away, seeming to give voice to the disintegration of Puritanism and conventionality. FitzGerald was less shocking but fundamentally just as nihilist.

The initial neglect of the poem can be taken as suggesting that the *Rubáiyát* ran counter to the powerful mid-Victorian optimism, utilitarianism and belief in the pieties of everyday life. Then its acceptance can be seen as expressing the reverse side of Victorian Puritanism. This reaction was also Victorian. On the one hand, FitzGerald's contemporaries were not prepared for the notion of pleasure without considering it wicked; on the other, they felt that if man was ignorant of the ultimate purpose of the universe, he had better seek satisfaction and consolation in "A book of Verses," where wine, woman and wilderness would become Paradise. Furthermore, one might read into the poem a kind of stoic resignation, which also has its place in the Victorian makeup. Any pessimistic attitude toward the position of man was considered by some to be weak; the poem showed a cynical view of human life by lowering man "into the Dust" or to the lowest degree, without any value. But others held beliefs embodying both optimism and perversity as later advocated by the decadents. Darwin's scientific researches seemed to many to decree that man's place was in a world ruled not by God, but by mere chance, which determined who was fittest to survive.

The subsequent success of the *Rubáiyát*, notably after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), was a kind of natural selection itself,

and its discovery by the Pre-Raphaelites was especially significant. Touched with pessimism and melancholy, as well as exotic imagery, it appealed to those who rejected conventional Victorian art and who were against the didactic use of art for moral, social and religious edification.

The sudden enthusiastic demand for the *Rubáiyát* by the Pre-Raphaelites made Quaritch ask FitzGerald to prepare a new edition. FitzGerald showed no desire to do further work on the poem, however, and in any case he was not interested in seeking fame or fortune. Nevertheless, when he received a letter from Mrs. Tennyson (who often used to write on behalf of her husband, Alfred Tennyson) telling him that Tennyson had admired the *Rubáiyát*, FitzGerald decided to work on the poem:

To think of Alfred's approving my old Omar! I never should have thought he even knew of it. Certainly I should never have sent it to him, always supposing that he would not approve anything but a literal translation – unless from such hands as can do original Work, and therefore do not translate other People's.⁷

In 1867, while FitzGerald was working on the second edition of the *Rubáiyát*, Nicolas published his prose translation of the 464 quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām under the name of *Les Quatrains de Khéyam* (Paris, the Imperial Press, 1867), based on a manuscript discovered in Iran while he was a consul there. Nicolas had described 'Umar Khayyām as a Sufi and claimed that his song of wine had a mystical meaning. FitzGerald studied Nicolas's translation and found inspiration for some new quatrains in his second edition (Nos. 46, 47).

Crucially, however, FitzGerald did not change his view about 'Umar's character as a "material Epicurean." According to his preface to the second edition, FitzGerald wondered naively how "wine" might have a mystical allusion: "Were the Wine spiritual, for instance, how wash the body with it when dead? Why make cups of the dead clay to be filled with – 'La Divinité' – by some succeeding Mystic?" He believed, without any evidence, that Nicolas was wrong in his conclusion about 'Umar Khayyām. He added thirty-five stanzas to the seventy-five of the first edition and revised some of the quatrains. He also altered the sequence and printed the second edition in 1868.

The alterations drew protests from his first admirers. Thomas Hinchliff in a letter to Quaritch, expressed his disappointment with the alterations: "We were grieved to find that Mr. FitzGerald, in altering the text here and there, had grievously injured the Original. So much so that we agreed to send our friend in Japan an old copy which he had to spare instead of the new and smarter edition."⁸ To begin with, FitzGerald's manifest intention in the alterations was to structure his selected quatrains as a single poem

and to diverge from the original in such a way that his creation would become an original poem.

In spite of its popularity among the Pre-Raphaelites, reviewers ignored the poem until Charles Eliot Norton published an article in the *North American Review* in October 1869. Norton had been shown the book by Burne-Jones when he was visiting Ruskin in England. Norton obtained the second edition of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* and a copy of Nicolas's French translation before he returned to America. Norton's article comparing the two translations and stating his preference for FitzGerald's won the first public recognition for the *Rubáiyát*. In his article, Norton stated:

*He [the translator] is to be called "translator" only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic spirit from one language to another, . . . its excellence is the highest testimony that could be given, to the essential impressiveness and worth of the Persian poet. It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction, not a translation, but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration.*⁹

As a result of Norton's article, the *Rubáiyát* won popularity in the United States, whose people "are my Omar's best friends," as FitzGerald said. The author, however, was still unknown. The publisher now persuaded FitzGerald to prepare a new edition of the poem in view of its popularity.

Due to demand from its American admirers in Philadelphia, the third edition of the *Rubáiyát* was published in 1872. Upon hearing from Cowell that the first edition of the poem had been reprinted by someone in India, FitzGerald commented: "I have lived not in vain, if I have lived to be pirated." The name of the translator of the *Rubáiyát* was still unknown in England but in America it was rumoured that its author is a certain "Reverend Edward FitzGerald," who lived somewhere in Norfolk and was fond of boating. Norton in his visit to England mentioned the rumour of the authorship of the *Rubáiyát* to Carlyle. Carlyle was very surprised:

*The Reverend Edward FitzGerald? . . . Why, he is no more Reverend than I am! He is a very old friend of mine – I am surprised, if the book be as good as you tell me it is, that my old friend has never mentioned it to me.*¹⁰

In February of 1875, FitzEdward Hall, a philologist and student of Eastern languages and literature, identified FitzGerald as the author of the *Rubáiyát* in Lippincott's Magazine, published in Philadelphia, writing an explanatory paragraph on the works of FitzGerald. In the following year, Henry Schütz Wilson, a minor writer and critic, for the first time publicly identified FitzGerald in the *Contemporary Review* (March, 1876, XXVII: 559-570)

as a “masterly” translator. A critic in the *Spectator* (March 1876, 334-36) observed that FitzGerald’s ‘Umar is “a great poet of denial and revolt.” He continued in his review “it is somewhat a disgrace to us that such a poem should have been amongst us for fifteen years without becoming generally known.” In late 1878 in America, James R. Osgood published five hundred copies of FitzGerald’s third edition of the *Rubáiyát*, “a handsome, too handsome – edition of Omar,” as FitzGerald called it, followed by a second printing before the end of the month. Recognising the celebrity of the poem in America, Bernard Quaritch asked FitzGerald’s permission to publish another edition of the poem.

FitzGerald was determined, at least, not to print “his” ‘Umar alone any more. He intended to print it with his *Salámán*, a mystical allegory written by a great Persian writer of romance ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492). He wrote to Cowell inquiring of him whether he wanted the *Rubáiyát* to be reprinted along with *Salámán*. Cowell agreed to FitzGerald’s suggestion. In December 1878, FitzGerald allowed Quaritch to publish the third edition of his “old Omar” with a condition: “If Omar be reprinted, Cowell wishes *Salámán* to go along with him.”¹¹ In this way FitzGerald wished “to stitch up the Saint [i.e. *Salámán*] & the Sinner [i.e. Omar] together.” Moreover, he was certain that *Salámán* would survive as long as the *Rubáiyát* was remembered. He also wished “Omar to stand first, be never reprinted separate from Jāmī” (the author of *Salámán*).¹² In the same letter, FitzGerald asked Quaritch not to mention his name in the book. On the second of August 1879, FitzGerald received his *Rubáiyát-Salámán* volume.

A direct response to FitzGerald’s celebrated poem was “Rabbi Ben Ezra,” Browning’s great religious poem first published in *Dramatis Personae* in 1864. This poem, according to De Vane, was actually inspired by FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát*.¹³ The poem is generally believed to be an expression of Browning’s own attitude to life (i.e. it is not so “dramatic” as others). It is significant that Browning chose, as his *persona*, a Middle Eastern historical scientist, apparently selected by him in response to FitzGerald’s Omar, an astronomer-mathematician poet of Persia. As the poem opens, the Rabbi invites his young friends to accompany him in his survey of life from youth to old age. The Rabbi welcomes age because it is “the last of life, for which the first was made” (1. 3). The speaker does not “remonstrate” against the indecisions, yearnings, “hopes and fears/ Annulling youth’s brief years,” because they are the conditions of growth. It is “doubt” and “care” which distinguish man from animals:

Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beasts?

(1. 24)

*But man is disturbed by “a spark” because he is nearer to God
than are the recipients of God’s inferior gifts:*

Rejoice we are allied

*To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.*
(ll. 25-30)

This is why the Rabbi asks his young friends to “welcome each rebuff” which turns “earth’s smoothness rough.” In this connection what divides us from the brute is aspiration not achievement. To Browning, as J. H. Buckley writes, “the fulfillment of desire meant spiritual death, for it removed the high remote ideal that had given motive power to the soul.”¹⁴ Browning refuses to denigrate the physical side of human nature. He seeks a model for human satisfaction, distinct from the animal, through a balance of the physical and spiritual sides of human nature. The body is intended to serve the highest aims of the soul:

*Let us not always say
‘Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!’
As the bird wings and sings;
Let us cry ‘All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!’*
(stanza 12)

While Browning’s Rabbi sees life as a process which death completes, FitzGerald’s Omar views life and its end in the following way:

*Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and sans End! (No. 24)*

The repetition of the image of “dust” is FitzGerald’s invention. In the original the reader is asked “not to allow sorrow to embrace” him, “nor an idle grief to occupy” his days; the reader is then asked not to forsake the book, the beloved’s lips and the bank of a spring before the earth embraces him. The recurring image of “dust” seems to be FitzGerald’s way of emphasising a fashionable Victorian nihilism, which Browning was too strong to be influenced by. The Rabbi sees the whole design of life as “perfect” and thanks God that he is “a man”:

*Not once beat ‘Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design.*

*I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
 Perfect I call thy plan:
 Thanks that I was a man!
 Maker, remake, complete, – I trust what Thou shalt do!’*
 (stanza 10)

FitzGerald’s ‘Umar, unlike Browning’s Rabbi, rebels against this divine design, and wishes he had the power to “shatter” it and “remold” it according to his own heart’s desire:

*Ah Love! Could you and I with Him Conspire
 To grasp this sorry Scheme of things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits – and then
 Remold it nearer to the Heart’s Desire! (No. 99)*

In the original, there is no talk of conspiracy, of wishing for a power such as God’s to construct another wheel of fortune closer to the heart’s desire.

The last line of Browning’s stanza 10 anticipates the metaphor of pot and potter in stanzas 26-32. These stanzas contain the most striking imagery in the poem, of “clay,” “pot,” and “potter.” In the strained metaphor of the potter’s wheel, as Erickson points out, the Rabbi finally finds the proper image for describing the formlessness of man’s striving after God.¹⁵ In stanza 26, the Rabbi addresses FitzGerald’s ‘Umar when he says:

*Ay, note that Potter’s wheel,
 That metaphor! and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay, –
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round,
 ‘Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!’*

The last line alludes to and summarises the whole drift of FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát*. In this stanza the Rabbi, who is modelled on a historical commentator, philosopher, and astronomer of the twelfth century, mocks the philosophy of FitzGerald’s ‘Umar, mathematician and astronomer of the early twelfth century, when he chants:

*Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise;
 One thing at least is certain – This life flies;
 One thing is certain and the rest is lies;
 The Flower that once has blown forever dies. (No. 63)*

The first two lines do not belong to the original Persian text and are FitzGerald’s composition, but the second two, with their important

substitution of “dies” for the original “blooms,” are 'Umar's. FitzGerald describes man in his poem, stanzas 82-90, as a “pot” made of clay by a “Potter.” Through this image, however, FitzGerald, unlike Browning, reduces man to a worthless lump of clay who has no duty but to seize the day, because all he knows is that life passes quickly.

Browning, on the other hand, celebrates the physical delights of life and welcomes old age, which itself represents the culmination of a rich life, as the gateway to something even better. For FitzGerald, old age represented the end of life and of everything, even his friendships. FitzGerald feared old age and death. Unlike his *persona* who lived and recommended living in the present, FitzGerald lived from his early youth with a vision of old age, feeling how rapidly life was passing. This mood is present in his “The Meadows in Spring” first published in 1831. If FitzGerald, through Omar, announces that man is merely a “consumer,” Browning, through his Rabbi, suggests that man is distinct from the mere *consumer*, to whom satiety is an end in itself: he is more akin to God the Provider. From this follows the Rabbi's whole argument – that man is a being with higher duties than the rest of creation but with correspondingly higher rewards.”¹⁶

The only place where such a notion of man is present in FitzGerald's reproduction is the quatrain No 44:

*Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame – were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?*

But FitzGerald, in the character of the invented “Omar,” denies this higher reward:

*Alike for those who for TODAY prepare,
And those that after some TOMORROW stare,
A Muézzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There.” (No. 25)*

FitzGerald's inability to see a particular aspect of life in Browning and especially in 'Umar reveals a peculiarly later-nineteenth-century cynicism and nihilism, while grappling with exactly the same issues and spiritual contexts as Browning, Tennyson – and 'Umar. FitzGerald fails to find the richness of response they did, but finds another kind of response, a sceptical and ultimately a cheaper kind.

FitzGerald can partly be understood in differentiation from and opposition to Browning's cast of mind. One of Browning's achievements which was impenetrable to FitzGerald was the resolution of the problem of doubt: a problem which troubled many of Browning's contemporaries, such as

Tennyson and Arnold, and, of course, FitzGerald himself. Browning was deeply concerned by the religious issues of the day, but he never suffered the agonies of doubt experienced by Tennyson and Arnold. At a time when Newman converted to the Church of Rome in 1845 and when Strauss's *The Life of Jesus* (translated into English by George Eliot in 1846) put the basis of Christianity under question, Browning showed life to be joyful as long as it was perfected by a belief in the hereafter. Thus doubt became evidence of God, whereas FitzGerald gloomily accepted it as evidence of godlessness, at least in his *Rubáiyát* where he denies the certainty of creation and doomsday:

*And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in What All begins and ends in – Yes;
Think then you are TODAY what YESTERDAY
You were – TOMORROW you shall not be less. (No. 42)*

FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* is perhaps the archetypal Victorian poem. It has dramatic form through its invented persona of 'Umar; it has mysticism, Epicureanism, melancholy, loss of faith, anxiety about the future, and unfamiliar exoticism as well. As others tried to introduce classical figures into Victorian art, FitzGerald also introduced a historical scientist from a remote time and culture. The melancholy in the quatrains attributed to 'Umar also had a philosophic basis in the quatrains: what we have, even if its duration is brief and uncertain, is worth having. It is better to live and enjoy life as it comes. According to FitzGerald, the theme of the *Rubáiyát* was "a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately found at the bottom of all thinking men's minds: but made music of"; and its message was sceptical: it is useless to ask questions because on one hand you will find no answers, and on the other the universe has its own meaning, which simply remains forever hidden from us.

FitzGerald's poem is nevertheless an immortal song, about which Tennyson in the lines added to *Tiresias and Other Poems* (1885) rightly stated:

*... I know no version done
In English more divinely well;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar; and your Omar drew
Full-handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters ...*

FitzGerald's 'Umar problematised the general conception of a "real" 'Umar to such an extent that it stimulated Persian scholars to address the

question of the authenticity of the quatrains attributed to 'Umar by FitzGerald. Some of these scholars, like the late M.T. Ja'farī and M. Muṭaharī, concluded that we have in effect two 'Umar Khayyāms: one the religious scientist of the eleventh century, the real 'Umar who sometimes improvised *rubā'īs*; and the other the author of a large quantity of quatrains, who has no discoverable historical identity. They were not aware, however, that their speculations were founded on FitzGerald's invention, a *persona* created by him and called "'Umar." Another result of the popularity of FitzGerald's 'Umar was that copyists tried to collect *rubā'īs* under the name of 'Umar Khayyām and forge the date of their compilation: an earlier date being better for foreign markets.

With the growth of scepticism and pessimism in the second half of the Victorian period, we observe many substitutes for religion. One was "art," and the Pre-Raphaelites were its primary advocates. Pessimism paved the way for writers like John Davidson (1857-1909), Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) and A. E. Housman (1859-1936). The hedonism of FitzGerald's poem is present in Oscar Wilde's essays and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. And its fatalism is present in Hardy's novels, in which man never seems to be free, and mysterious forces control his life. It is worth noting that in the twentieth century, with the rise of existentialism and nihilism, the *Rubāiyāt* has attracted even more widespread and popular attention. British soldiers, according to Professor Arberry, took it with them in both World Wars. Its rebellion against the prevailing conceptions of God, Heaven, and Hell, its complaint against fate and predestination, its pessimism, its stress on the here-and-now and its Epicurean nature have made the poem continually popular.

Although the *Rubāiyāt* was unnoticed by the mid-Victorian English public, once it was noticed, it was never allowed to fall into neglect again. On 25 March 1897, the Omar Khayyām club met for dinner and Sir George Robertson, the hero of Chitral, "delighted the company by remarking that men of action were really dreamers and sentimentalists and that his chief pleasure in the mountains of Chitral was the reading of Omar Khayyām."¹⁷

Notes

- 1 A. M. Terhune, *The Life of Edward FitzGerald*, London: Yale University Press, 1947, p. 208.
- 2 Alfred M. Terhune, Annabelle B. Terhune, *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1980, vol. iii: pp. 465-66; to Cowell, 1 December 1862.
- 3 Terhune, *The Life of Edward FitzGerald*, p. 207.
- 4 MS letter, Trinity College Library; quoted by Terhune, p. 212.
- 5 According to Michael Millgate's *The Life and Works of Thomas Hardy* (Macmillan, 1984), Thomas Hardy on his deathbed asked his wife to repeat to him this quatrain from the *Rubāiyāt*. She took a copy of Omar from his bedside and read to him. When she finished it "he indicated that he wished no more to be read." (480-81) This quatrain does

- not have any Persian equivalent in the manuscripts attributed to Omar Khayyám; but it has much in common with Hardy.
- 6 Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, London: Macmillan, 1917, p. 94.
 - 7 Terhune, *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, vol. iii, p.59; to Mrs. Tennyson, 4 November 1867.
 - 8 Iran B. H. Jewett, *Edward FitzGerald*, London: George Prior Publisher, 1977, p. 94.
 - 9 Charles Eliot Norton, "Nicholas' Quatrains de Kheyam," *North American Review*, CIX, October, 1869, pp. 575-76.
 - 10 Terhune, *The Life of Edward FitzGerald*, p. 211.
 - 11 Terhune, *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, vol. iv: 158; to FitzGerald, 18 November 1878.
 - 12 Ibid., p.173; to B. Quaritch, 16 January 1879.
 - 13 William Clyde De Vane, *A Browning Handbook*, London: John Murray, 1937, p. 259.
 - 14 Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978, p. 89.
 - 15 Lee Erickson, *Robert Browning: His Poetry and His Audience*, London: Cornell UP, 1984, p. 212.
 - 16 Philip Drew, ed. *Robert Browning: A Collection of Critical Essays*, London: Methuen, 1970, p.184.
 - 17 A.S. Arberry, *The Romance of the Rubáiyát*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959, p. 36.

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Vernacularizing Rubaiyat: the Politics of Madhushala in the context of the Indian Nationalism

A. Castaing
(INALCO)

In the early 1930s, when the young Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bacchan (1907-2003) recited for the first time, and before stupefied assemblies, the quatrains that were soon to be published as the collection *Madhuśālā* (“The house of wine,” 1935), the thundering repercussions of this amazing text were already obvious. Histories of literature have noted that its publication created a mass infatuation,¹ favoured by the holding of public recitations (*kavi sammelan*), which the verses’ musicality encouraged. Legends and anecdotes surround this publication, and the poet himself has recounted his stupefaction at the popular success of the poems, which he could hear on everyone’s lips.² The collection, which narrates the existential itinerary of man portrayed as a drinker, welcomed by a warm house of wine, indeed encourages a hedonist representation of life, glorifying intoxication and the enchantment of beauty, nature, sensuality, art and of course poetry. The romantic aura which surrounds the collection, published in a literary context inherited from both Rabindranath Tagore and John Keats, sets it up as a sanctified idol in a way that could obscure the collection’s historical and political discourse.

Reading a much-commented text such as *Madhuśālā* raises questions about the way literature is rooted, or declared to be rooted or non-rooted, in its context and how it actively or passively, explicitly or implicitly, participates in the great nodes and debates of its immediate historical setting. Given the collection’s obviously extemporal and oneiric character, parallels with the nationalist struggle that characterises India in the 1930s may seem unlikely, but this paper aims at questioning the historicity of literature beyond its explicit discourses and contents, and at illuminating the ideological strategies at work within the poetics themselves.

Madhuśālā’s poetical itinerary

Composed of 135 quatrains whose rhyme follows an “aaba” structure, the collection’s originality lies in the fact that every stanza ends with the term *Madhuśālā* (“House of wine”), defining /ālā/ as a unique, omnipresent and

persistent rhyme. This rhyme thus elaborates the collection's poetic universe around a set of elements: *pyālā* ("cup"), *hālā* ("wine"), *madhubālā/ saqibālā* ("maid"), *pīnevālā* ("drinker"), *matvālā* ("intoxicated"). The first stanza, for example:

mRdu bhāvom ke angurom kī
āj banā lāyā hālā
priyatam, apne hī hāthom se
āj pilāūmgā pyālā ;
pahale bhog lagā lūm terā
phir prasād jag pāegā ;
sabse pahale terā svagat
kartī merī Madhusālā³.

Distilled from all my hopes and dreams,
This wine is yours, my Dearest Dear;
To you I proffer now the Cup
Unsullied, and the liquor clear;
Before it goes to every nation,
You, Goddess, taste my first libation;
My House of Wine shall honour you
Before the thirsty crowd draws near.⁴

Moreover, in most of the stanzas (76 out of 135), the rhyme is defined by a thematic couple closing the first and the second distich, *hālā* and *pyālā*, focusing on wine and its containers (The House, the Cup):

hāthom mem āne se pahale
nāz dikhāegā pyālā,
adharom par āne se pahale
adā dikhaegī hālā,
bahutere inkār karega
sāqī ane se pahale;
pathik, na ghabrā jānā, pahale
mān karegī Madhusālā⁵.

Reluctantly the Cup will come
Into your hands, and at the brink
All woman-like, the Wine retreats
Before the longing lips may drink
Often before she tilts the vial
The Saki mocks with soft denial;
Be not surprised, O traveller,

When House and Handmaid seem to shrink.
(St. 13)

In other cases, one of the two terms may be present (as in 44 stanzas), or replaced by another element referring to wine and intoxication: *sāqībālā* in 12 stanzas; *pīnevālā* in 9 stanzas; *matvālā* in 13 stanzas; *jvālā* (“flame”) in 7 stanzas.

Finally, in 7 stanzas, the term *mālā* (“garland”) can certainly not be assimilated to bacchanal symbolism, but underlines the poet’s heuristic agenda regarding the combination of the required elements composing the poetical creation. This “garland” indeed consists of a set of ornaments composed of symbolic as well as prosodic elements, which establish the “flavour” of the poem’s cathartic effect.⁶ This double orientation, which articulates wine with poetic creation, underlines the originality of the collection’s theme and “itinerary”. If the title itself defines the praise of intoxication as a thematic and aesthetical framework, it is accompanied by the fervour of creativity, which the first stanza literally dramatizes. The collection, as the fruit of distilled inspiration/grapes, is offered to the reader/drinker in its completed form. The first stanzas indeed present the collection’s symbolic “garland” as well as its prosodic basis, while stanzas 6 to 9 emphasize the drinker’s itinerary as he travels toward the ideal House of Wine. Desire combined with thirst is thus stressed in the first pages (“The House of Wine will soon appear”, St. 8), justifying wine’s omnipresence and polymorphic aspects (“*madhu, madirā, mādak hālā*”, “Wine honeyed, potent, sweet and clear”, St. 8), as well as symbolic and sensorial exultation:

sun, kalkal, chalchal madhu-
ghaṭ se girtī pyālom mem hālā,
sun, runjhun, runjhun cal
vitaraṇ kartī madhu sāqībālā;
bas ā pahumce, dūr nahīm kuch,
cār qadam ab caltā hai;
cahak rahe, sun, pīnevāle,
mahak rahe, le, Madhuśālā.

Listen! the gurgling in the Cups
The sounds of drunken merriment!
The Saki moves to music, shakes
Each tinkling golden ornament.
Now we are near the destination
And hear the merry conversation;
Listen! And now we can perceive

The House of Wine, the drifting scent.
(St. 10)

The auditory emphasis, amplified in Hindi by an accumulation of alliteration and onomatopoeia (*runjhun, runjhun; kalkal; chalchal*), dissociates the destination from its sensual and aesthetical manifestations. Music, colours and dance, as well as nature and beauty, thus concern the highly lyrical next stanzas. Equally lyrical is also the representation of the House as a welcoming, secular and egalitarian (St. 57 & 58) homeland, transcending casts and social or communal discrimination:

musalmān au' hindū haim do,
ek, magari, unkā pyālā,
ek, magari, unkā madirālay,
ek, magari, unkī hālā;
donom rahte ek na jab tak
masjid-mandir mem jāte ;
bair barhāte masjid-mandir,
mel karātī Madhusālā!

O Muslim, Hindu – faith are two
But one the brimming cup you share;
And one the drinking house, and one
The wine which flows so freely there.
By mosque and temple all's divided,
All is either “mine” of “thine”;
But enmities thus forged are all
Forgotten in the House of Wine.⁷
(St. 50)

Stanza 61 marks a brutal transformation, opening a period of doubts, regrets and bitterness. Facing the uncertain condition of man, the tyranny of Time, the progressive loss of ideals, the bitterness that follows intoxication, the second part of the collection is the long lament of a disenchanted man, who fails to find a way out of his frustrations. Death's omnipresence (St. 76 to 87) is both dramatic and parodic, when the description of funeral rituals leads to ridicule of Hindu religious orthodoxies:

mere adharom par ho antim
vastu na tulsīdal, pyālā,
merī jihvā par ho antim
vastu na gangājal, hālā,
mere śav ke pīche calne-
vālo, yād ise rakhnā –

“rām nām hai satya” na kahnā,
kahnā “saccī Madhuśālā.”

*Not Ganga-water on my tongue
But drops of wine shall bring relief;
Lay on my dying lips at last
The Goblet, not the Tulsi leaf;
Let those who bear me to the pyre
And stand beside my funeral fire
Not chant “Our God alone is great! »
But chant “The House of Wine stands chief! »
(St. 82)*

Nevertheless, the collection’s last two stanzas offer a possible redemption within the *gift* that allows poetical creation:

*bare-bare nāzom se mainne
pālī hai sāqībālā;
kalit kalpanā kā hī isne
sadā uṭhāyā hai pyālā;
mān-dulārom se hī rakhnā
is merī sukumārī ko;
viśva, tumhāre hāthom mem ab
saump rahā hūm Madhuśālā.*

*I taught the little maid myself,
Adored Her, and with jewels hung
Imagination’s fragile harp
Hangs in Her hands, a lute new-strung;
How world, I leave my House behind,
The architecture of my mind;
I leave my loving little Maid:
Be gentle; She is very young.
(St. 135)*

■ A Khayyāmian palimpsest?

One can certainly not read *Madhuśālā* without referring to the *rubaiyat* composed by the twelfth century Persian poet ‘Umar Khayyām, which were in fact translated into Hindi by Bacchan himself. *Umar khayām kī Madhuśālā* (“Omar Khayyām’s House of Wine”) was published a few months before *Madhuśālā*, and in its title, structure, themes and symbols, is used as a model for Bacchan’s own creation. Initiated as a child to both

Sanskrit and Persian, and raised in a bi-cultural and bilingual universe, Bacchan says he “spoke Urdu to his father and Avadhi (the local dialect of Hindi) to his mother.⁸” In his context, Persian as a language and *rubaiyat* as a form are not exogenous. As the critic Harish Trivedi says, “the *rubâî* has been used by Indian poets for centuries, not only in Persian but also in Urdu and with original local experimentation and innovation in the *bahr* or metrical length as well; the form was not only known but had been quite domesticated.⁹” Indeed, eminent Urdu poets such as Mir Taqi Mir (1722-1808) and, more recently, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984), have resorted to traditional forms borrowed from the Persian poetic tradition, such as the *rubaiyat* and *ghazal*, whose musicality is favourable to public recitations.¹⁰ The poet Firaq Gorakhpuri (1896-1982), one of the Indian “masters” of *rubā’īyāt*, defines the Persian quatrain’s structure:

The first line should reflect the beauty’s perfect brow,
The second portray the sable locks aglow
The fourth from the third should thus seem to flow,
As the greening upper lip from the arched eyebrow¹¹

In addition to the form, the symbols and themes used in *Madhuśālā* also explicitly refer to Khayyām’s poetry. Cup, *Saqi* and Drinker certainly are associated with the praise of intoxication, but they also have a metaphoric value, depending on each stanza’s content. Bacchan’s *House of Wine* can be seen as an allegory of poetic creation, homeland, universe, love etc., with wine and intoxication symbolising the duality of existence, both sweet and bitter. The presentation of this duality is another trait the two poets have in common, as Bacchan re-invents the main themes of Khayyām’s philosophical discourse: the condemnation of orthodoxies, hierarchies and religious idols; the valorisation of human existence and bitterness at its ephemeral character; and the valorisation of an Epicurean credo.

In relation to the poet’s opposition to religious orthodoxies, intoxication is seen as a way to overcome the world’s illusions, to annihilate categories and hierarchies and condemn religious artifices which obstruct the way to truth. As a matter of fact, Khayyām writes:

Indeed the idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this world much wrong:
Have drown’d my Glory in a shallow Cup
And sold my reputation for a song.

And this I know; whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught

Better than in the Temple lost outright.
(Khayyām, St. LXXVII¹²)

And Bacchan follows:

dharm granth sab jalā cukī haim
jiske antar kī jvālā,
mandir, masjid, girje—sabko
tor cukā jo matvālā,
panḍit, momim, pādriom ke
phandom ko jo kāṭ cukā,
kar saktī āj usīkā
svāgat merī Madhuśālā.

He who has calcined all the creeds
With fire from his burning breast
Who quits the temple, mosque and church
A drunken heretic, unblest,
Who sees the snares, and now comes running
From Pandit's, Priest's and Mullah's cunning,
He, and he only, shall today
Be in my House a welcome guest.
(*Madhuśālā*, St. 17)

Both poets adopt a nonconformist position, carrying a critical, even blasphemous message. And when Bacchan ridicules the Hindu funeral rituals (St. 82, see above), he draws his inspiration from Khayyām:

Ah, with the grape my fading Life provide,
And wash my body whence the Life has died,
And in a Winding-sheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.¹³

Bacchan's *Umar khayām kī Madhuśālā* is even more explicit in displaying his inspiration:

Beloved, moisten with wine my lips as they become death-withered
When I die, my dear, bathe my body with wine.
Cover my body with vine-leaves, of which also having made a bed.
Lay me down quietly to sleep by some vinous garden.¹⁴

The rejection of religious schema is accompanied by the valorisation of human existence and its constant fluctuation between joy and sadness, hope and despair. Death, suffering, deception, helplessness in the face of the

flow of Time, bitterness, are certainly unavoidable as the lot of man: all the more reason to enjoy life's sensuality. Hence this love for wine, whose name is chanted like an idol's:

*Go on with endless faith, invoking
[Nectar, liquor, intoxicating Wine]
Believe that in your hand you grasp
The glorious Cup, and do not fear;
Imaginary Wine receiving,
Create the Saki by believing;
Press on, O wayfarer, and then
The House of Wine will soon appear
(Bacchan, St. 8)*

*And David's lips are locked; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!"
"Red Wine" – the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That fallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.
(Khayyām, st. VI)*

Hence also his enchantment by beauty, nature and the arts, which are able to root man in an absolute present and thus to overcome the inexorability of Time. Pleasure (*O, essence of Delight*, writes Khayyām; *You drink me up with senses swimming*, writes Bacchan) as a way to transcend devastation and loss nurtures both Khayyām's and Bacchan's poetry, but regret always underlies the ode of delight, bitterness always underlies the sweet taste of wine:

*Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.
(Khayyām, St. VIII)*

*Man is a fragile Cup, alas!
Delicate, transient, made of clay,
Full of the fluid bitter-sweet,
The Wine of Life, poured out each day;
With myriad arms, Death, reckoning;
And Time, insatiate Drinker, drinks
The whole created world away.
(Madhuśālā, St. 73)*

*Ah, my beloved fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears:
To-morrow! – Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.
(Khayyām, St. XXI)*

*Tomorrow! Those who drink are slow
To trust the concept of Tomorrow!
The hands that lift the Cup today
May soon hang limp in death or sorrow!
We grasp today – today is done –
How shall we trust the not-begun?
Angels of Death may keep this House
Tomorrow, which today you borrow.
(Madhuśālā, st. 61)*

Indigenizing Rubā'īyāt: translation, appropriation and cultural “swing”

Beyond a simple parody, H.R. Bacchan undertakes in *Madhuśālā* an impressive palimpsest of the architecture of 'Umar Khayyām's Rubā'īyāt, adopting both its form and contents. Written simultaneously with a free “trans-creation” in Hindi of Khayyām's Rubā'īyāt in Edward Fitzgerald's translation (1859), this composition defies all “exogenization” in integrating a cultural context capable of accepting “outsiders”. As Harish Trivedi underlines, if no less than 15 or 19 Hindi translations of Khayyām's Rubaiyat were published between 1930 and 1958, Fitzgerald's version obviously had an important impact in India. Fitzgerald's version was quite “romanticized,” matching the extremely positive echo of English Romanticism in India in the 1920s.¹⁵ *Chāyāvād* (“Shadow-ism”), a poetical movement which appeared around the mid 1920's, is the most convincing example of this resonance. And in some regards, *Madhuśālā* is typically *Chāyāvād*-ian, with its symbolism, highly lyrical descriptions of love, beauty and nature, liberation from traditional form and themes, and domination by an introspective “self” expressing his sensibility and individuality.¹⁶ Despite its originality, *Madhuśālā* appears as a formal and thematic “absorption” of Khayyām's *Rubā'īyāt*.

Furthermore, a close reading of Bacchan's text throws light on the way the poet derives indigenous cultural references from exogenous cultural references. First, there is the representation of the beloved, which assimilates the thematic and formal bases of the collection (intoxication, wine, quatrains), but also some topoi from Sanskrit classical love poetry, as in stanza 36 where the Saqi is compared to dawn. He uses sophisticated Sanskrit

terminology (*uṣā* and *prataḥ* for “dawn”, *khag* for “birds”, *tāraḥ-maṇi maṇḍit* for “star-studded veil”), exclusively metaphorical descriptions, and symbols linked to nature, in a combination which is redolent of the *Śringara rasa*, the “flavour of Love”. A key concept in Indian classical aesthetics, *rasa* refers to the cathartic effect of art. *Śringara*, one of the eight *Rasa* described by the XIIth Century philosopher Abhinavagupta,¹⁷ refers to the feeling of love as well as eroticism exploited particularly in descriptions of the love games between Lord Krishna and the milkmaid Radha, of which Jayadeva’s *Gita Govinda* (XIIth Century) is one of the most impressive poetical expressions. Beauty and love, along with passion, expectation and despair, strongly underly a vast and complex symbolic palette composed of natural elements (stars, animals, clouds, water etc.).

Moreover, if symbolic wine refers explicitly to Khayyām’s poetry, the terms used to name it, indigenise it. First, the word *madhu* in the title of the collection can indeed be translated as “wine,” but also as “nectar” and “honey,” which bears a sacred value in the Vedic tradition as representing the nectar of immortality, *amrit*. This sacred connotation is emphasized by Bacchan himself in the collection’s opening lines, which quote a verse from the Rig Veda, one of the sacred texts of Hindu religion: “Winds are blowing honey for the man faithful to order; rivers are flowing honey. Let the plant be rich in honey for us!”¹⁸ *Madhuśālā* is transformed from a den of iniquity to a holy and purifying place. Furthermore, as a bitter element, wine is also designated as *hālāhal* (“Poison”), connoting the *hālāhal* that Lord Shiva drank to save the universe from destruction. Stanza 115 stresses this relationship between wine and the Tantric tradition, when the poet adopts the attributes (begging bowl, poison) of a Shivaite ascetic:

*Think not that poison was my choice
Since Wine its ecstasy denies;
I did not take a begging bowl
Lacking a Goblet for a prize;
To roast my heart and heart’s desire
I dwelt beside the funeral pyre;
But look! For there beneath my feet
The House of Wine submissive lies.*

If *Madhuśālā* is replaced by the funeral pyre where Shivaite ascetics dwell, fire is crucial in both the Tantric and Vedic traditions, where it purifies as well as redeems.¹⁹ The stanzas embody a sacred ritual, in which fire is sacred and the word, as a prayer, *performs*. Indeed, in Vedic tradition, as Charles Malamoud underlines, “the sacrificial rituals performed by the gods – and following their example, by humans – can only be fully realized when they are accompanied by the recitation of Vedic *mantras*.”²⁰ But the mantra, the ‘magical formula’ whose repetition brought about the

creation of the universe as described in the Hindu cosmogony, is not the hallowed syllable “Om” but *ālā*, this incessant rhyme which permeates the collection as a condensed *Madhuśālā*. It thus holds a double performative value: *Madhuśālā* is both *signifié* giving rise to an oneiric world stemming from the poet’s imagination (“Distilled from my hopes and dream”, St. 1), and *signifiant*, whose acoustic substance, through repetition, impells the creation of a sacred universe.

Consequently, in its lexicon, in its aesthetic codes as well as in its cultural references, Bacchan’s *rubaiyat* refer in the first place to a Hindu indigenous universe. Despite the mainly thematic similarities between Bacchan and Khayyām’s poetry, the transcreation that *Madhuśālā* represents proceeds to a referential swing, performed in the various layers of the collection. This “swing” can certainly be justified by the accumulation of translations separating the original from this Hindi version, as well as by the geographical, temporal and linguistic distance between the two collections. Critics may recognise Bacchan’s influences, but they should also be sensitive to this swing’s import, in an historical and political context where it can certainly not be insignificant.

Yet, beyond the import of this referential displacement, the collection asserts an explicit ideological position. Could not the few “committed” stanzas, that have been described as “weak” or “didactical,”²¹ be seen as nullifying a reading in terms of *chāyāvād* romanticism alone? In other words, could not this re-appropriation be nurtured by a real political discourse, whose substance stands precisely beyond didacticism?

The idea of a Nation

These “committed” stanzas are indeed reminders of Bacchan’s sympathies with Gandhian action and ideology. In the late 1920’s, in response to Gandhi’s call, Bacchan joined the Nationalist Struggle. After Gandhi’s death, he also published two collections of poems (*Khādī ke phūl* and *Sūt kī mālā*, 1948) as a tribute. Both the “nationalist” and “egalitarian” aspects of Gandhian discourse are conveyed in these stanzas:

*There is a precious rich red Wine
Made for a terrible carouse
From those heroic Indian hearts
Victims by patriotic vows;
Now generous the Motherland
Pours out such Wine with either hand;
Freedom is thirsty Kali, and
The altar is a hallowed House.*
(St. 45)

*None of the drunkards in this House
 Stand upon caste or social form;
 None says, « My wine is touched! » « My cup
 With a polluting touch is warm! »
 Here tipsy in the drinking hall
 Sit drinking freely great and small;
 Here wealth and rank sink drowned in Wine;
 My House achieves a great reform.
 (St. 57)*

Madhuśālā was published in a context of cultural and political fervour. The 1930s constituted what historians²² have called the “critical decade” in the Indian nationalist movement, suggesting a huge mobilization of the population in the struggle for independence. In addition to the constant pressure on British rule exerted by political forces (notably the Congress Party which, at the end of the 1920s, called for complete independence for India), the Indian population became massively involved in the non-cooperation movement stimulated by Gandhi. Gandhi had returned to India in 1915, and promoted a mode of struggle initiated in South Africa, called *Satyagraha* (“the Force of Truth”). Massively followed by the Indian rural population in 1917 and then 1919, this *Satyagraha* was characterized by “passive resistance” through non-violent actions: violation of “unfair” rules, voluntary arrests, and spectacular marches. Thus, Gandhi became a catalyst in nationalist dynamics. In 1930-1931 and again in 1932-1933, he played a main role in the movement of civil disobedience: protest marches, boycotts of imported goods, strikes etc. In 1942, Gandhi worked with Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Congress Party, to initiate the Quit India Resolution, calling for India’s complete autonomy. However, the years leading up to the country’s independence exacerbated their disagreements concerning the modalities of the country’s governance on the one hand, and the Muslim question on the other. Gandhi presented himself as the defender of a “mixed” nation, refusing the idea of separate electorates for the different religious communities and quotas for minorities. But above all, he was firmly opposed to the creation of Pakistan, a separate state built on a religious basis. He criticized the “solution” proposed by Nehru and the Congress Party, which advocated a severed India with a strong central power rather than the village confederation Gandhi dreamt of by Gandhi.

Indeed, the national ideal defended by the Nationalist Movement was based on unity, despite the composite character of India from a religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic point of view. The vision of an independent nation as formulated by Nehru was pan-Indian, articulated around a common cause, ideal and culture. The creation of the Muslim League in 1905 and then its call for a separate state sounded the death-knell for such an ideal. It is therefore important to emphasise the ambivalence of the

“invention” of the Nation in India. As underlined by the Historian Gyanendra Pandey,²³ India had begun to think itself as a Nation, and for the individual as a “citizen,” since the 1920s. In the 19th century, the nationalist answer to colonisation had been formulated by mobilizing an image of the country drawn from Hindu cultural resources, with the ideal of restoring the Golden Age of Great India. The vision and identity of this Hindustan, this magnified India, were exclusively Hindu, excluding Muslims.

In Northern India, this fervour was supported by a common language, Hindi, a purified and standardized version of *Khari boli*, the lingua franca of North India. In accordance with the formula summing up the construction of Indian identity, “Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan,” all “Persianisms” or “Arabisms” were excluded from the Hindi lexicon, to be replaced by a Sanskrit vocabulary, and the *Devanagari* script was adopted while Urdu, its Muslim equivalent, adopted the Arabic alphabet. Hindi was standardized through the creation of grammars, journals, newspapers and fictions, which aimed at conveying the new language of the Hindu nation. However it was not yet a language of literature. As a paradox, the constitution of a Panindian identity found its roots in an affirmation of the communalism that the political mobilizations sought to erase.

Many studies on Hindi literature in the late 19th century and the early 20th century have revealed the transformations occurring within its internal stakes and ideals.²⁴ At that time, North India saw an attempt to formulate and communicate a definition of a national language and culture, as seen for example in the very popular collection *Bhārat Bhārātī* (1912) written by Maithili Sharan Gupta. While confirming the poetical value of the Hindi language, the collection glorifies ancient India and presents a reformist ideal for modern India, which was to be extricated from the dark colonial era. During these first decades, the agenda of a “committed literature” was to denounce colonial abuses. The novelist Premchand, considered as one of the main figures of Hindi fiction, prepared the ground for an anti-British literature, a vehicle for Gandhian ideals, which denounced colonial, social and caste abuses and glorified humane qualities opposed to greed and corruption, in the context of oppressed peasants. Gandhism, Marxism and Nationalism played a key role in Hindi literature in the 1920s and 1930s.

Nevertheless, it is essential to situate literary commitments beyond the superficial layers, beyond patriotic or egalitarian themes. In *Madhuśālā*, the few committed stanzas do not in themselves explain the collection’s political substance and, above all, its impact. This impact results rather from the referential displacement, from the paradoxes and strangeness it contains.

First, the collection’s lexicon aims at erasing communal distinctions, when the gulf between Hindi and Urdu was exacerbating them.²⁵ While

the collection contains a strong Sanskrit element (as in St. 36), it also uses a significant number of Arabic and Persian terms. In addition to the often-repeated *sāqī*, some terms such as *momim* or *masjid* (St. 17) are highly connoted. This cohabitation is not incongruous, it is natural in Hindi in both speech and in literature.²⁶ This is what the synonyms in the collection show: a Sanskrit term meets its Persian or Arabic equivalent, belonging either to a literary or a colloquial level: “intoxication” can be either *māḍaktā* (Sanskrit) or *mastī* (Persian); “world” may be either *viśva* (Sk) or *duniyā* (Arabic); “fate” is either *bhāgya* (Sk) or *qismat* (P); “desire” is either *abhilāṣā* (Sk) or *armān* (P); “mad” is either *madmātā* (Sk) or *dīvanā* (P). A stanza may contain a double lexicon: both *himmat* (P) and *sāhas* (Sk) designate “courage” in st. 7, and *bhāgya* and *qismat* are “fate” in st. 98.

Similarly, the Hindu traditions evoked in the collection counterbalance the Arabo-Persian tradition that is also present. Stanza 13, cited above, (p XX) which draws on the stereotypes of Persian classical love poetry, seems to be answered by Stanza 36.

The wandering yogi ascetic, represented by symbols referring to Tantrism (*khappar*, fire and the funeral pyre) is also present as a *Qalandar*, the mad and drunk vagrant Sufi ascetic progressing towards Union with the divine spirit, abundantly described by Persian Sufi poetry.²⁷ While the drinker is “intoxicated” (*mastī*), and looking for his *sheikh*, he is also making progress through the repetition of a sacred phrase, his personal *Zikr* formula. The poet thus emphasizes the similarities between the two traditions, in which the repetition of a sacred word is a means of achieving transcendence.

However frequent the cultural references can be, they are never explicit or repeated enough to refer to a precise and defined tradition. The juxtapositions of the two traditions might appear too trivial to ground a reading upon. But in the South Asian cultural context, the proximity of traditions is imposed by an historical fact: the Muslim ruling during more than two centuries, which induced an indigenization of exogenous characteristics and the composition of hybrid traditions.²⁸ Through the diversity of his references and through these parallelisms, the poet points to the inter-penetrations of traditions, refusing to marginalize Muslim culture, but rather acknowledging it as deeply “indigenous”, as deeply Indian. Bacchan’s poetry is the fruit of an imagination which is both indigenous and multi-cultural, thus defending the idea of a composite and fraternal nation.

This fraternalism though goes beyond the simple religious segmentations: all segmentations and hierarchies are rejected, as shown in stanza 17 which presents the reforming drinker as a “heretic.” Khayyām’s humanist discourse, which denounces orthodoxies and religious artifices, finds an echo in Gandhian discourse which rejects the distinction between popular and high culture. The “dramatization” of *Madhuṣālā*’s publication, and its

promotion through recitations before large popular audiences “intoxicated” by poetry, proudly described by the poet in his autobiography and in the collection’s preface,²⁹ indicate that Bacchan’s agenda was to popularize what was traditionally considered an elitist culture, that is Persian poetry. Similarly, the multiple references to Vedism are not promoting a sacred and reserved Hindu tradition. Deconstructing the myth of “pure” cultures, Bacchan does not reverse hierarchies. Scholarly and highly “sacred” traditions, governed by an explicit purity (Vedism), are freely crossed with popular practices and traditions (Tantrism, Sufism), mainly governed by transgression, granting them a grandeur and sacredness. The heterodox character of the House and the marginal, mad and heretical Drinker, echoes the heterodox and composite character of the coming new nation (*rāṣṭra*) envisioned by Gandhi as patchwork of traditions, cultures, languages and communities, all inspired by an egalitarian and fraternal ideal.

If unity was one of the key concepts in the 1920s and 1930s, this collection reminds the reader of the risk of subsuming diversity under a national ideal that, especially in its early development, was itself marked by communalism. The national heritage praised by the defenders of the Nation is composed of a common culture (*jāti*) made up of diversity and interactions, and not of homogeneous or hermetic groups. Beyond a praise of intoxication, beyond the narrative of life or art’s tribulations, this “House where it is pleasant to dwell awhile” is also an allegory of the Nation as a welcoming land, built on equality, fraternity and diversity, all contributing to the Indian identity. In the context of the threat of balkanisation of the country on religious lines, *Madhuśālā* aims to define and communicate the Gandhian idea of the Nation.

Notes

- 1 See notably R.A. Dwivedi, *A critical survey of Hindi literature*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Das, 1966; M. Bandopadhyay, *Lives and works of great Hindi poets*, Delhi: BR Publishing House, 1994. F. Orsini, *The Hindi public sphere, 1920-1940: language and literature in the age of Nationalism*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- 2 H.R. Bacchan, *In the afternoon of time, An autobiography*, R. Snell, ed., New Delhi: Viking, 1998, chap. 10.
- 3 The underlining is mine.
- 4 Except otherwise mentioned, all translations are M. Boulton and R. S. Vyas’, *The House of Wine*, New Delhi: Penguins, 1989.
- 5 The underlining is mine.
- 6 In accordance with the rules of classical Sanskrit poetry, in which the “garland” (*mālā*) of “ornaments” (*alankār*) serves to determine the work’s “mood” and “flavour” (*rasa*): See M. Hulin, *Le principe de l’ego dans la pensée indienne classique*, Paris: Boccard - Collège de France, Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1978, pp. 348-50, and E. Gerow, “Indian Poetics”, in J. Gonda, ed., *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. V Fasc. 3, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977.
- 7 Translation by Rupert Snell, in H.R. Bacchan, *In the afternoon of time, An autobiography*, pp. 163-4.

- 8 H. Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions. English Literature and India*, Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993, p. 52.
- 9 Ibid., chap. 2-VI.
- 10 After a first volume titled *Masterpieces of Urdu Ghazals* (New Delhi: Sterling Paperback, 1990), the critic K.C. Kanda edited an anthology of Indian Rubaiyats: *Masterpieces of Urdu Rubaiyats* (New Delhi: Sterling Paperback, 1994), which presents the work of 25 famous poets over more than four centuries.
- 11 Quoted by Kanda, *Masterpieces of Urdu Rubaiyats*, p. 3.
- 12 All translations are Edward Fitzgerald's, in E. Heron-Allen, ed., *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyām*, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1899.
- 13 Translation by Edward Fitzgerald and quoted by Trivedi, *Colonial transactions. English literature in India*, p. 67.
- 14 Translated and quoted by Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions. English Literature and India*, p. 63.
- 15 "Such chronological clustering of so many translators within so few years may seem uncanny. But it is at the same time a part of the over-all pattern of the literary history not only in Hindi but broadly speaking of all Indian languages. Over the last one hundred years or so, Indian languages have received four hundred years of English Literature from Shakespeare down to say Ted Hughes, and in this highly telescoped and elliptical time-wrap, the moment when most Indian languages discovered English romantic poetry in a big way came some time in the 1920s and persisted for a decade or so afterwards. Edward Fitzgerald, who belonged to a late and almost decadent phase of English romanticism, was appropriately received in Hindi towards the fag-end of the reception of the English romantic movement": Trivedi, *Colonial transactions. English Literature and India*, p. 49.
- 16 And so classified by the histories of Literature: See notably P. Gaëffke, *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century*, in J. Gonda, ed., *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. VIII Fasc. 2. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1978, p. 34.
- 17 Michel Hulin defines *rasa* as "the object of aesthetical experience", and quotes Abhinavagupta who evokes the "mental and intuitive perception, which annihilates the distinctions of Time" and which "penetrates the heart directly": Hulin, *Le principe de l'ego dans la pensée indienne classique*, pp. 348-50.
- 18 *Madhu vātā Rāyate madhu kśaranti sindhavaḥ mādhvīrnaḥ santvoṣadhīḥ*, Rīg Veda 1-4-90.
- 19 In *Cooking the World*, Charles Malamoud explicates the value of Fire in Vedic Rituals: the Sanskrit word *pac* means both "to cook" and "to ripen", "to mature". He thus associates sacrifice, which aims at redemption, with cooking which aims at creating, originating what composes the living body: milk, blood etc.: *Cooking the World. Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989/1996, p. 48.
- 20 Malamoud, *Cooking the World. Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, p. 143.
- 21 Notably the prefacer of the English translation: "In stanza 45 the poet has employed the imagery of the tavern and of sacrificial wine to sound a patriotic note, but this is not in Bachchan's best style and its introduction lacks spontaneity. There are few stanzas which have a topical interest only and are definitely didactic; for example, the question of Hindu-Muslim unity is hinted at in stanza 53, the problem of untouchability in 57 and 58 and socialism in 59. Such passages, however, I consider the weakest in the book. They have found a place only because the poet's canvas is wide enough to include the whole of life." G.P. Johari, "Introduction to the First English Edition, 1950", *Madhushala, The House of Wine*, p. xiii.
- 22 J. Brown, *Modern India, The origins of an Asian democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, chap. V.

- 23 *The construction of communalism in colonial North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- 24 See notably Orsini, *The Hindi public sphere, 1920-1940: language and literature in the age of Nationalism*, and V. Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- 25 See C. R. King, *One language, two scripts. The Hindi movement in Nineteenth Century North India*, New Delhi: OUP, 1994.
- 26 "One of the distinctive factors in the evolution of New-Indo-Aryan is the integration of some Turkish and many Arabic and Persian words, resulting from the invasions of the Turko-Afghan conquerors toward the very end of the 10th c. (h) The classical division of the lexicon between *tatsam* (Sanskrit like in their form), *taṭbhav* (such as they have become as a result of historical evolution), *deśī* (local: with no clear etymology) and alien does not really correspond to practical use. Some Persian words are perceived as native (h), and, moreover, many newly introduced words from Sanskrit are perceived as loans": A. Montaut, *A grammar of Hindi*, Munich: Lincom, 2004, p. 6.
- 27 Commenting the Persian poet Baba Tahir, J.T.P. de Bruijn writes: Occasionally, terms are used which belong to the vocabulary of the *qalandars*, a phenomenon which appeared only more than a century later in the history of Sufism. It did play a great part in the development of Sufi poetry, but this also was a development which had not yet begun in the lifetime of Baba Tahir." He then quotes the poet's quatrain :
- 28 "I am that drunk whom they call a "qalandar";
- 29 I have no home, no family, no shelter.
- 30 My days I spend circling your place;
- 31 At night I put my head upon the tiles."
- 32 J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry. An introduction to the mystical use of classical poems*, Richmond: Curzon, 1997, p. 15.
- 33 See notably D.S. Khan, *Crossing the Threshold, Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.
- 34 H.R. Bacchan, *In the afternoon of time, An autobiography*, pp. 144-61; "Bhūmikā" (Preface to the eleventh edition), in *Baccan racnāvālī* Vol. 1, A. Kumar, ed., New Delhi: Rajkamal, 1983, pp. 35-7.

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Attempts at locating the *Rubáiyát* in Indian Philosophical thought

A. Rangarajan
(Independent scholar)

■ 1. Introduction

Peter Hill in his book *Fate, Predestination and Human Action* in the *Mahabharata*, recalls a passage from Bede's *History of the British Church and People*. Hill writes:

*“An unnamed thegn at the table of King Edward of Northumbria compared the life of a man to the flight of a sparrow through a warm banquet hall on a winter night: The bird comes out of the cold darkness, flies for a few brief moments through the light, and disappears into the darkness again. Man's existential plight could scarcely be better put. The ultimate claim of all religions is that it can tell us something about the thegn's earlier and later darkness, for man has rarely been prepared to accept that darkness is all there is.”*¹

Hinduism too has been occupied with the question of what happens in the sparrow's earlier and later darkness. It describes a supernatural order with attendant laws, principles, tenets and recommended practices aimed at lifting us eternally out of our plight. And 'Umar Khayyām has described man's existential plight with great lyrical beauty in his *Rubā'īyāt*. Some of the pre-suppositions about man's place in the supernatural order of Hinduism and 'Umar Khayyām's description of the human condition show striking parallels. This has led many to speculate that Khayyām's verses are loaded with mystical allegory and that it is as amenable to a melancholy-laced hedonistic interpretation as it is to a spiritual one. We will note some of those parallels cited earlier and look at some attempts at embedding Omarian quatrains in Indian Philosophical thought. We would have to go beyond Hinduism and include India's heretic religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivika thought. The last of these offers interesting perspectives for the current discussion.

This is not an easy exercise, I should forewarn, as even a straight annotation and understanding of the Rubaiyat would be difficult; we are trying rather to look at an embedded mysticism to compare it with concepts from Indian philosophical systems which pose considerable difficulties of their own. Nevertheless this empirical exercise can be very rewarding, deepen our understanding of the ideas we find. We must be prepared for a contrast with modernity and secularism, which have been scornful of the existence of a supernatural order, while optimistically supposing that if we make good use of the sparrow's brief flight in warmth and light, we can control the environment. Modern man has invested considerable energy in glittering material progress, discounting any need for help from above. But Indian thought and 'Umar Khayyām view things with unmistakable pessimism.

Evidently we can only outline the broad presuppositions of Indian philosophic thought here, not trace every strand and variant. A broad outline, keeping the philosophic essence of the rubaiyat in mind, will suffice to enable this exercise in comparative thought to yield some key insights. After looking at parallels in the metaphysics we will inquire whether 'Umar Khayyām may have known some Sanskrit works, through translations.

This paper takes the form of a Discussion paper that suggests the directions a more detailed inquiry would take to give further rigour to the ideas referred to here.

■ Discussion on Comparative Thought

The Transient Quality of all human accomplishment:

The *Rubáiyát* paints a clear picture of the ephemeral nature of worldly pursuits and vividly communicates the futility of human endeavour. A similar idea is deeply ingrained in Hindu and Indian thought; it is even a central tenet that pleasure and pain is always alternating putting us through misery. Nothing lasts, and it is freedom from bondage to this cycle that we should strive for, rather than getting engagaing in worldly affairs and enmeshing ourselves further. Many quatrains from the *Rubáiyát* talk about this impermanence. Life is seen as struggle and incessant toil. The Indian religious view on mortal existence could well be summarised, borrowing Khayyām, as 'crawling and coop't we live and die'.

Khayyām on our ephemeral existence:

*The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes – or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon Desert's Dusty face
Lighting a little Hour or two – is gone.*

(Rubáiyát)²

*Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his hour or two, and went his way.*

And to quote from Bhartihari Poems (5th century CE):

*For an instant he is a child,
For an instant a youth delighting in passion,
For an instant he is a pauper,
For an instant fat in prosperity,
Then like an actor,
With withered limbs of old age,
His body covered with wrinkles,
A man at the end of his worldly existence
Falls at the curtain to death.*

(Translated from Sanskrit by Barbara Stoler Miller)³

Fate, Predestination and Determinism

Some of the most striking parallels between Indian philosophic thought and 'Umar Khayyām's portrayal of man's life relate to the ancient philosophical themes of free will, fate, predestination and determinism. Khayyām explains man's plight through determinism:

*'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny With Men for Pieces plays:
Hither and Thither moves, mates and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.*

The theme recurs in other well-known quatrains such as the one that starts "The moving finger writes" and the one that talks about the first morning of creation writing what the last dawn of reckoning shall read. These quatrains suggest that a rigid predestination prevails in the scheme of things.

Indian philosophic thought expounds on this question in a very elaborate manner. Rather than a God who lays out your destiny or an impersonal fate acting through time to determine your life, Indian thought offers a possibility of changing one's destiny through Karma, by living and acting properly through virtue. This is a compromise: one has a fate, and one's actions can determine one's fate in this life or the next. Fate is juxtaposed in unresolved tension with the doctrine of Karma, whilst time is the key for the distribution of Karmic consequences. The only lines in the Rubaiyat that raise such a possibility are these:

*Would we not shatter it to bits — and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Hearts' Desire!*

Destiny and Human Action

*And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to It for help—for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.*

This describes the human condition in extreme terms, with no room for alleviation through the compromise of Karma or some form of human action. No prayer can help. The third heretic religion that will be cited here, Ajivika, holds a similar view on this doctrine. Whilst Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism spoke of freedom and liberation being possible through human action, Ajivika tenets make it clear that Karma has no role. You must patiently wait for liberation until all the cycles of birth and rebirth are finished. Ajivikism speaks of Niyati, an immutable Universal Order that has to play out. Tamil poetry of South India in the 2nd or 3rd Century CE, influenced by Ajivika philosophy, spoke of actually finding comfort in being encapsulated in a Universal Order.⁴ Tamil Ajivika literature did not see it as an imprisonment. Based on this outlook, it preached against all forms of human authority and embraced egalitarianism, suggesting there is no need for a religiously-based hegemony.

Prof. AL Basham writes on Niyati:

The fundamental principle of Ajivika philosophy was Fate, usually called Niyati. Buddhist and Jaina sources agree that Gosala (the founder of Ajivikism) was a rigid determinist, who exalted Niyati to the status of the motive factor of the universe and the sole agent of all phenomenal change.⁵

The Futility of Reason and the Imperfection of Knowledge:

*Why, all the Saints and sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.*

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.*

The Hindu concept of Maya is central when it comes to the imperfection of knowledge gathered through the sense experience. This Hindu doctrine holds that there is something unreal about the world of sense experience. It concludes that imperfect cognition or comprehension must lead to imperfect knowledge. It is essential to recognise this Maya and step out of it, to commence the true spiritual journey. It does not matter for our current discussion what form this liberation takes according to various Indian religions, it could be Moksha or Nirvana. The allegory of the 'Blind Understanding' is powerful here. What is the use of a lamp when you are blind? Acquiring the ability to see (coming out of Maya?) is a precondition to using any source of light. In philosophic terms, the epistemological question is implicit here.

Some of the quatrains of Khayyām are very evocative of the concept of the Maya in their attempts to describe the unreal nature of worldly existence.

*For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.*

Special connotation of Kūza-nāma, drawing close parallels to Indian Philosophies

Two tenets occupy a central place in Indian philosophic thought. One of them, rebirth, is an essential idea in all the Indian religions referred to here. The other is seeing Man and God as the Universal and Manifest forms of the same reality. This occupies a preeminent place in Hinduism. The section of the *Rubáiyát* known as the *Kūza-nāma*, where pots speak allegorically, is especially significant in looking at these parallels.

Transmigration and rebirth.

That we are born again and go through the cycle of births and re-births is seen in the metaphor of the pot becoming earth once again to become yet another pot.

*Then said another – "Surely not in vain
"My Substance from the common Earth was ta'en,
"That He who subtly wrought me into Shape
"Should stamp me back to common Earth again."*

Universal and Manifest forms – The Jeevathma and Paramathma

*And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not:
And suddenly one more impatient cried –
“Who is the Potter, pray and who the Pot?”*

In Hindu thought, man is *Jeevathma* or manifested through life, while God is *Paramathma*, eternally present. The aim of all human action is for the *Jeevathma* to achieve union with the *Paramathma*. That would be Moksha (release). That God and man are made of the same material is reflected in the rich metaphors of the *Kūza-nāma*, in which the earth, the pot and the potter are made of the same stuff. The parallels have been discussed in philosophic discourse; we cannot achieve an exact rigour here for obvious reasons, but we can indicate the fascination. Indian religious views of God range from denial to a very liberal one in which God has a place in the scheme of things and sometimes is subject to Karmic laws and other first principles. Khayyām too invokes God in an ambivalent manner at times chiding him (“With Pitfalls and with Gin beset the road I was to wander in!”), at other times exalting him.

Having thus traced these broad parallels, we will look at three books that have expounded on this idea. As always with *Rubāiyāt* and ‘Umar Khayyām, there is a huge theatre of engagement outside the world of academia, including much of the thinking elite. In this context, India produces many fertile ideas about the parallels, but formal works are rare. The study of the Legacy of ‘Umar Khayyām can benefit from an inclusive approach that includes this thinking, for in some sense it embodies the very essence of Khayyām. The three books discussed below are written by people from diverse backgrounds, and their treatments vary widely.

The three works to be discussed are:

‘Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayam explained’ by Yoganada Paramahansa

Yoganda Paramahansa was a Hindu mystic and Swami who moved to the US in the 1920s when Chicago hosted the World Parliament of Religions. He has a considerable following as a Guru and his book ‘The Autobiography of Yogi’ continues to draw readers from all over. In the 30s and 40s he is supposed to have offered mystical interpretations of the *Rubāiyāt*. His disciple Donald Walters alias Swami Kiriyaanda compiled all these interpretations, edited them and published them as a book bearing the title ‘*Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayam explained*’ in 1994. An earlier version called the ‘*Wine of a Mystic*’ was published around 1950. The interpretations are mystical in nature, much like a Sufi view. The *Rubāiyāt* are

treated as a deep allegory for the soul's romance with God. 'Umar Khayyām is understood to be revealing an inner truth.

The first quatrain's call to wake up is read as a call to step out of ignorance. The stone that puts the stars to flight is interpreted as Spiritual self discipline. Stars are seen as material desires. Vairagya—the determination to undertake penance—is associated with the stone in Indian tradition. We shall see later in Bhartrihari's philosophic poems that the last section that spoke of renunciation is titled Vairagya Sataka. The ignorance alluded to here could be seen as Maya—the world as an illusion.

3.2. *Dust and Soul of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyām by KV Sundaresa Iyer*

This book was published in 1977. Sundaresa Iyer was a practicing lawyer at that time and a great 'Umar Khayyām enthusiast. He has drawn parallels between most of the tenets in Hindu thought and the wisdom in the quatrains, and presents his book as a work of comparative thought. It is clearly the work of an enthusiastic amateur. He has annotated the quatrains and drawn parallels with all the major aspects in Hindu thought described earlier in this paper. He has also drawn parallels with the ideas in the Tamil religious poetic works of Thirumoolar and Pattinathar. In some of the poems of Pattinathar one sees mention of a rigid fate that determines the life of humans. This rigid fate, according to Tamil thought and literature, is written as cranial writing on each man's fore head. Nothing can change it. This is very reminiscent of the moving finger that writes. The Tamil idea of 'Vidhi' is an unmistakable parallel.

In these Tamil works, there is a strong overtone of pessimism and negation towards earthly life. The heretic religions of India mentioned earlier continued to have an influence in South India for several centuries longer than in the North. Ajiviksm, the religion of strict determinism, survived for another 700 years in the South before dying out and merging with Jainism. Sundaresa Iyer's book goes beyond the Sanskrit domain of Hindu thought and includes ideas from Tamil religious works.

The Nectar of Grace by Swami Govinda Thirtha.

This is a voluminous work published in 1941 and talks in detail about 'Umar Khayyām the person, sketches his biography, and interprets his horoscope. His scientific, mathematical and philosophic contributions are discussed, as well as his reception in popular lore. There are extensive references to manuscripts consulted. Over 1000 quatrains of 'Umar Khayyām are cited, cross-referenced to various manuscripts, and translated. The quatrains are classified as follows (page 198):

Theme	Number
Praise of God	59
The Wheel of Time	62
The Youth (Lyrical)	66
Decay and Death	60
The Clay and Cup	37
The Fate	22
The Chastening	193
The Kharabat	138
The Maikana	186
Personal and Polemic	167
Prayers	59
Miscellaneous	47
Total	1096

Swami Govinda Thirtha's work in relation to these manuscripts and sources deserves to be carried further. Before embracing Sainthood he was known as Mr. Datar and was in the service of the Princely state of Hyderabad. From the 14th century, after the South Indian or Deccani Sultanate had broken away from Delhi, many learned men from Persia (modern-day Iran and Iraq) joined the Deccan imperial service, bringing Persian learning and cultural influences with them, and many Persian manuscripts as well. In addition to his knowledge of English and of Indian languages, Swami Govinda Thirtha knew Persian well. He had previously translated the Rubaiyat into Marathi (another Indian Language) and had produced a comparison of the quatrains to the *Narada Bakti Sutra*, an important body of Hindu religious literature.

Swami Govinda Thirtha also finds extraordinary parallels in structure and content between some of the quatrains and the Sanskrit epigrams of Panchatantra, Hitopadesa and Bhartrihari. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to list the actual epigrams and quatrains; that would required a detailed study. Swami Govinda Thirtha suggests that 'Umar Khayyām may have read the epigrams through Arabic translations. The Panchatantra and Hitopadesa were rendered into Arabic by the 8th century. The Chinese pilgrim and traveler I-ching writes about the Bhartrihari, but whether the work itself reached the Arabic or Persian-speaking world is another topic for future research. During that period, the civilizations of Asia greatly enriched one another's knowledge and literature.

Before I conclude this paper I would like to mention something about the Bhartrihari. The work takes its name from King Bhartrihari, who apparently became disenchanted with life when he discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him. He retired to the forest and found himself vacillating between the tranquil life of an ascetic and the pleasures of a sensuous life. He is torn between equanimity and the pulls of passion. Perplexed at

his own condition, his longings and lack of resolve, he concludes that renunciation is the only way out. An overwhelming sense of personal irony leads Bhartrihari to see man's position in the world as paradoxical and transient.

In her commentary on Bhartrihari, Stoller Miller writes:

*"Drunk with the wine of little wealth or some passing enjoyment, a man is deluded by the world; though he experiences the transience of life, he cannot understand the real meaning of time or his absurd position in it. (h) Bhartrihari shows a keen awareness of the paradox involved in enjoining a deluded man to abandon the world of his delusion."*⁶

Much like Khayyām, Bhartrihari's verses reflecting on this tension abound in beauty and philosophic depth:

*If wealth which yields all desires is won,
What then?
If your foot stands on the head of your foes,
What then?
If honoured men are drawn to you by riches' force,
What then?
If man's mundane body endures for an aeon,
What then?*⁷

Conclusion

We have found some broad parallels and metaphysical similarities between Indian Philosophies and the Rubaiyat, but no direct mapping. I would like to conclude on a more reflective note. *The Consolation of Philosophy* was written by Boethius in the 6th century. The fact that it was written in prison before his execution adds much poignancy to this extraordinary book. Man has long looked to philosophy for consolation particularly when he realizes that his existential plight is like of that of the thegn's sparrow. If we look at the consolation offered by the philosophies we have been discussing in this paper, we would see that Bhartrihari is, at best, a contained bitterness invoking certain helplessness. Ajivikism taken along with its Tamil traditions does a better job. It asks for our patience and says that we are part of a universal order. It asks us not to fret or fume. Ajivikism advocates acceptance but not a resignation as the human response to our plight. Omar Khayyām comes along and seems to tell us that, despite the human condition that we face, we can actually be amused. The 'wine' offers the perfect

counterpoise to the ontological labyrinth in which human plight is conceived and perceived. After this, the 'wine' could be removed and even the unique 'structure' would stand, the apparent and elusive absurdity having been tackled!

The ultimate redundancy of the 'wine' makes it easier to read it as a metaphor, which perhaps explains the numerous mystical interpretations. The tables seem to have turned! "Make game of that which makes as much of thee"

Appendix 1

(G.U. Pope's translation of *Kaniyan Poongundranar's Poem – Puranaanuru* 192) (translated in 1906) This is part of the 2 century BC Collection of Poems in Tamil grouped as *Puranaanuru* and belongs to the body of literature called the *Sanga Ilakkiyam*.

The Sages

*To us all towns are one, all men our kin,
Life's good comes not from others' gifts, nor ill,
Man's pains and pain's relief are from within,
Death's no new thing, nor do our blossoms thrill
When joyous life seems like a luscious draught.
When grieved, we patient suffer; for, we deem
This much-praised life of ours a fragile raft
Borne down the waters of some mountain stream
That o'er huge boulders roaring seeks the plain
Tho' storms with lightning's flash from darkened skies.
Descend, the raft goes on as fates ordain.
Thus have we seen in visions of the wise !
We marvel not at the greatness of the great;
Still less despise we men of low estate.*

Notes

- 1 Hill, Peter Manners, *Fate, Predestination and Human Action in the Mahabharata*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001, p.85.
- 2 All the Khayyām quatrains cited are from Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát*.
- 3 B S Miller, *Bhartrihari: Poems*, New York: Columbia University Press 1967, opening page.
- 4 Kaniyan Poongundranar , *Puranaanuru* 192, Tamil collection 2 Century BC- Sanga Ilakkiyam (an English translation of this poem is in the appendix)

- 5 A L Basham, *The History and doctrines of TheAjivikas, A vanished Indian religion*, London: Luzac and Company Ltd, 1951, p.224.
- 6 BS Miller, *Bhartrihari: Poems*, Introduction p. xxii.
- 7 BS Miller, *The Hermit & The Love-Thief*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978, p. 97

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- Basham, A. L. *The History and doctrines of the Ajivikas, a vanished Indian religion*, London: Luzac and Company Ltd, 1951
- Hill, Peter Manners, *Fate, Predestination and Human Action in the Mahabharata*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001
- Sundaresa Iyer, KV, *Dust and Soul of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyām*, Madras: Kalakshetra, 1977
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An ‘Umar Khayyām Database

Jos Coumans

(Independent scholar)

Introduction

There is still a vivid interest in ‘Umar Khayyām and his *rubā’īyāt*: new editions, new translations, and a steady flow of articles in academic journals, magazines and newspapers, not least triggered by the events held in 2009 to commemorate the birth of Edward FitzGerald in 1809 and the first publication of his *Rubáiyát* translation in 1859. This interest has led over the years to an enormous body of documents. It is not unreasonable to estimate the number of editions of the *Rubáiyát* today at 2,000.¹ In his study *In search of Omar Khayyām* (1971), Ali Dashti suggested that more than 2,000 books and articles had been written about Omar Khayyām at that time, which is suggestive of how large the number would be today. Several attempts have been made to catalogue this material. The first was 'A list of English versions and editions of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám,' in the *Bibelot Series* edition of the *Rubáiyát* by Thomas B. Mosher in 1894. This list was updated in subsequent editions of the *Rubáiyát* in Mosher's *Old World Series*. Next we may consider the two volume edition by N.H. Dole in 1896 and of course the bibliography published by A.G. Potter in 1929. More recently bibliographies have been published by C.J. Weber (1959), H. Halbach (1975) and F. Angouráni and Z. Angouráni (2002)², but there is no comprehensive, general survey, either of the numerous editions of the *Rubáiyát*,³ or of the books, articles and other material about Omar Khayyám, Edward FitzGerald or the *Rubáiyát*.

In their recent study, W. Martin and S. Mason (2007) presented an analysis of the way artists have dealt with the imaginative features of the *Rubáiyát*. The analysis, though restricted to editions of FitzGerald's translation, shows the popularity of the book. There are many, many more illustrated and decorated editions. It is evident that Omar Khayyám has played, and still does play, an important role in the Netherland's literary and cultural history, even if no overall statistics are available to back this up. It has sometimes been claimed that Omar Khayyám is a household name in the Netherlands. This is not strictly true, but it is remarkable to see how often and intensively the Dutch have let themselves be carried away by Omar Khayyám. Statistics regarding the publishing of material

relating to the *rubáiyát* are a matter of utmost delicacy, but if we consider for example a total of 63 Dutch editions (including reprints), we can say that the Netherlands, a relatively small country, ranks among the global top ten in *Rubáiyát* production.

The editions of the Rubáiyát of 'Umar Khayyām

The bibliographer collects his data from a wide variety of material and resources: private collections, special collections in libraries and institutions, earlier bibliographies and so on. But however important and helpful a bibliography may be, it is not the proper vehicle for the kind of information we have in mind. After all, what we really want to know, for example, is this:

How many translations of the Rubáiyát exist, how many editions exist of every translation, how often are they reprinted or reissued? In which languages is the work translated, and in how many countries is it published? How many illustrated or decorated editions are there? Here we need statistics as well, regarding artists, time periods and numbers, reprints and reissues. And of course, how large is the FitzGerald corpus in this entire domain.

Statistics should also deal with the number of commercial or officially published editions versus privately printed, limited or pirated editions. How many copies were printed of a specific edition, and in which series was it published? Is it a verse or a prose translation, does it follow the usual rhyme and metrical schemes. Is it a popular edition or an academic, critical, or scholarly edition? Who has contributed to each edition, be it by means of an introduction or in other materials such as forewords, prologues, epilogues etc. And finally, for this moment at least, from which text or source does the translation originate.

For many editions and translations it will probably be impossible to obtain all required data, especially data on publishing houses, as this kind of information is hardly available.

The secondary literature

The number of articles, books and other sorts of publications on Khayyām is even larger than the number of editions of the *rubáiyát*. The questions that we might wish to have answers to, are for instance: how many theses have been published on the subject, what are the most important academic and critical studies, when and where have they been published. What portions of the Khayyāmiana belong to the popular and to the academic domains. Countless shorter articles were published in newspapers and

magazines in the first decades of the 20th century, but there is no decent survey of this material. The online archives of the New York Times for example, give access to hundreds of articles on Khayyām and his *rubā'iyāt*, but as they are not equally relevant, a selection is necessary. There are various other resources to search but first we will have to identify and locate them. This secondary material has even been more neglected in terms of cataloguing than the numerous editions of the *Rubā'iyāt*.

The quatrains

Suppose we want to know whether the quatrains in the manuscript, known as Supplément Persan 823, in the French National Library, have been translated and who is the translator. Or which translators used the Whinfield editions for their own translations? It seems that the French translation by Franz Toussaint was used more than once in Spanish versions published in South-America, but in how many exactly. Which quatrains occur in all of the important old manuscripts? And where can we find the existing translations of these quatrains? It is obvious that a bibliography or library catalogue cannot provide answers to this sort of questions without becoming a multi-volume encyclopedia.

Scholarly or critical editions, such as those by Whinfield, provide references for each quatrain to parallel manuscripts and editions. In these works references are given as footnotes, or as tables with corresponding manuscripts, identifying each quatrain in other manuscripts and editions. But there is no uniformity and in each edition these parallels differ greatly.

To go into this in more detail: The editions of Anet (1957), Arberry (1949, 1952), Christensen (1905, 1920, 1927), Csillik (1934), Dole (1896), Heron Allen (1898, 1899), Kasra (1975), Mahfuz-ul-Haq (1939, 1986), Rodwell (1931), (Roe, 1906), Saidi (1991), Thompson (1906), Tirtha (1941) and Whinfield (1882, 1883), contain tables of corresponding quatrains in, or references to, manuscripts and published editions. For example, for his 1882 translation, Whinfield used the edition of Nicolas (1867), the Lucknow edition (1878), the Bodleian ms. of 865 A.H. and a few smaller collections. Each quatrain in the Whinfield edition has a reference to these collections. Quatrain 1 has N. 4 as a reference code, which means that this first *rubā'i* corresponds with quatrain number 4 in Nicolas' translation. Quatrains corresponding with the Bodleian and Lucknow collections are only indicated with a single letter, B or L. The sources for this translation are only briefly mentioned on page 4-5 in his introduction. For the bilingual edition of 1883, Whinfield extended his translation with material from additional sources, or authorities as he called them. A list is given on page xviii in the introduction. Here Whinfield indicated for each quatrain in his translation in which other authority it can be found, however without giving the corresponding number in that collection, as he did with the

Nicolas quatrains in his earlier edition. If we want to locate each of the Whinfield quatrains in the other authorities, there is a lot of work to be done.

More helpful in this regard are the editions by Christensen. In the *Critical studies* of 1927 Christensen analyzed quatrains from eighteen collections. For each quatrain in this edition not only the authorities are given but also the corresponding number in that collection. All these numbers and references are collected in a separate table. This allows us to identify corresponding quatrains in various authorities immediately.

To illustrate this in further detail, we can give the following characteristics regarding references or tables from a few of the above mentioned editions.

Anet 1957: table, including Cambridge ms. (Arberry 1952); Christensen 1927; Furughi-Ghani 1942; Hedayat 1942; Rosen 1925; Nicolas 1867; E'tessam Zadeh 1934; Guy 1935.

Arberry 1949: list, including FitzGerald 1859 and 1879; Whinfield 1883; Heron-Allen 1898; Rosen 1930; Christensen 1927; Mahfuz-ul-Haq 1939; Furughi 1942. For each quatrain references are given in the text to corresponding quatrains, when available, including quatrain number.

Arberry 1952: table, including Cambridge ms. 604 (1207); Ch. Beatty ms. 658 (1259-60); Bodleian ms. 856 (1460-1); Christensen 1927; Furughi 1942; Ghani anthology. 14th cent.; Nicolas 1867; Qazvini anthology 741 (1341); Rosen 1925; Rosen App. I anthology 930 (1523-4); Rempis anthology 731 (1331); Nafisi anthology ca. 750 (1349); Whinfield 2nd ed. 1901; FitzGerald 1879.

Csillik 1934: four tables, of which the first is the most relevant, including Suppl. Pers. 1417; Anc. Fonds 349; Suppl. Pers. 823; Suppl. Pers. 1366; Suppl. Pers. 1637; Suppl. Pers. 1435.

Heron-Allen 1898: list, including Calcutta Ms. no. 1548; Suppl. Persan 823; Bankipur Ms., Lucknow lithogr. 1894; St. Petersburg lithogr. 1888; Bombay lithogr. 1880; Nicolas 1867; Whinfield 1883; FitzGerald 1859, 1868, 1872, 1879, 1890; De Tassy 1857, FitzGerald (Letters and literary remains) 1889, Dole 1896, Cowell (Calc. Rev.) 1858 and a few others. For each quatrain references are given in the text to corresponding quatrains, when available, including quatrain number.

Heron-Allen 1899: list, including Ouseley Ms no 140; Calcutta Ms no 1548; Lucknow lithogr. 1894; Whinfield 1883; Nicolas 1867; St. Petersburg lithogr. 1888; Bombay 1880; Ms Publ. Lib. Bankipur 1553-4; Suppl. Persan 823; Suppl. Persan 745; Suppl. Persan 793; Suppl. Persan 826; Ancien Fonds 349; Ms Lib. Nawak of Tonk; Cowell (Calcutta Rev.) 1858; De Tassy 1857; Payne 1898. For each quatrain references are given in the text to corresponding quatrains, when available, including quatrain number.⁴

The next step may be to see which sources are dealt with in the various editions. For example, the Lucknow lithographed edition, dated A.H. 1312, is mentioned in Christensen 1905, Heron-Allen 1898 and 1899, Roe 1906, Saidi 1991 and Thompson 1906. The Bodleian MS (Ouseley 140) is mentioned in Heron-Allen 1899, Roe 1906, Christensen 1927, Rodwell 1931, Tirtha 1941 and many others.

We can now easily find the various translations of a quatrain, for example:

Nr. 13 in Heron-Allen (1899) reads:

*Now that there is a possibility of happiness for the world,
every living heart has yearnings towards the desert,
upon every bough is the appearance of Moses' hand,
in every breeze is the exhalation of Jesus' breath.*

This quatrain is nr. 194 in the *Supplément Persan*, nr. 823, nr. 116 in Whinfield, 1883, nr. 2 in De Tassy, 1857 and nr. 4 in the four FitzGerald translations. In Roe (1906) it is nr. 7 and here it reads as follows:

*But lo, without, the year is young and fair,
And yearning hearts to stilly meads repair;
The hand of Musa shines on ev'ry bough,
The breath of 'Isa rises on the air.*

Roe identified this quatrain as nr. 2, in Buch VI, Bodenstein, 1889, nr. 40 in Cadell, 1899, nr. 1, in the 2nd series in Garner, 1897, and nr. 454 in Payne, 1898.

Rodwell (1931) gives for two variants (a and b) of this quatrain as additional authorities: MS, O.R. 10.910 in the British Museum (est. 16th century), MS in the Cambridge Library, MS 906 in the India Office Library, 1811, Lucknow lithograph, 1878, Lucknow lithograph, 1924, Nicolas 1867, Amritsar lithograph, Ouseley MS 140 in British Library, *Supplément Persan*, nr. 1417, Calcutta printed edition of 1836 and Whinfield 1883. Unfortunately, the quatrains in Rodwell are not identified with individual numbers in these authorities, but as we know from Roe that the quatrain in question is nr. 4 in FitzGerald, we can find editions that have comparative tables that link the FitzGerald versions with other authorities.

Probably the most extensive edition, if we look at the number of authorities, is Tirtha 1941.⁵ The bibliography of manuscripts and editions includes 111 works. For each quatrain the number in corresponding authorities is given, but as one quatrain may have more than 50 correspondences it would be a painstaking job to find quatrains from other sources, for example nr. 4 in FitzGerald, in this work.

Another issue, or problem, is the fact that all of these editions use different codes or abbreviations for the same authority. The Bodleian manuscript for instance is 'BDa' in Tirtha, 'O' in Heron-Allen (1899) and Rodwell, 'B' in Roe and 'Bodl.I' in Christensen 1927.

This problem can be solved if we collect every quatrain in a database, including all relevant metadata, such as bibliographic details of the edition in which they are found, the codes for corresponding authorities. Of course, the database should also provide the text of each quatrain,⁶ which should allow us to find all the variants of one and the same, oldest example. In the end we will have a large network of quatrains that are connected to each other.

As there is no definite, limited and established body of quatrains that are undoubtedly Khayyám's, this super table represents a floating corpus of quatrains. To prevent it from extending without limits, there has to be some generally accepted agreement on this question, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

It would take us too far here to suggest every possible index that could be searched, but at least we should be able to retrieve all the parallels in all sources of a certain quatrain in any source, including the texts of these parallels and the details of their sources.

The database

Although we have three different sorts or sets of information, i.e. on the *Rubáiyát*, on secondary material and on the quatrains, they exceed the possibilities of a simple bibliography. In a database, links can be constructed between the items in each set. For example, we should be able to find which translation or edition is the subject of a certain study, and, in the next step, consult the various quatrains in these editions themselves.

For the time being, we will not consider the technical details regarding the database, but there is a number of relevant ownership and management issues.

1. **Contents** – what does the database contain? We can think of (1) manuscripts; (2) editions of the *Rubáiyát*; (3) literature on the *Rubáiyát*, Khayyám, FitzGerald and other translators; (4) parodies, works of art, music, drama, commercial spin-off etc.
2. **Output** – search and select; output on screen and in print.
3. **Form** – it should be a long term project by way of an online database; to be published as a website; the database grows as it is online.
4. **Users** – professional interest: students, professors, researchers; book collectors; libraries, publishers, bookshops and bookdealers; the general public.

5. **Ownership** – who will own copyrights, take decisions, allow access: an institution (library, university or faculty), a society or a private undertaking should hold.
6. **Publisher** – obviously the database will have to be commercially interesting for a publishing firm.
7. **Access**: is it freely accessible or will some form of subscription be necessary?
8. **Additional products** – advanced search options; print and download record lists or selections; links to full text or web-documents; additional data on translators, illustrators, publishers.
9. **Costs** – database software, costs for maintenance, administration, hosting the database.

Conclusion

Not only the number of editions of the *Rubáiyát* tells us something about the popularity of the book, we also need statistics on related material such as critical studies, essays, articles in journals, magazines and newspapers. Another category that provides important clues is that of the parody, of art and drama, and of course the domain of the commercial spin-off: wines, restaurants, bars, mugs, t-shirts, shoes, jewelry etc., that are connected to the Omar Khayyām phenomenon. This material deserves to be documented if we want to understand Omar Khayyām's 'influence' on our society not only in a qualitative way but also statistically. But even this would not be enough: we should be able to compare it to other literary and cultural phenomena. But that, while important, is beyond the scope of this paper.

Notes

- 1 This number is an estimate, based on calculations from data in W.H. Martin and S. Mason, *The Art of Omar Khayyām: illustrating FitzGerald's Rubaiyat*, London, New York: Tauris, 2007, and J. Coumans, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyām: an Updated Bibliography*, Leiden: Leiden University, 2010.
- 2 There are other bibliographic studies, but these are some of the more important. For more information see Coumans (2010).
- 3 A new bibliography is in preparation, see Coumans (2010).
- 4 Of course there are more editions with tables and reference lists, notably in Tirtha 1941, but they are not considered here.
- 5 Swámí Govinda Tírtha, *The nectar of grace: 'Omar Khayyām's life and works*, Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1941.
- 6 Of course, copyright issues need to be respected.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

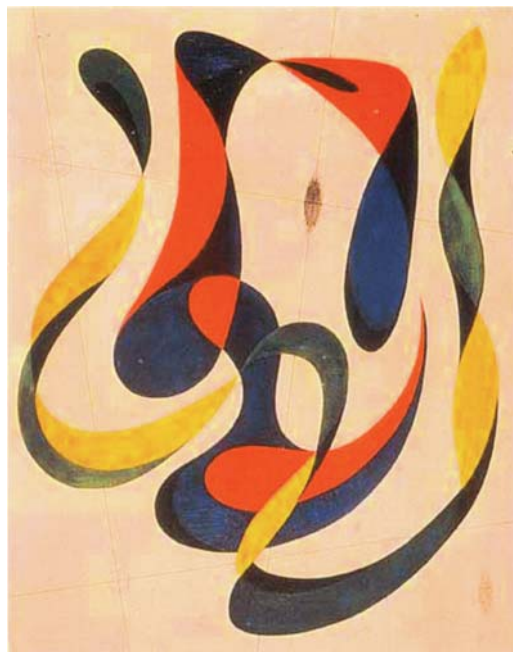


Fig. 5



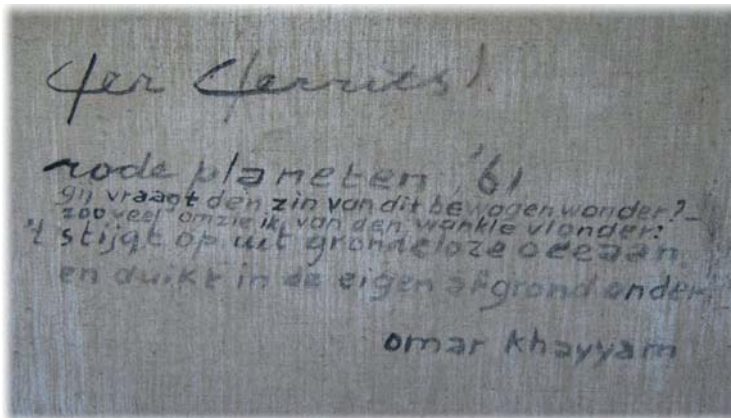
Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Ger Gerrits

rode planeten '61

gij vraagt den zin van dit bewogen wonder? -
zooveel omzie ik van den wankle vlonder:
't stijgt op uit grondeloze oeeaan.
en duikt in de eigen afgrond onder.

omar khayyam

Fig. 9

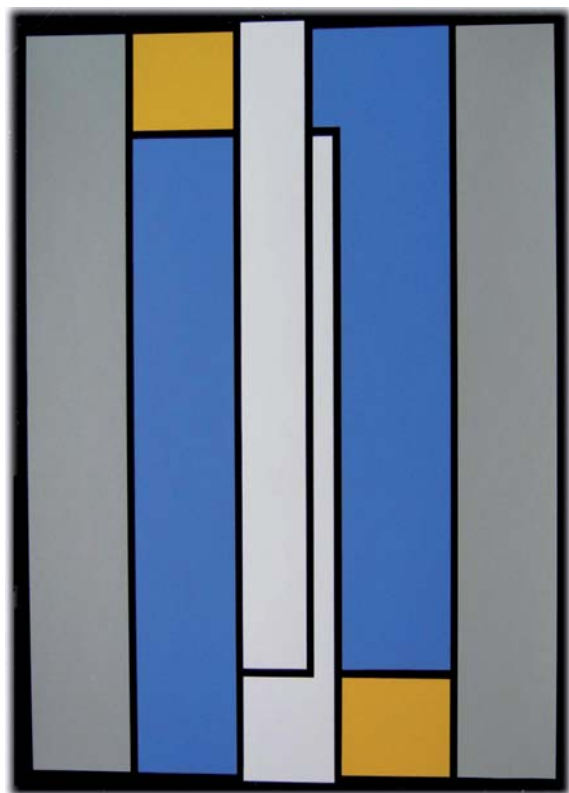


Fig. 10

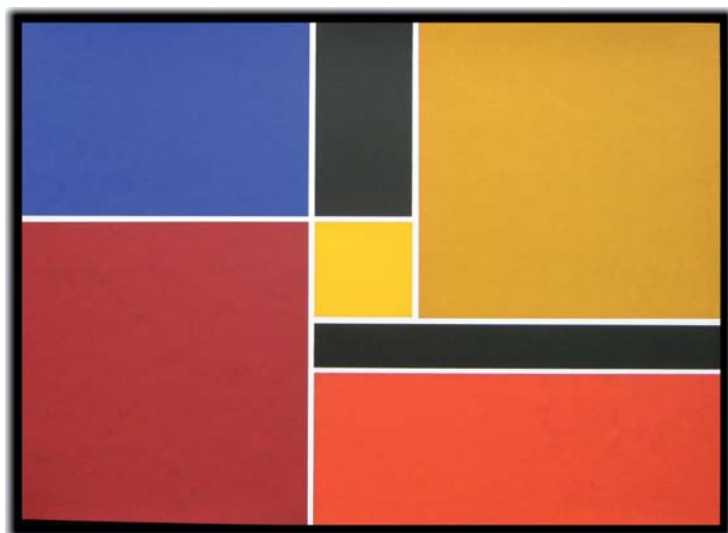


Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

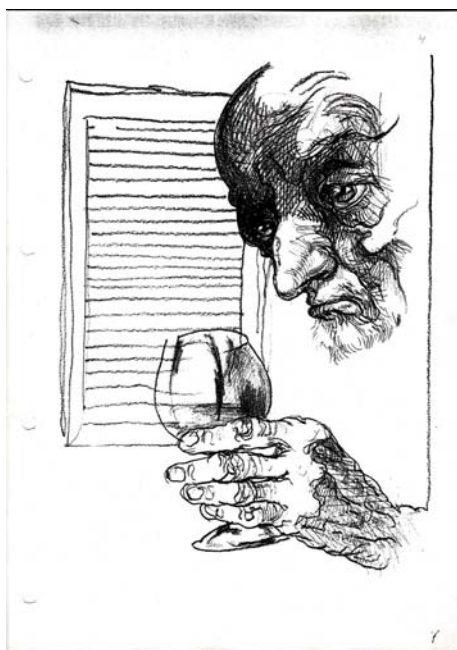


Fig. 15: Alexander Gushchin, illustration of the Ruba'i of Khayyam: "Be happy! You will not last forever..." © A. Guschchin.



Fig. 16: A typical display of Khayyam translations (St Petersburg major bookstore Dom Knigi, 28 Nevskiy Prospekt, photograph © F. Abdullaeva, June 2010).



Fig. 17: One of many poetry series (EKSMO Publishing House), where Khayyam, together with 'Persian Classical Poetry' is included among the Russian poetry: all other volumes in the series are dedicated to the most famous Russian poets (Dom Voennoy Knigi, 20 Nevskiy Prospekt, open 24 hours 7 days a week, photograph © F. Abdullaeva, June 2010).



Fig. 18: Omar Khayyam, Ruba'i, Moscow: Mir entsiklopediy (miniature edition), Avanta+, Astrel, 2011, photograph © F. Abdullaeva



Fig. 19: L.S. Bakst's study of Ida Rubinstein as Cleopatra for the Dyagilev's Ballets Russes in Paris, 1909. Collection of Princes Lobanov-Rostovskie, Konstantinovskiy Palace, Strelna/St Petersburg, photograph © Konstantinovskiy Palace.



Fig. 20: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Slave Market* (1867), Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA, photograph © Bridgeman Art Library.

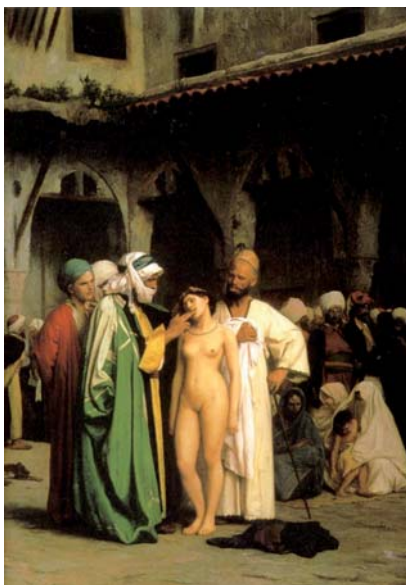


Fig. 21: Collage of different editions of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* with a Russian version, in Butromeevs' *Omar Khayyam and Persian poets of X-XVI centuries*, Moscow: Belyi gorod, p. 363 © Belyi gorod.



Fig. 22: Cover of the edition of Khayyam's quatrains published by the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist party (B. Parmuzin (ed.), Sh. Shamuhamedov (comp.), Tashkent, 1978).

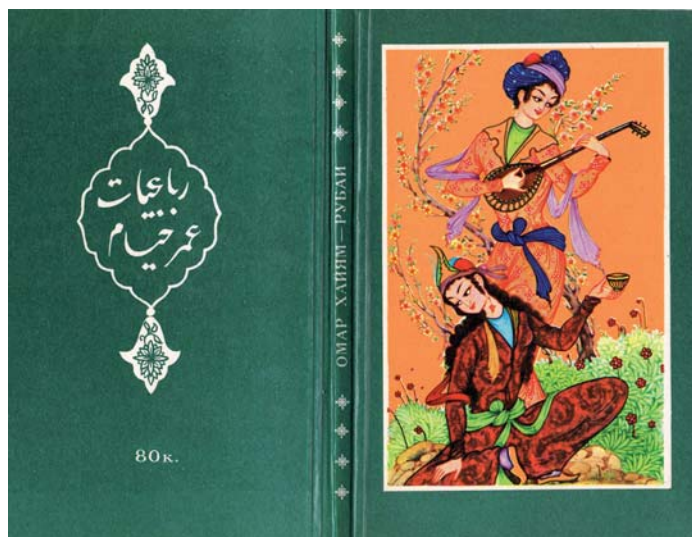


Fig. 23: P. Bunin, reproduced in: Omar Khayyam, How marvellous the face of the beloved, M. Reisner (comp.), Moscow, EKSMO-PRESS, 2000, pp. 46-47 © EKSMO-PRESS.



Fig. 24: P. Bunin, reproduced in: Omar Khayyam, *How marvellous the face of the beloved*, M. Reisner (comp.), Moscow, EKSMO-PRESS, 2000, cover © EKSMO-PRESS.



Fig. 25: I. Stepanova, reproduced in *Omar Khayyam, How marvellous the face of the beloved*, M. Reisner (comp.), Moscow, EKSMO-PRESS, 2008, cover. Stepanova obviously imitated Bunin's style and the whole design of the edition of 2000 © EKSMO-PRESS.



Fig. 26: Vladimir S. Vasil'kovskiy, 'White beauty', reproduced in Omar Khayyam in translations by Kh. Manuvakhov: *Ruba'i*, St Petersburg: Novaya Niva, 2009, p. 11 photograph © Novaya Niva.

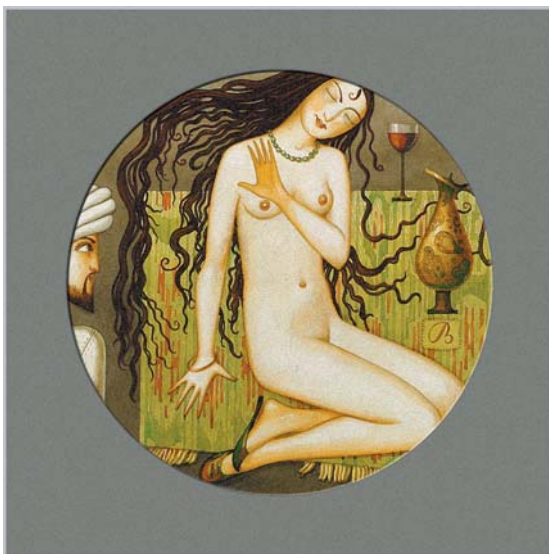


Fig. 27: Vladimir S. Vasil'kovskiy, 'Brothel in desert', reproduced in Omar Khayyam in translations by Kh. Manuvakhov: *Ruba'i*, St Petersburg: Novaya Niva, 2009, p. 93 photograph © Novaya Niva.



Fig. 28: Omar Khayyam, *Drawings, paintings and decoupages by Henri Matisse*, Sergiev Posad: Folio, 2010, p. 113 © Folio.

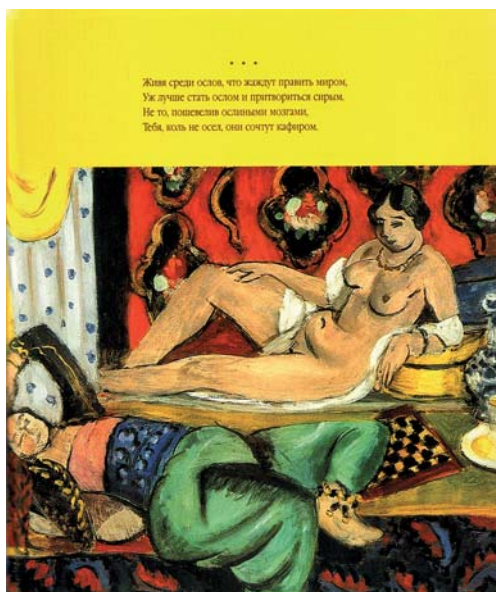


Fig. 29: Omar Khayyam, *Drawings, paintings and decoupages by Henri Matisse*, Sergiev Posad: Folio, 2010, p. 117 © Folio.

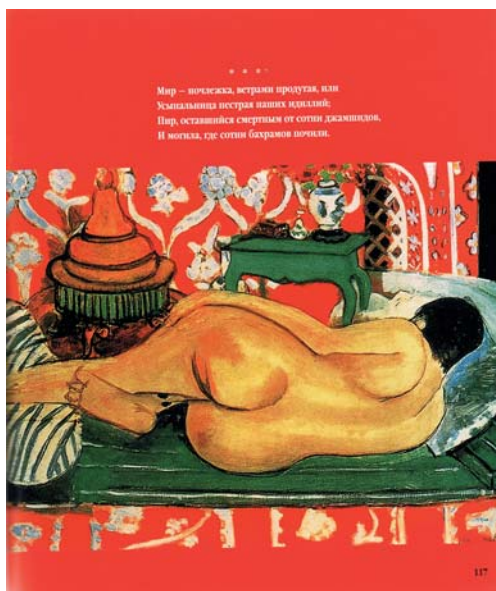


Fig. 30: *Fakhr al-Din Gurgani, Vis and Ramin, Petrozavodsk, 1996, illustr. by M. Romadin, p. 164 © M. Romadin.*



Fig. 31: *Fakhr al-Din Gurgani, Vis and Ramin, Petrozavodsk, 1996, illustr. by M. Romadin, p. 165 © M. Romadin.*

