

**An Annotated Rubaiyat of  
Omar Khayyam**  
By

Laina Farhat-Holzman

Originally a Doctoral Dissertation presented to  
the University of Southern California,  
under the name  
Marlena Farhat, June 1973.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
Historical Background	1
FitzGerald's Method as Translator	8
Omar's Style	27
Sufi or Epicurean	32
<u>THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM</u>	42
<u>ANNOTATIONS</u>	69
Comparative Chart of Quatrain Numbers	121
<u>A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	124
<u>APPENDIX</u>	127
Other Translators	128

## INTRODUCTION

### Historical Background

It is rare indeed when a poet of talent undertakes the translation of a great work of literature with a rendering so successful that it bridges the chasm of time, space, and nation. Such is the accomplishment of Edward FitzGerald, the 19th century Anglo-Irish minor poet and amateur translator, who not only attained world fame through his poetic translation, but revived the reputation of the Persian 12th century astronomer-poet, Omar Khayyám, whose star had dimmed even in his native land. This dissertation will attempt to examine FitzGerald's work with emphasis on the functions, problems, and responsibilities of a serious translator.

The standard editions of the Rubáiyát in English, such as the 1946 Grosset and Dunlap edition, feature the 5th edition of FitzGerald's translation along with the 1st edition, often appended, for comparison. The present volume offers for the first time a new edition of

FitzGerald's work; a composite of all five previous editions, with selection made on the basis of each quatrain's solution to a particular problem of translation posed by the original. In rare cases, a verse is selected on aesthetic grounds, or because it serves to summarize or introduce a quatrain grouping as arranged by FitzGerald. The verses have been annotated with discussions of the mythology, original sources, translation problems, or other data relevant to the translator's task.

At the turn of the century, as a result of FitzGerald's celebrated translation, a considerable body of Rubáiyát literature emerged, most of which was either literal or verse translation of the various available manuscripts. Of this material, the three most useful editions, from the standpoint of the serious student, have been two brought out by Edward Heron-Allen and one by Nathan Haskell Dole. Heron-Allen's contributions were: a facsimile edition of the Bodleian Library manuscript, with transliteration, translation, and notes;<sup>1</sup> and a comparative volume containing the translations of FitzGerald, E. H. Whinfield, and J. B. Nicolas with a source analysis of FitzGerald's translation.<sup>2</sup> Dole's edition is a multivariorum with comparative verse translations by significant scholars in England, France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Facsimile of the MS in the Bodleian Library, 2nd ed. (London: Nichols, 1898), p. xxiii. This work will henceforth be cited as Facsimile.

<sup>2</sup>The Sufistic Quatrains of Omar Khayyam, in Definitive Form Including Translation of E. FitzGerald (101 quatrains) with Edward Heron-Allen's Analysis, E. H. Whinfield (500 quatrains) and J. B. Nicolas (464 quatrains) (New York and London: Dunne, 1903). This work will henceforth be cited as Source Analysis.

<sup>3</sup>Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Multi-Variorum Edition (Boston: Page, 1905), 2 vols.

Of use to the biographer of FitzGerald is the seven-volume Edward FitzGerald: Letters & Literary Remains, edited by his literary executor, W. A. Wright (London, 1902-3). No one to date, however, has provided an annotated edition of FitzGerald's translation which would help to explain the allusions (mythological, historical, social), the puns, the problems of translation faced by FitzGerald, and his editorial decisions and liberties. There has been available only one tantalizing sample of such an approach which consists of a verse or two explicated in the introduction of the late A. J. Arberry's Omar Khayyám: A New Version.<sup>4</sup> Arberry's analysis of FitzGerald's opening verse with the Persian original fully explicated, has served as a model for this edition's approach, and appears in part in the analysis of Quatrain No. 1. FitzGerald did not have available an authentic text as he might have, had he been translating Vergil or Cervantes. What came his way were two manuscripts: No. 140 of the Ouseley MS (at the Bodleian Library) written in Shiraz, A.D. 1460, containing 158 quatrains; and the Asiatic Society's Library MS at Calcutta, containing 516 quatrains, which FitzGerald noted was swelled by all kinds of repetitions and corruptions. The older of the two, the Ouseley, was copied nearly three hundred years after the death of the poet, but at the time that FitzGerald was translating, this text was the oldest available in Europe.

To compound FitzGerald's difficulties, since Persian anthologists had arranged Omar's quatrains in traditional rhyming-word alphabetical order, there was no way to determine the chronological order in which

---

<sup>4</sup>Omar Khayyám: A New Version (London: Murray, 1952).

the verses had been written. Nor was there any grouping of verses according to subject matter -- once again due to the traditional arrangement. FitzGerald, then, was faced with an impossible to authenticate and disparate body of quatrains from which he produced in 1859 a translated volume of seventy-five verses, arranged as a day in the life of the narrator. He later wrote to his publisher:

March 31 1872

He begins with Dawn pretty sober & contemplative; then as he thinks & drinks, grows savage, blasphemous &c., and then again sobers down into melancholy at nightfall....<sup>5</sup>

His decision to arrange the verses in a narrative frame was an editorial decision based, perhaps, on his conception of the responsible translator, which will be discussed at greater length in the following section.

Nine years later (1868) while preparing a second and somewhat expanded edition of one hundred ten quatrains, FitzGerald had access to a third text, that used by the French diplomat-scholar, J. B. Nicolas. A small number of new verses owe their genesis to that third text (the Teheran Lithograph).

By the time of the third edition, which for all purposes remains FitzGerald's final revision (the fourth and fifth scarcely differing), FitzGerald was no longer working from Persian texts, but was instead refining and revising his English translation, often, it is felt by some Persian readers, to the detriment of faithfulness to the original.

FitzGerald's initial task as translator was to understand the nature and poetic possibilities of his genre, the rubai (our quatrain,

---

<sup>5</sup> Joanna Richardson, ed., FitzGerald: Selected Works (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 668.

or epigram). The rubai is a purely Persian invention in the science of prosody. (Most other Persian poetry is written in Arabic meters and forms.) The epigram and the rubai are closely related; both are brief verses which deal concisely, pointedly, and often satirically with a single thought, frequently with a paradoxical or witty climactic turn. The verse unit (bayt) of the rubai is composed of two half-verses (misra), the first, second, and fourth of which rhyme. FitzGerald describes the effect of that third blank-rhyming line as: "Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last."<sup>6</sup> Two bayts (or four hemistichs) in the hazaj meter comprise a single rubai.

Given the problems of the text, an exotic (though Indo-European) language, and a delicate and demanding genre, the success of FitzGerald's translation is surprising. The circumstances surrounding this particular venture are unique, of course, but it is to be hoped that something more can be learned about the mysterious process of poetic translation from analyzing the nature of FitzGerald's work.

FitzGerald's charming biography, "Omar Khayyám, the Astronomer-Poet of Persia," which appeared in his 1868 and 1872 editions, is readily available in every standard edition of the Rubaiyat today, as are biographies of FitzGerald. For our purposes here, it is more important to focus our attention upon the three special conditions which made this celebrated translation possible: British imperialism, the friendship of

---

<sup>6</sup> Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Complete Edition Showing Variants in the Five Original Printings (New York: Crowell, 1921), p. 32. This work is henceforth cited as the "Crowell Edition."

Edward Byles Cowell, and a psychological bond between the 19th century FitzGerald and the 12th century Omar.

It is highly unfashionable in some circles for one to praise British imperialism. By the middle of the 19th century, however, two hundred years of British imperialism had produced at least one positive fruit: a succession of diplomat-scholars of remarkable energy who engaged in Persian studies as a result of contact with India, where Persian was still the literary and courtly language as a holdover from the Mogul Empire. (For a full discussion of this colorful period, see Marzieh Gail's Persia and the Victorians.)<sup>7</sup>

The second factor contributing to FitzGerald's translation was the particular linguistic genius of Edward Byles Cowell (1826-1903), a scholar seventeen years the junior of FitzGerald, who taught his older friend Persian. Cowell suggested that FitzGerald attempt to translate the then little known poet Omar Khayyám, and sent to him from India copies of the two manuscripts which were to be the major sources from which FitzGerald worked.

The third factor appears to be the peculiar psychological bond which linked (at least in FitzGerald's mind) the 12th century Persian astronomer-poet with the 19th century Anglo-Irish dilettante and recluse. That FitzGerald so strongly identified with Omar provided him with the intuition to solve problems not always soluble by scholarship. The result is what may well be considered one of the most remarkable transplantations of poetry from one culture to another. The bond felt by FitzGerald does not seem to have been merely a trick of his

---

<sup>7</sup> Persia and the Victorians (London: Allen & Unwin, 1951).



imagination. Both FitzGerald and Omar were men of gentle nature; introverted yet esteemed by their small circles of distinguished friends; observers of the world, yet withdrawn from it; and skeptical of the political, scientific and religious fanaticisms of their times. They both identified somewhat romantically with great peoples who had been conquered by powerful neighbors (Persia by the Arabs and Ireland by England); and they were both multi-lingual, a faculty that often enhances one's capacity for empathy with the unfamiliar. Insofar as we can tell, these two poets seem to have been cut from a similar emotional and intellectual cloth.

Few single translations have had such widespread repercussions on literature, art, and scholarship as FitzGerald's, and no translation has ever been as widely retranslated as this, in languages as globally far-flung as Icelandic and Malay. FitzGerald's work had a direct effect on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, Richard Burton, Ralph Waldo Emerson, A. C. Swinburne, George Meredith, and James Joyce, not to mention the ever widening rings of influence reaching to the Art Nouveau movement and Oscar Wilde's circle. Meredith himself describes one specific instance of FitzGerald's direct influence -- in this case, on Swinburne. He writes in a letter to the London Times, April 15, 1909, that Swinburne had been reading to him in his cottage at Copsham the quatrains of Omar Khayyám when "suddenly Swinburne ran into the cottage, returned with paper, quill pen, and red ink. In that hour he

had written the first 13 stanzas of 'Laus Veneris', directly inspired by Omar Khayyám."<sup>8</sup>

It is probable that FitzGerald's keen sense of identity with Omar was the key to his success, and that his so-called liberties are almost always justified by a larger view of his responsibility. It is FitzGerald's view of his responsibility which is to be examined here.

#### FitzGerald's Method as Translator

In the perennial wrangling over the issue of FitzGerald's translation of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, it seems that none of the disputants have cared to define their concept of translation. While a set of technical instructions can be translated from one language to another without too much difficulty, poetic translation is not a matter of word for word equivalents. No one familiar with a masterpiece in his native tongue will ever be completely happy with a translation, no matter how parallel. There is always some facet which suffers or is excluded in a translation, since certain native elements of a poem simply cannot be expressed outside of their own home territory. For example, there are native literary or social allusions such as the personal invective and topical humor found in Aristophanes' plays. There are special sound effects, peculiar rhythms, assonances, consonances, double meanings, and puns peculiar to the native language which cannot easily be transposed into another tongue. There are

---

<sup>8</sup> Jamshedji E. Saklatwalla, The Voice of Omar Khayyam: A Variorum Study of His Rubaiyat (Bombay: Qayyimah, 1936), p. 54; and The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Comprising the Metrical Translations of Edward FitzGerald and E. H. Whinfield and the Prose Version of Justin Huntly McCarthy (New York: Nelson, 1900), p. viii.

references to or echoes of native folklore or folkways which cannot be translated in a word or two, but which require a long footnote. If the translator succeeds in capturing one feature, he may well find himself sacrificing another.

FitzGerald was exceedingly sensitive to the manifold nuances of his task. Despite the fact that his translations are rarely verbatim (although a few certainly are), I feel that he has come closer than any other translator to transplanting into English soil the living plant of Omar's verse, and I should like to show that, far from being a casual and indifferent dilettante, FitzGerald was a serious and diligent translator. His seriousness is attested by the following letter to his friend, Cowell:

April 27, 1859

I suppose very few people have ever taken such pains in translation as I have, though certainly not to be literal. But, at all cost, a thing must live, with a transfusion of one's own worse life if one can't retain the original's better. Better a live sparrow than a stuffed eagle.<sup>9</sup>

In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of other critics of FitzGerald who do not themselves set forth some standard for a translator's responsibilities, I will attempt to assess the attributes of a gifted translator with special emphasis on FitzGerald, although not at the expense of a general standard:

1. The translator must have a good working knowledge of the language, and must work with a number of that country's authors in order to understand the poetic possibilities

---

<sup>9</sup>Dole, I, xxxiii.

and variations of the language, and to gain knowledge of the culture's literary history.

2. The translator must be familiar with the political history, folklore, religious theories and practices, and the daily life of the people.
3. He must absorb the work he is translating, digest it, love it, and then be able to give it new birth in his own language.
4. If he has the capacity to identify with the psyche of the original poet, and if he has, in effect, a soul and mind approximately equal to that of his counterpart, then there is a chance that the transplanted work will have the vitality to live.

Most serious translators, I believe, have the first two qualities. Some have the third as well. But only a very few have had the fourth, and those have generally produced the acknowledged masterpieces of translation, works which inspire a foreign audience nearly as much as the originals inspired the native readers. The Dichter brothers' translations of Shakespeare into German, Pasternak's Shakespeare in Russian, Moncrieff's Proust, Chapman's Homer, and FitzGerald's Omar, all share that quality of greatness.

If we examine FitzGerald's first qualification, his working knowledge of the language, we find that he not only had a gift for languages, but he also had a long career in translation, amateur and leisurely though it was. He translated six plays of Calderon, the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, and two Persian works, one of which is still a

serviceable translation of Attár's Bird Parliament. The Jámi was his apprentice piece, for which he relied heavily on Cowell for help. The Attár was his journeyman's effort, a translation good enough to be used still in one of the more recent anthologies of Persian literature in translation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, by the time FitzGerald was ready to tackle Omar, he had a good reading and writing knowledge of Persian, and had made several serious attempts at translation.

His knowledge of Persian literary history was rather good, lacking only in the long epic and romance genres, which were not to his taste and were beyond his reading skill. His impatience with long genres is reflected in a letter to Cowell dated January 25, 1857, when he writes: "I should like to see Nizami's Shirin, though I have not yet seen enough to care for in Nizami."<sup>11</sup>

Nizami (1140-1202) was one of the best, and most difficult, of Persian poets, whose long verse romances predated the great European romances by almost a century.

On March 12 of the same year, he writes to Cowell of his problems with the Bird Parliament of Attár, a long verse narrative which he greatly reduced and translated:

It has amused me...to reduce the Mass into something of an Artistic Shape. There are lots of Passages which--how should I like to talk them over with you!<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> A. J. Arberry, ed., Persian Poems: An Anthology of Verse Translations (1954; rpt. London: Dent, 1964), pp. 160-162.

<sup>11</sup> Richardson, p. 589.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

In the same letter, he dismisses the great mystic-epic poet of Persia, Jelaleddin Rumi, with the following comment:

I don't speak of Jelaleddin whom I know so little of (enough to show me that he is no great Artist, however).

In further testimony to his disinclination for the longer genres, FitzGerald was notorious for his penchant for pruning voluminous literary works down to his notion of honest brevity. His library contained volumes rebound after he had cut out all the "padding."<sup>13</sup>

Despite FitzGerald's limitations, the sources he consulted in his Persian studies covered a considerable range of material. Heron-Allen's "Source Analysis" lists Cowell's interlinear of Hafiz; Sir William Jones' Grammar (which is an extensive anthology of poetry as well); Sa'di's Gulistan, Eastwick's edition; Jámi's Salámán and Absál (which he translated); Attár's Bird Parliament (which he also translated); and Binning's Journal of a Two Year Journey into Persia, India & Ceylon, &c., (FitzGerald's major source of folkloric, local color, and descriptive material on Persia).<sup>14</sup> Another work, which Heron-Allen does not include in his Source Analysis is Müller's "Comparative Mythology" in the Oxford Essays for 1856, which FitzGerald mentions briefly in a letter of April 25, 1856, and then later on March 30, 1857. The universal significance to which he turns Persian mythology in his translation indicates that if Müller was no real source for FitzGerald, he was at least a trigger for the realization of FitzGerald's own gifts in comparative mythology.

---

<sup>13</sup>Dole, I, vi.

<sup>14</sup>Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 40.

In regard to absorbing the work he was reading, it is fascinating to read FitzGerald's letters to Cowell, in which we can trace his growing respect for, absorption in, and finally, identification with, the Persian poet himself. FitzGerald's initial attitude toward things Persian was casual, as when he wrote to Cowell (October 25, 1853): "I have ordered Eastwick's Gulistan; for I believe I shall potter out so much Persian."<sup>15</sup> In the same letter, he complains about reading another Persian work, The Gardener and the Nightingale, which he found "difficult enough even with Jones' translation."

Bit by bit, however, as he warmed to the task of translating the Persian mystic poets Jámí and Attár, FitzGerald's enthusiasm and absorption poured forth in his letters to Cowell. FitzGerald regaled him with anecdotes and delightful tales from Persian folklore and chronicles. He used Persian phrases in his own speech as when he referred to the burned house of a mutual friend as kharáb (Persian for ruined). The letters were soon filled with tentative fragments of his translation of the Attár Bird Parliament. The evidences of keen self criticism and the beginnings of a philosophy of translation are apparent in the following letter:

March 12, 1857

Meanwhile also I keep putting into shape some of that Mantic Bird Parliament which however would never do to publish. For this reason; that anything like a literal Translation would be, I think, unreadable; and what I have done for amusement is not only so unliteral, but I doubt unoriental,

---

<sup>15</sup> Richardson, p. 574.

in its form and Expression, as would destroy the value of the Original without replacing it with anything worth reading of my own.<sup>16</sup>

In the same letter, FitzGerald then admits to a practice that he was to use once more, to such good effect, on the Omar translation -- the practice of extracting the grain from the chaff. "It has amused me... to reduce the Mass into something of an Artistic Shape." This letter goes on to produce a flippant remark which has been used by FitzGerald's critics to his detriment ever since:

It is an amusement to me to take what Liberties I like with these Persians, who (as I think) are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them.

The rest of the paragraph offers a tentative critique of several major Persian poets, whom FitzGerald admits to know but superficially, yet he acknowledges that Hafiz is "the best Musician of Words" and that Hafiz and "old Omar Khayyám ring like true Metal." Yet the cavalier dismissal of the Persians has been used as an indication of FitzGerald's "liberties." When taken in context and seen as an attitude (if ever serious) which changed as he gained reading facility in Persian, one can see the growth which took place.

FitzGerald furthermore appeared to suffer from periodic embarrassment at showing deep feeling or sentiment. It is as if he would find himself being emotionally "taken over" by his Persian world of the imagination, and he would pull back, either by belittling himself, cutting the awesome Omar down to size by calling him "old Omar," or by some mildly sarcastic remark. This is, after all, the same man who

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 589.



celebrated the Jubilee of Queen Victoria by leaping into a swimming pool at the boom of the signal cannon, singing "God Save the Queen" as he and his friends thrashed about in the water.<sup>17</sup>

In a letter to Cowell dated June 5, 1857, FitzGerald discusses his first attempts at translating from Omar, undertaken in an environment not unlike that in which the Persian poet had worked:

When in Bedfordshire I put away almost all Books except Omar Khayyam!, which I could not help looking over in a Paddock covered with Buttercups and brushed by a delicious Breeze, while a dainty racing filly of W. Browne's came startling up to wonder and snuff about me.<sup>18</sup>

He then runs off what was later to become Quatrain No. IV into "Monkish Latin...retaining the Italian value of the Vowels, not the Classical."

Tempus est que Orientis Aura mundus renovatur,  
quo de fonte pluviali dulcis Imber reseratur;  
Musi-manus undecumque ramos insuper splendescit;  
Jesu-spiritusque Salutaris terram pervagatur.

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

Since the Rubáiyát was his first totally independent effort at Persian translation, he must have felt uneasy with Cowell half a globe away. The Latin may have served as a crutch for him because Latin, after all, brought with it all the security of a schoolboy discipline mastered.

As the work on the Rubáiyát progresses, the note of personal identification begins to surface:

---

<sup>17</sup>Gail, p. 139.

<sup>18</sup>Richardson, p. 597.

July 1, 1857

June over! A thing I think of with Omar-like sorrow. And the Roses here are blowing--and going--as abundantly as even in Persia.<sup>19</sup>

His preoccupation with Omar even creeps into his letters to friends other than Cowell. In a letter to his friend, George Borrow (June 1857),<sup>20</sup> he not only discusses his newly received Calcutta MS, but even dashes off a quatrain in Persian for him.

In a letter to Cowell, FitzGerald defends his kinship feeling for Omar:

December 8, 1857

But in truth, I take old Omar rather more as my property than yours; he and I are more akin, are we not? You see all his Beauty, but you don't feel with him in some respects as I do.<sup>21</sup>

We catch a glimpse of his initial working method -- thinking on his feet while walking in his garden -- in the following letter:

July 14, 1857

Have I previously asked you to observe 486, of which I send a poor Sir W. Jones' sort of Parody which came into my mind walking in a Garden here; the rose is blowing as in Persia? And with this poor little Envoy my Letter shall end. I will not stop to make the Verse better.

I long for wine! Oh Saki of my Soul,  
Prepare thy Song and fill the morning Bowl;  
For this first Summer month that brings the Rose  
takes many a Sultan with it as it goes.<sup>22</sup>

Some years later, Cowell described FitzGerald's working style:

---

<sup>19</sup>Richardson, p. 600.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 601.

<sup>21</sup>Heron-Allen, Facsimile, p. xxiii.

<sup>22</sup>Richardson, p. 601.

I am quite sure that he did not make a literal prose version first; He was too fond of getting the strong, vivid impression of the original as a whole. He pondered this over and over afterwards, and altered it in his lonely walks, sometimes approximating nearer to the original, and often diverging farther. He was always aiming at some strong and worthy equivalent; verbal accuracy he disregarded.<sup>23</sup>

FitzGerald's philosophy of translation was serious, despite his self-protecting flippancies about "amusing myself." He never insisted that his method was the correct one, or the only one; he simply felt that it had valid justification and that the results met an unfilled need. In a letter to Cowell, he discusses the problem of translating Aeschylus:

May 7, 1857

Well, I have not turned over Johnson's Dictionary for the last month, having got hold of Aeschylus. I think I want to turn his Trilogy into what shall be readable English Verse; a thing I have always thought of, but was frightened at the Chorus. So I am now; I can't think them so fine as People talk of; they are terribly maimed; and all such Lyrics require a better Poet than I am to set forth in English. But the better Poets won't do it; and I cannot find one readable translation. I shall (if I make one) make a very free one; not for Scholars, but for those who are ignorant of Greek, and who (so far as I have seen) have never been induced to learn it by any Translations yet made of these Plays...I really think I have the faculty of making some things readable which others have hitherto left unreadable.<sup>24</sup>

In his preface to Agamemnon, FitzGerald further illuminates his sense of the translator's responsibility:

I suppose that a literal version of this play, if possible, would scarce be intelligible. Even were the dialogue always clear, the lyric Choruses, which make up so large a part, are so dark and abrupt in themselves, and therefore so much the more conscientious translator must not only jump at a meaning,

---

<sup>23</sup> Heron-Allen, Facsimile, p. xxxii.

<sup>24</sup> Richardson, p. 597.

but must bridge over a chasm; especially if he determine to complete the antiphony of Strophe and Antistrophe in English verse.

Thus encumbered with forms which sometimes, I think, hang heavy on Aeschylus himself; struggling with indistinct meanings, obscure allusions, and even with puns which some have tried to reproduce in English; this grand play, which to the scholar and the poet, lives, breathes, and moves in the dead language, has hitherto seemed to me to drag and stifle under conscientious translation into the living; that is to say, to have lost that which I think the drama can least afford to lose all the world over. And so it was that, hopeless of succeeding where as good versifiers, and better scholars, seemed to me to have failed, I came first to break the bonds of Greek Tragedy; then to swerve from the Master's footsteps; and so, one license drawing on another to make all of a piece, arrived at the present anomalous conclusion.<sup>25</sup>

In the same preface, FitzGerald proposes what appears as our previously listed fourth qualification for the inspired translator:

For to re-create the Tragedy, body and soul, into English... must be reserved--especially the Lyric part--for some Poet, worthy of that name and of congenial Genius with the Greek. Would that every one such would devote himself to one such work! whether by Translation, Paraphrase, or Metaphrase, to use Dryden's definition, whose Alexander's Feast, and some fragments of whose Plays, indicate that he, perhaps, might have rendered such a service to Aeschylus and to us. Or, to go further back in our own Drama, one thinks what Marlowe might have done; himself a translator from the Greek; something akin to Aeschylus in his genius...

Other scholars and critics have recognized in FitzGerald's approach a valid method of translation. Professor Charles Eliot Norton, the first American reviewer of the FitzGerald translation, grapples with what he considered an inadequate definition of translator in his article in the North American Review, October, 1869:

FitzGerald is to be called "translator" only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic trans- fusion of a poet's spirit from one language to another, and the re-presentation of ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own, but perfectly

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 387.

adapted to the new conditions of time, place, custom and habit of mind in which they reappear....It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction; not a translation, but a re-delivery of a poetic inspiration.<sup>26</sup>

Whinfield, who was one of the best translator-scholars of the Rubáiyát after FitzGerald, acknowledges FitzGerald as an incomparable master, and quotes the Arabic Hadis: "The business of a messenger is simply to deliver his message." "The translator," says Whinfield, "must try to correspond."<sup>27</sup>

Heron-Allen's scholarly "Source Analysis" of FitzGerald's translation goes far to show that what appears to be FitzGerald's overly free treatment of his material and changes to the extent of invention are really nothing of the sort. FitzGerald's efforts can be seen in terms of his conception of translation. Heron-Allen writes:

In addition to being a remarkable paraphrase of Omar's incomparable quatrains, it is a synthetical result of our poet's entire course of Persian studies.<sup>28</sup>

Of the quatrains which FitzGerald translated, Heron-Allen determined that forty-nine were faithful paraphrases of single quatrains to be found in the Ouseley or Calcutta manuscripts, or both; forty-four could be termed "composite" quatrains, made up of several different verses; two were inspired by the Nicolas Tehran lithograph and translation; two were directly traceable to Attár's Bird Parliament; two were

---

<sup>26</sup>Dole, I, lii-liii.

<sup>27</sup>Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 132.

<sup>28</sup>Edward Heron-Allen, Some Sidelights on Edward FitzGerald's Poem (London: Nichols, 1898), p. 32.

inspired by Omar but influenced by Hafiz; and three which appeared in the first and second editions were later suppressed by FitzGerald, and Heron-Allen was unable to trace their source.<sup>29</sup>

It seems, then, that FitzGerald can be established as a conscientious, albeit unorthodox, translator, and we may reconstruct what he probably felt were his responsibilities toward Omar as follows:

1. Since Omar was virtually unknown to all but a few European orientologists, FitzGerald's first task was to introduce the poet to a new audience. As he was not working with an authentic text, there was no reason to produce a ponderous and dull verbatim translation of each quatrain. To make it readable, editorial pruning would be necessary.
2. Since FitzGerald felt keenly that his talent lay in making accessible and exciting a translation which pedantic scholars would render forbidding to the casual reader, his primary concern was to show Omar's contemporary as well as timeless relevance.
3. FitzGerald apparently felt that the best way to introduce his poet to a new public would be by way of what we would today call a "retrospective," ( a term we borrow from the graphic art world since literature has no counterpart). A retrospective is a manner of exhibiting the work of a graphic artist so that a viewer can see at a glance that artist's chronological development and subject matter groupings. This is an excellent way of presenting unfamiliar or difficult material comprehensibly.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Since no one knows the chronological order in which Omar wrote his verses, FitzGerald imposed an artificial time sense on the material by arranging the quatrains within a time span of dawn to midnight, or one day in the life of the "narrator." He then provided a sort of continuity not found in the Persian manuscripts by grouping his material in subject-clusters. FitzGerald commented on the order he imposed on the manuscript in his introduction when he noted:

As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubaiyat follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme--a strange succession of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the "Drink and make-merry," which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original.<sup>30</sup>

Heron-Allen, in assessing the subject matter of the entire number of quatrains from which FitzGerald drew his translation, without assigning proportions categorized them as follows:

1. Shikayat-i rozgar (wheel of heaven, loss, injustice)
2. Hajw (hypocrisy, impiety of the pious, ignorance of the learned)
3. Firakiya wa Wisaliya (love poems, the sorrows of separation and joys of reunion with the Beloved, earthly and spiritual)
4. Bahariya (spring songs, garden songs)
5. Kufriya (irreligious and antinomian utterances, bacchanalian defiance)
6. Munajat (addresses to the Deity for forgiveness and release from self).<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Crowell edition, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 133.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Verse Number, 5th Edition</u>
Dawn	I to III
New Year, spring songs	IV to X
Picnic in the wilderness	X to XII
Worldly folly	XIII and XIV
Garden, field, desert	XIV to XVIII
Transmigrations of souls, metamorphosis	XIX and XX
Dust, beneath the dust	XX to XXVI
In like water, out like wind	XXVII to XXX
The riddle	XXXI to XXXV
The speaking clay	XXXVI to XXXIX
The cup - tulip - cypress - cup	XL to XLIII
The body, a clay carcass	XLIV and XLV
Vast space and time	XLVI and XLVIII
Brief space and time	XLIX to LIV
Reason and logic	LV to LIX
Religion and drink	LX to LXIII
Word from beyond	LXIV to LXVII
Divine games	LXVIII to LXX
Predestination (the moving finger)	LXXI to LXXV
Blasphemy quatrains (anti- predestination)	LXVIII to LXXXI
Kuza-Nama (pot saga)	LXXXII to XC
Vineyard burial	XCI and XCII
Dishonor	XCIII to XCV
End of spring, youth, the day	XCVI to CI

FitzGerald took certain liberties in his translations of individual verses which would have been unthinkable if the translation involved an authenticated text. In this case, however, he took the obviously differing manuscripts as license to occasionally depart from his main text, the Ouseley MS, for the sake of the overall project. At times he combined the material of several related quatrains into one, expanded one into two or more verses, paraphrased, or emphasized historical or mythological allusions beyond the reference in the original with which a European reader might be unfamiliar. He even provided a few verses of his own, such as No. 40 in this edition, but only by way of linking subject clusters. Heron-Allen tells us that FitzGerald brought the



whole body of his Persian studies to bear in his translation.<sup>32</sup> He was not, after all, just translating the familiar Vergil, but, rather, the Persian Omar, an unknown poet of an unfamiliar culture.

An example of one quatrain which inspired two quite different translations by FitzGerald is the following original verse literally rendered by Heron-Allen:

Every day I resolve to repent in the evening,  
 To repent the brimful goblet and the cup.  
 But now that the season of roses has come, I cannot repent!  
 Permit us to repent our repentance in this season, O Lord.<sup>33</sup>

FitzGerald first translates this as verse No. VII of his first edition:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
 The Winter Garment of Repentence fling:  
 The Bird of Time has but a little way  
 To fly--and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

His second translation appears as verse No. LXX of the first edition:

Indeed, indeed, Repentence oft before  
 I swore--but was I sober when I swore?  
 And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand  
 My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

At first glance, No. VII seems further from the original Persian verse than No. LXX, but this is not necessarily so. The latter verse is much more literal. The former one, however, is just as true to the spirit, and, furthermore, provides allusions otherwise unavailable to a Western reader. In an attempt to analyze this verse as FitzGerald might have done, we offer the following:

"Repentence" is the key word in the original, followed by the phrase "season of roses" (*fasl-e gol*), which is as powerfully emotive to a Persian as is Chaucer's "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote" to

<sup>32</sup> Heron-Allen, Facsimile, p. 296.

<sup>33</sup> Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 49.

an Englishman. FitzGerald captures the headiness of the Persian spring following upon the suffering of the snowy winter; he compares for us our own Lent/Easter complex and the Moslem Rámazán/Nowruz (fasting month/Vernal Equinox-New Year) celebrations in his "...In the Fire of Spring/ The Winter garment of Repentence fling." The Fire of Spring is not only metaphorical for youth and warm blood, but is a literal reference to real fires--the bonfires of Persian Spring festivals which parallel the old fire wheels in ancient Britain which were rolled down hill to symbolize the return of the sun after winter. The Bird of Time is, perhaps, either the fire-restored phoenix, or the nightingale (the rose's perennial beloved) of the preceding verse. Altogether he gives us a great deal of the feeling which would move the Persian reader, but which is not apparent in a literal translation.

His second rendition of this verse is far more subdued, as befits its position at the thoughtful conclusion of the narrator's day, and, perhaps, life. The tapestry of Persian allusion is already woven; therefore, he need only deal directly with the verse itself. The word "repentence" receives first line attention, with "I swore" in the second line to cover the original's "I resolve." The brimful goblet and the cup become "was I sober when I swore?" which is an equivalent reference to heavy drinking. FitzGerald thereby doubles "I swore" and gives us "Repent" and "Penitence," much like the "repent our penitence" of the original. He fails to provide as many variations on "repent" as Omar, but the humor is nonetheless present. "Rose-in-hand" is a tangible "season of roses." The threadbare penitence gives us the "every day I resolve," which is threadbare from abuse. All in all, this second

translation is a satisfactory parallel to the original, but it is fortunate that the more dazzling translation, so rich in allusion, appears first to capture the reader's immediate interest.

On occasion, FitzGerald mis-translated a word, thereby throwing askew an entire verse. In one such case, which appears as No. 60 in this edition, he was later corrected by Cowell, but chose not to amend his error. The resulting translation, however, does not produce an entirely different irony than that intended by the original, which follows:

Yesterday, whilst drunk, I was passing a tavern,  
 I saw a drunken old man bearing a vessel on his shoulder.  
 I said, "Old man, does not God make thee ashamed?"  
 He replied, "God is merciful, go, drink wine!"  
 (Literal translation, Heron-Allen)<sup>34</sup>

FitzGerald has it:

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
 Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape  
 Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and  
 He bid me taste of it; and 'twas--the Grape!

The mistaken word is piri (old man), which FitzGerald read pari (fairy). Omar's thrust at hypocrisy (the drunken youth scolding the drunken old man) becomes in FitzGerald's verse a countermanding of a religious ordinance (an angel bearing forbidden wine). The similarity of the verse lies in the ironic reversal: an old man, who should represent wisdom and piety, urging the already drunken youth to drink more wine; and the suggestion of an angel-shaped creature, a traditionally divine messenger, as a wine-bearer. Even with the mistaken word, however, FitzGerald transmits the ironic incongruity.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

The *Kuza-Nāma*, or "Pot Saga," is one of several examples of FitzGerald's expansion of a few quatrains into an entire digression. Verses 82, 83, and 87 in this edition are all derived from one original, which is discussed in the annotation to our quatrain No. 87.

Examples of FitzGerald's contracting of two or more verses into one can be found in such verses as our Nos. 39, 12 (the famous *Loaf of Bread and Flask of Wine* verse), 74, 100, and several others. In each case, the "mashing together" as he calls it, is justified by the editorial confrontation of verses sufficiently alike to be variants of one original. Our verse No. 39, for example, is FitzGerald's contraction of the following two verses which appeared in the *Calcutta MS*: (Literal translation of Heron-Allen.)

I pondered over the workshop of a potter;  
 In the shadow of the wheel I saw that the master, with his feet,  
     Made handles and covers for goblets and jars, <sup>35</sup>  
 Out of the skulls of Kings and the feet of beggars.

I made my way into the abode of the potters of the age,  
 Every moment showed some new skill with clay;  
     I saw, though men devoid of vision saw it not,  
 My ancestors' dust on the hands of every potter. <sup>36</sup>

There is no way of being certain that these verses are variants of one original, or that one is a modification of the other, or, for that matter, that they are Omar's intentional variations on a theme. Therefore, FitzGerald, in contracting them, is within his prerogative as editor.

FitzGerald, then, can be seen as a conscientious translator who was confronted with a difficult and delicate task. He did not consider his

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

method definitive; he hoped that others who followed him would provide scholarship and analysis. But he was correct in believing that before the scholars dissect a foreign work, the poetic gardener must get to it first to assure it life in its new ground. Heron-Allen's assessment of FitzGerald's work still holds: "A translation pure and simple it is not, but a translation in the most classic sense of the term it undoubtedly is."<sup>37</sup>

### Omar's Style

At the time that FitzGerald translated from the Persian, no one knew for certain which verses attributed to Omar were genuine, and which were either scribal variants, scribal emendations, or actually scribal inventions masquerading as Omar's verses. FitzGerald was fully aware of this problem when he worked with the Ouseley MS and later the Calcutta MS and the Tehran Lithograph used by the French translator, Nicolas. (Several of FitzGerald's editorial choices are illustrated in my notes to Quatrains Nos. 8 and 19.) It was, furthermore, apparent to scholars in the field that the older the manuscript, the fewer the quatrains, with the Ouseley having the fewest quatrains of all. It seems that a number of creative scribes had been at work, adding to Omar's opus. At one point, a 19th Century scholar, Mrs. Jesse Cadell, collated all the verses in all the manuscripts collected in Europe, and found some 1,200 quatrains attributed to Omar. Then the pendulum swung the other way when European scholars, led by the Russian, Zhukovsky, began to

---

<sup>37</sup> Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 133.

eliminate quatrains as spurious until almost nothing was left, and there was serious doubt that Omar ever wrote verse at all.<sup>38</sup> The discovery in the 1940's of two manuscripts older than the Ouseley MS restored beyond serious question Omar's claim to authorship, according to A. J. Arberry, who edited and translated the newly discovered material in his Omar Khayyam: a New Version, London, 1952. Without these new discoveries, one could only speculate about the style of Omar. Some of the speculations, however, were amazingly close to the mark. In Edward Cowell's article for the Calcutta Review, published in 1857, he assesses Omar's style as follows:

Every other poet of Persia has written too much,--even her noblest sons of genius weary with their prolixity. The language has a fatal facility of rhyme, which makes it easier to write in verse than in prose, and every author heaps volumes on volumes, until he buries himself and his reader beneath their weight. Our mathematician is the one solitary exception. He has fewer lines than Gray.<sup>39</sup>

Cowell was certainly correct that Omar does not bury us with a torrent of words as many Persian authors do, but in this regard Omar is not a unique figure. There have been other epigrammatic writers in Persian literature, both before and after Omar. The rubai genre demands terse expression in which every word counts. As for the number of lines that Omar wrote, Cowell was evidently anticipating the work of the Russian school when he attributes to Omar so few lines. If Omar had written so little in his lifetime, his name would not have come down to us at all as a poet. Actually, according to medieval Persian

<sup>38</sup> A. J. Arberry, Classical Persian Literature (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> Dole, I, xix.

anthologists, his work enjoyed considerable popularity for a period after his death. That so many copyists added their own work to his opus indicates that his name carried considerable prestige.

The early 20th century orientalist, R. A. Nicholson, assumed that the work of the real Omar was impossible to ascertain. Even so, those verses attributed to Omar had a character sufficiently distinguished to warrant FitzGerald's attention. Nicholson writes:

The collection attributed to Omar Khayyám resembles the Greek Anthology in being the work of various more or less eminent hands, known and unknown, early and late. The extent of Omar's share in it is very uncertain. Very few of the Rubá'iyat can be definitely assigned to him, and a great number of them cannot possibly be his; but, taken together, they present characteristic ideas with such simplicity and elegance that we may excuse FitzGerald for having made their reputed author by far the most famous and popular of all Persian writers in the western literary world.<sup>40</sup>

With the acquisition of the two old manuscripts reported by Arberry, we now have a much firmer picture of the real Omar. Arberry tells us:

Even the most superficial perusal of Omar's poems makes it abundantly clear that he was no friend of the Sufis, whom he both parodies and directly attacks in a number of places ...Omar is above all other things a poet of rationalist pessimism; but unlike the majority of pessimists, he never takes himself or his views too tragically, and therefore his style is lightened and enlivened by a very delicate sense of humour.<sup>41</sup>

The question of Omar's religious philosophy enters a discussion of style only insofar as it affects the tone of his verses. According to Arberry, the few pious-minded verses were not typical of the poet and

---

<sup>40</sup>R. A. Nicholson, Tales of Mystic Meaning (New York: Stokes, n.d.), p. xii.

<sup>41</sup>Omar Khayyám: A New Version, pp. 26-27.

might have been dashed off to show that he could do it as well as the best. On the other hand, they might have been the product of his old age, or they might have been later scribal additions. Whatever the case may be, genuine religious feeling and irony are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As discussed at greater length in the next section, it is not necessarily correct to assume a partisan position in regard to religious attitudes.

FitzGerald apparently took the view that Omar, like himself, could show a mocking face to the world and yet conceal existential anguish. In his attempt to capture what he considered to be the essence of Omar's style, he emphasized the gaiety, gentle humor, love of pun and parody, and (despite Omar's anti-intellectual pose) intellectual complexity of the older poet. These are the very qualities which Arberry, by way of scholarship, also considered most characteristic of Omar.<sup>42</sup>

Omar's occasional wistfulness and melancholy are not listed by Arberry as characteristic of Omar, yet these qualities lie like a patina over the whole of FitzGerald's translation. FitzGerald, however, tells us that he found the quatrains in the Bodeleian MS to be "a strange succession of Grave and Gay,"<sup>43</sup> an observation which can be substantiated. It is occasionally FitzGerald's tendency to subdue the more rollicking verses and to escalate the melancholy to anguish or anger; yet such intensification is infrequent, and he did have models for his treatment. An example of Omar as mocker can be seen in the following verse:

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Crowell edition, p. 32.



There is a cup which wisdom loud acclaims,  
 And for its beauty gives it a hundred kisses on the brow,  
 Such a sweet cup, this Potter of the World  
 Makes, and then shatters it upon the ground.

(Heron-Allen literal translation of  
 No. 84 Ouseley Manuscript)<sup>44</sup>

While the image of the hundred kisses on the brow is almost burlesque, the underlying question of the Creator as maker and destroyer is painfully apparent.

In another of Omar's verses, undisguised longing and pain are revealed as intensely as in any of FitzGerald's renderings:

Oh! would that there were a place of repose,  
 Or that we might come to the end of the road;  
 Would that from the heart of the earth, after a hundred  
 thousand years,  
 We might all hope to blossom again like the verdure.<sup>45</sup>

(Heron-Allen literal translation of  
 No. 509 Calcutta Manuscript)

While it is possible to assess Omar's style in a verse-by-verse analysis, certain of his stylistic qualities are predetermined by the requirements of his form, the rubai. This form demands the spontaneity and appositeness found in Japanese haiku, and, as with the haiku tradition in Japan, has long been a popular impromptu pastime in Persia. Because of the genuine Persian and plebeian origin of this verse form, it is considered proper to retain a rustic flavor and to maintain, insofar as possible, a heavily Persian vocabulary (the more elegant court poetry being much more saturated with Arabic loan words). Omar's verses are deliberately Persian, and when Arabic words are used, they are carefully selected to make a point, such as the ironic use of Koranic

---

<sup>44</sup>Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

Arabic to urge the reader to awaken and drink wine, which we find in FitzGerald's choice for his opening quatrain. According to Arberry, the use of Arabic in this case is as if the Prophet himself urged this prohibited act.<sup>46</sup> Omar will often balance Arabic words with their Persian counterpart in the next line, or employ in one quatrain four ways of describing one thing, using both Persian and Arabic words for vocabulary expansion. (In Quatrain No. 1, for example, he employs four ways for saying day: *sobh*, *ruz*, *sahar*, and *aiyam*). Because the Persian verbal system makes extensive use of auxiliaries and compound verbs, Omar is frequently able to use one verb at the end of the three rhyming lines, but each in a slightly different idiom, such as *afgand* (to cast) in Quatrain No. 1, or *gereftan* (to take) in Quatrain No. 19.

All the above considered, FitzGerald had an exceedingly difficult task to perform when he undertook translation of this Persian master's work. Unlike poets of longer forms, Omar never nods.

#### Sufi or Epicurean

The issue of Omar's "wine" verses, the innumerable quatrains which either open or close with the exhortation "*mai khor*" (drink wine!), has been a major source of controversy among scholars for nearly a century. It seems, moreover, that this issue has plagued Persian readers for seven centuries, and there seems little likelihood of proving one way or another that the wine drinking was intended either as being purely symbolic or as purely epicurean.

---

<sup>46</sup> Arberry, Omar Khayyam: A New Version, p. 32.

FitzGerald's position in this matter seems to be reasonable. In the introductory notes to his translation, he compares Omar with Lucretius, citing as his authority his teacher and scholarly friend, Edward Cowell. He concludes his first introduction with a vision of Omar as the passionate seeker after truth who "after vainly endeavouring to unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of To-morrow, fell back upon To-day (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only Ground he had got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his feet."<sup>47</sup>

In response to the Nicolas edition of the Rubáiyát, which came out while FitzGerald was preparing his own second edition, FitzGerald confronts the challenge which Nicolas poses in his insistence that Omar was a Sufi (a Moslem mystical ascetic sect) and all wine references are symbolic of God and the Divine Spirit. While seriously examining Nicolas' contentions, FitzGerald finds that his original view still stands, but he makes allowances for the Sufi interpretation and further emphasizes that epicurean does not mean libertine, as some of FitzGerald's attackers have assumed. He concludes his introduction as follows:

However, as there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Sufi--and even something of a Saint--those who please may so interpret his Wine and Cup-bearer. On the other hand, as there is far more historical certainty of his being a Philosopher, of scientific Insight and Ability far beyond that of the Age and Country he lived in; of such moderate worldly Ambition as becomes a

---

<sup>47</sup> Crowell edition, p. 33.

Philosopher, and such moderate wants as rarely satisfy a Debauchee; other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the Wine Omar celebrates is simply the Juice of the Grape, he bragged more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.<sup>48</sup>

Since the initiation of this quarrel between FitzGerald and Nicolas, a number of other scholars have entered the fray. Some of the leading positions are cited below:

M. J. Darmesteter, in his Les Origines de la poésie persane (Paris, 1887), recognizes the distinction between the drinking songs of Europe and those of Persia, a distinction that has been overlooked by partisans of both extreme positions:

Les chansons à boire de l'Europe ne sont que des chansons d'ivrogne; celles de la Perse sont un chant de révolte contre le coren, contre les bigots, contre l'oppression de la nature et de la raison par la loi religieuse. L'homme que boit est pour la poète le symbole de l'homme émancipé; pour le mystique, le vin est plus encore, c'est le symbole de l'ivresse divine.<sup>49</sup>

Darmesteter, then, emphasizes the element of revolt in Omar's work, which is certainly possible as this theme enjoys some precedent in Persian poetry. The model for nearly all Persian writers was Ferdowsi, in whose epic poem, the Sháhnáma, loyalty and revolt are in constant conflict. Omar alludes to the Sháhnáma in numerous quatrains, as FitzGerald points out in his notes.

Furthermore, while the Sufi proponents prepare for us long lists of words which Omar, as well as known Sufi poets have used to symbolize

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Dole, I, Ixxii.

other things, Omar was his own man, and took what he wished from all traditions.

FitzGerald further reminds us that the poetic views of Omar which are claimed by Persian Sufis as their own are far older than the oldest formal religions. We are also reminded that Omar was not only something of an antiquarian, but that his whole scientific training imposed on his thought processes a speculative, examining cast of mind. This position is also taken by Robert Arnot who cites references to Omar which appear in various early biographical notices in Persian anthologies and histories. His chief source, which he quotes at length, is Mohammad Shahrazuri's Nazhet-ul-Arwah (History of Learned Men), which describes Omar as a remarkable universal man of modest habits. Arnot summarizes:

In this manner also is Omar portrayed in the various early biographical notices: a defender of "Greek Science," famous for his knowledge of the Koran and the Law, and at the same time a "stinging serpent" to the dogmatic; a wit and a mocker, a bitter and implacable enemy of all hypocrisy; a man who, while curing others of the wounds of worldly triviality, impurity, and sinful vanity, himself only with almost his last breath closed the philosophic book on "Healing" and turned with a touching prayer to the One God, the Infinite, whom he had been striving to comprehend with all the strength of his mind and heart. Khayyám's lively protests and his heated words in freedom's cause brought upon him many bitter moments in his life and exposed him to numerous attacks at the hands of the mullahs, especially those of the Shiite community.<sup>50</sup>

Arnot reached the same conclusion about Omar's character by way of scholarship that FitzGerald reached largely through intuition and empathy:

---

<sup>50</sup> Robert Arnot, "General Introduction," Heron-Allen Facsimile, p. xiii.

We may look upon Omar as a deeply learned man, following his own convictions, who, tortured with the question of existence, and finding no solution to life in Musulman dogmas, worked out for himself a regular conception of life based on Sufistic Mysticism; a man who, without discarding belief, smiled ironically at the inconsistencies and peculiarities of the Islam of his time, which left many minds dissatisfied in the fourth and fifth centuries, needing as it did vivification....Omar was a preacher of moral purity and of a contemplative life; one who loved his God and struggled to master the eternal, the good, and the beautiful.<sup>51</sup>

The most satisfactory English scholar-translator of the Rubáiyát after FitzGerald, was Edward Henry Whinfield, who, in 1883, brought out an edition of 500 quatrains accompanied by the Persian text facing the translation. Whinfield adds to the biographical speculation about Omar by asserting that Omar was, among other things, a satirist. He believes that the many satirical quatrains were the result of religious civil strife in Naishápúr which disgusted Omar, and perhaps even menaced him.<sup>52</sup>

As to the Sufi-epicurean issue, Whinfield denies that Omar must be one or the other. Omar was, according to earliest accounts, a man in conflict. Whinfield discards the present day Persian insistence that Omar was a Sufi for the same reason that FitzGerald objects to this view -- a general misunderstanding of the respectability of material epicureanism, and an uneasiness in the face of discussion.<sup>53</sup>

That Omar was exposed by his very education to the often conflicting world views of science/philosophy on the one hand and

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 134.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

mysticism/poetry on the other, is apparent from his list of teachers and influences, as provided by Whinfield. As a native of Khorassán, the northwestern province of Persia which was the seat of the first Persian renaissance after the Moslem conquest, Omar was exposed to the Moslem philosophers Alkindi, Alfarábi, and Avicenna, as well as to his predecessors in rubai writing, Abul Khair, Nizám ul mulk and Gházáli, all of whom were Sufistically inclined.<sup>54</sup>

While there is no positive evidence that Omar read Job and Ecclesiastes, Whinfield compares much of Omar's work to these older texts, those painful dialogues with God which, like Omar's verses, attempt to comprehend the evil, the deformed, and the suffering which beset man.

The recent Robert Graves/Ali-Shah edition of the Rubáiyát dredges up once more the claim that Omar was an enrolled Sufi, and Ali-Shah supports this claim on the evidence of family tradition that Omar was a Sufi, and the possession of "the oldest extant manuscript" of the Rubáiyát which he considers clearly Sufistic.<sup>55</sup> This as yet unauthenticated manuscript appears to be based largely upon the Heron-Allen transcription of the Bodeleian Manuscript, which Graves and Ali-Shah issued in virtually the same order of quatrains as those of FitzGerald, despite the fact that all other manuscripts appear in a rhyming-word alphabetical order. FitzGerald's order, as he himself

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Graves, Omar Ali-Shah, The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam: A New Translation with Critical Commentaries (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 25.

admitted, was the result of personal taste and an attempt to organize the disparate mass into "something of an eclogue."

The scope of speculation on this subject seems endless. In an anthology called The Voice of Omar Khayyam, a Variorum Study of his Rubaiyat by the prolific Parsi scholar Jamshedji E. Saklatwalla (Bombay, 1936), there is a review of A Study of the Quatrains of Omar Khayyam of Naishapur by the Reverend Dr. Weir, Professor of Arabic at the University of Glasgow (no further indication of the author's identity nor the publication date for his study). According to the reviewer (unidentified, therefore, we assume him to be Saklatwalla himself), he refers to Dr. Weir as "one of the very few translators and critics of Omar that has gone to detect in this Astronomer Poet of Iran, leanings toward Zoroastrian doctrines, and at times his out-pourings go far as to betray him at heart a true follower of Zoroaster."

Saklatwalla's desire to claim Omar as a Zoroastrian is unsupported by evidence, yet his observation is not without some merit. Omar shares with a number of Persian Moslem poets, such as Ferdowsi, Gorgáni, Nizámi, etc., a romantic nostalgia for pre-Islamic Persia, this more on nationalistic grounds than theological, however. According to Arberry:

Persian intellectuals in particular resented the subjugation of their once proud and powerful country, and while they had no special affection for Zoroastrian beliefs and ways they were not averse to reminding their Arab overlords that Islam was a foreign and a not very clever creed: wine, which was allowed by Zoroaster but prohibited by Mohammed, provided an admirable symbol of rebellion, the more especially because it maketh glad the heart of man.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Omar Khayyam, A New Version, p. 28.



Nathan Haskell Dole views Omar's character in much the same light as FitzGerald does, when the latter speaks of Omar as bragging of the wine he drank more than drinking it. Dole writes:

It has ever been one of the delights of genius to make itself misunderstood by mediocrity. The Saviour frequently took pains to say things that he knew would shock and stagger the Scribes and Pharisees. Many a man has revelled in the reputation of being worse than he knew that he really was. And the more one studies Omar Khayyám, the more evident it grows that above and beyond the many quatrains which must necessarily bear a mystical interpretation, there are not a few which exhibit a bravado easily accounting for the unfriendly testimony borne by some of Omar's biographers in regard to his irreligious behavior.<sup>57</sup>

Since FitzGerald brought their poet back to the light, Persian and Parsi-Indian scholars have made vociferous claims that their poet was a pure mystic -- not a wine bibber. Arberry, however, provides us with a treatise on the history of the Persian New Year festival<sup>58</sup> (Nauruz-nama) in which there is a delightful anecdote on how wine was discovered in Persia. This New Year Saga is held to be of doubtful authenticity, though certainly very ancient, and it is attributed by tradition to Omar. Whether authentic or not, the fact that tradition would have it so indicates that Persians, even before FitzGerald's translation, were by no means unanimous about Omar's Sufism.

My own conclusion, in the face of all the conflicting claims, must come from the work itself. After several years of study of the quatrains, I find myself in agreement with FitzGerald's moderate view. I see Omar as a man of science with cosmic questions unanswerable by

---

<sup>57</sup> Dole, I, Ixi.

<sup>58</sup> Classical Persian Literature, p. 85.

by science and unanswered by orthodox Islam. I do not share FitzGerald's (or more likely, Cowell's) prejudice against Islam, therefore, I do not find it necessary to place Omar in a position of hostility toward his religion, as FitzGerald does when he writes (referring to the Cowell article) that Lucretius and Omar can be compared on many levels, including that they were men "who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false or foolish, Devotion to it...."<sup>59</sup> That Omar satirized hypocrisy and legalistic fanaticism there is no doubt, but this does not enroll him in the ranks of the atheists by any means.

This discussion can perhaps be concluded with the citation of several of Omar's quatrains which seem to speak for him as a man not committed to dogma of any sort, including organized Sufism. M. Nicolas himself provides the following quatrain, which he interprets as an attack on hypocritical mollahs. He does not explain away the literal wine, however:

If you do not drink wine, do not slander the drunkard,  
 For I am prepared to give up God if He orders me to give up wine,  
 You are filled with pride because you do not drink wine --  
 But you do a hundred slavish acts worse than drunkenness.

(Nicolas No. 12 -- Farhat translation)

Whinfield provides us with another quatrain that appears to reflect a keen self-portrait:

Am I a wine bibber? What if I am?  
 Gueber, or infidel? Suppose I am?  
 Each sect miscalls me, but I heed them not,  
 I am my own, and, what I am, I am.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Crowell edition, p. 31.

<sup>60</sup> E. H. Whinfield, The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam: Persian Text with English Verse Translation (London: Trubner, 1883), pp. 224-5.

FitzGerald quotes the following quatrain in his introductory biography, which he believes pleads Omar's pantheism. I see it, rather, as Omar's Credo, illustrated by way of a mathematical jest:

If I myself upon a looser Creed  
 Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good deed,  
     Let this one thing for my Atonement plead:  
 That One for Two I never did mis-read.<sup>61</sup>

As a final note, I submit a quatrain of Omar's which reveals a strong strain of mischief, a quality of the master which was played down by FitzGerald:

So far as in thee lies, follow the example of the profligate,  
 Destroy the foundations of prayer and fasting:  
     Hear thou the Word of Truth from Omar Khayyam,  
 "Drink wine, rob on the highway, and be benevolent."<sup>62</sup>

(Heron-Allen literal translation of  
 No. 123 Ouseley Manuscript.)

---

<sup>61</sup> Crowell edition, p. 31.

<sup>62</sup> Heron-Allen, Facsimile, p. 21.

**THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM**

**A New Selection of  
His Quatrains Taken from  
All Five Editions (1859-1889)  
of Edward FitzGerald's Translation**

The quatrains in this edition have been selected from all five of FitzGerald's editions, on the basis of each quatrain's solution to a particular problem of translation posed by the original, or on rare occasions, on this editor's personal choice. The numbering system is in arabic numerals, to distinguish this edition's arrangement from the standard FitzGerald editions, which are numbered in roman numerals. A comparative chart is provided in the Appendix.

## 1

Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night  
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:  
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught  
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

## 2

Before the phantom of False morning died,  
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,  
"When all the Temple is prepared within,  
"Why lags the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

## 3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted--"Open then the Door!  
"You know how little while we have to stay,  
"And, once departed, may return no more."

## 4

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

## 5

Irám indeed is gone with all its Rose,  
 And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;  
     But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,  
 And still a Garden by the Water blows.

## 6

And David's Lips are lock't; but in divine  
 High piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!  
     "Red Wine!"--the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
 That Yellow Cheek of her's to'incarnadine.

## 7

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.

## 8

Whether at Naishápúr 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.

## 9

And look--a thousand Blossoms with the Day  
 Woke--and a thousand scatter'd into Clay:

And this first Summer Month that brings the Rose  
 Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

## 10

But come with old Khayyam, and leave the Lot  
 Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot!

Let Rustum lay about him as he will,  
 Or Hátim Tai cry Supper--heed them not.

## 11

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown  
 That just divides the desert from the sown,  
 Where name of Slave and Sultán scarce is known,  
 And pity Sultan Máhmúd on this Throne.

## 12

Here with a Loaf of Bread Beneath the Bough,  
 A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse--and Thou  
 Beside me singing in the Wilderness--  
 And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

## 13

Some for the Glories of This World; and some  
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;

Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

## 14

Were it not Folly, Spider-like to spin  
The Thread of present Life away to win

What? for ourselves, who know not if we shall  
Breathe out the very Breath we now breathe in!

## 15

Look to the Rose that blows about us--"Lo,  
"Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow:

"At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
"Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

## 16

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.



## 17

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon  
 Turns Ashes--or it prospers; and anon,  
     Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face  
 Lighting a little hour or two--is gone.

## 18

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
 Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,  
     How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp  
 Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

## 19

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
 The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;  
     And Bahrá, that great Hunter--the Wild Ass  
 Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

## 20

The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,  
 And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew--  
     I saw the solitary Ringdove there,  
 And "Coo, coo, coo," she cried; and "Coo, coo, coo."

## 21

I sometimes think that never blows so red  
 The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;  
     That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
 Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

## 22

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green  
 Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean--  
     Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows  
 From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

## 23

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears  
 TO-DAY of past Regret and Future Fears:  
     To-morrow!--Why, To-morrow I may be  
 Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

## 24

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
 That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,  
     Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
 And one by one crept silently to rest.

## 25

And we, that now make merry in the Room  
 They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,  
     Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth  
 Descend, ourselves to make a Couch--for whom?

## 26

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!

## 27

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,  
 And those that after some TO-MORROW stare,  
     A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,  
 "Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There."

## 28

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.

## 29

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 where in I went.

## 30

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,  
 And with my own hand labor'd it to grow:  
     And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd--  
 "I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

## 31

Into this Universe, and Why not knowing  
 Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing;  
     And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,  
 I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.

## 32

What, without asking, hither hurried whence?  
 And, without asking, whither hurried hence!  
     Another and another Cup to drown  
 The Memory of this Impertinence!

## 33

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate  
 I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
     And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;  
 But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

## 34

There was a Door to which I found no Key:  
 There was a Veil past which I could not see:  
     Some little Talk awhile of ME and THEE  
 There seem'd--and then no more of THEE and ME.

## 35

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn  
 In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;  
     Nor Heav'n, with those eternal Signs reveal'd  
 And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

## 36

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,  
 Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide  
     "Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"  
 And--"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

37

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn  
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:

And Lip to Lip it murmur'd--"While you live  
"Drink!--for once dead you never shall return."

38

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive  
Articulation answer'd, once did live,

And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,  
How many Kisses might it take--and give!

39

For in the Market-place, one Dusk of Day,  
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet Clay:

And with its all obliterated Tongue  
It murmur'd--"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

40

And has not such a Story from of Old  
Down Man's successive generations roll'd

Of such a clod of saturated Earth  
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

## 41

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw  
 For Earth to drink of, but may steal below  
     To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye  
 There hidden--far beneath, and long ago.

## 42

As then the Tulip for her morning sup  
 Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,  
     Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n  
 To Earth invert you--like an empty Cup.

## 43

Do you, within your little hour of Grace,  
 The waving Cypress in your Arms enlace,  
     Before the Mother back into her arms  
 Fold, and dissolve you in a last embrace.

## 44

And if the Wine your 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.

## 45

So when that Angel of the darker Drink  
At last shall find you by the river-brink,  
    And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul  
Forth to your Lips to quaff--you shall not shrink.

## 46

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 carcase crippled to abide?

## 47

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest  
A Sultán to the realm of Death address;  
    The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh  
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

## 48

And fear not lest Existence closing your  
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;  
    The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd  
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.



## 49

When You and I behind the Veil are past,  
 Oh but the long long while the World shall last,  
     Which of our Coming and Departure heeds  
 As much as Ocean of a pebble-cast.

## 50

One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,  
 One Moment of the Well of Life to taste--  
     The Stars are setting and the Caravan  
 Starts for the Dawn of Nothing--Oh, make haste!

## 51

Would you that spangle of Existence spend  
 About THE SECRET--quick about it, Friend!  
     A Hair perhaps divides the False and True--  
 And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

## 52

A Hair, they say, divides the False and True;  
 Yes; and a single Alif were the Clue,  
     Could you but find it, to the Treasure-house,  
 And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

## 53

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins  
 Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;  
     Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and  
 They change and perish all--but He remains;

## 54

A moment guess'd--then back behind the Fold  
 Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd  
     Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,  
 He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

## 55

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor  
 Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,  
     You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You--how then  
 TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

## 56

How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit  
 Of This and That endeavour and dispute?  
     Better be merry with the fruitful Grape  
 Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

## 57

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse  
I made a Second Marriage in my house;

Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

## 58

For "Is" and "Is-Not" though with Rule and Line  
And "Up-and-Down" by Logic I define,

Of all that one should care to fathom, I  
Was never deep in anything but--Wine.

## 59

Ah, but my Computations, People say,  
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?--Nay,

'Twas only striking from the Calendar  
Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday.

## 60

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,  
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape

Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and  
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas--the Grape!

## 61

The Grape that can with Logic absolute  
 The Two-and Seventy jarring Sects confute:  
     The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice  
 Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

## 62

The mighty Mahmūd, Allah-breathing Lord,  
 That all the misbelieving and black Horde  
     Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul  
 Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

## 63

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare  
 Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?  
     A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?  
 And if a Curse--why, then, Who set it there?

## 64

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,  
 Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,  
     Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,  
 When the frail Cup is crumbled into Dust!

65

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 for ever dies.

66

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who  
 Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,  
       Not one returns to tell us of the Road,  
 Which to discover we must travel too.

67

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd  
 Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,  
       Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep  
 They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

68

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,  
 Some letter of that After-life to spell:  
       And by and by my Soul return'd to me,  
 And answer'd "I Myself and Heav'n and Hell:"

## 69

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,  
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,  
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,  
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

## 70

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.

## 71

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

## 72

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;  
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,  
He knows about it all--HE knows--HE knows!

## 73

But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me  
 The Quarrel of the Universe let be:  
     And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,  
 Make Game of that which makes as much of Thee.

## 74

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
 Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit  
     Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

## 75

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,  
 Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,  
     Lift not your hands to It for help--for it  
 As impotently rolls as you or I.

## 76

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,  
 And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:  
     And the first Morning of Creation wrote  
 What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

77

Yesterday This Day's Madness did prepare;  
 To-Morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:

Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:  
 Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

78

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke  
 A conscious Something to resent the yoke  
 Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
 Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

79

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid  
 Pure Gold for what he lent us dross-ally'd--  
 Sue for a Debt we never did contract,  
 And cannot answer--Oh, the sorry trade!

80

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
 Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
 Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round  
 Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!



## 81

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
 And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:

For all the Sin herewith the Face of Man  
 Is blacken'd--Man's forgiveness give--and take!

## KÚZA-NÁMA

## 82

As under cover of departing Day  
 Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazan away,

Once more within the Potter's house alone  
 I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

## 83

And once again there gather'd scarce heard  
 Whisper among them; as it were, the stirr'd

Ashes of some all but extinguisht Tongue,  
 Which mine ear kindled into living Word.

## 84

Said one among them--"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 shapeless Earth again?"

85

Another said--"Why, ne'er a peevish Boy,  
 "Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;  
 "Shall He that made the Vessel in pure Love  
 "And Fanny, in an after Rage destroy!"

86

None answer'd this; but after Silence spake  
 A Vessel of a more ungainly Make:  
 "They sneer at me for leaning all awry;  
 "What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake!"

87

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot--  
 I think a Súfi pipkin--waxing hot--  
 "All this of Pot and Potter--Tell me, then,  
 "Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

88

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell  
 "Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell  
 "The luckless Pots he marr'd in making--Pish!  
 "He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

## 89

Then said another with a long-drawn Sigh,  
 "My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:  
     "But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
 "Methinks I might recover by-and-bye!"

## 90

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,  
 The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:  
     And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!  
 "Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

## 91

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,  
 And wash my Body whence the Life has died,  
     And in a Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,  
 So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.

## 92

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare  
 Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air,  
     As not a True-believer passing by  
 But shall be overtaken unaware.

## 93

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long  
 Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong:  
     Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,  
 And sold my Reputation for a Song.

## 94

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before  
 I swore--but was I sober when I swore?  
     And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand  
 My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

## 95

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,  
 And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour--Well,  
     I wonder often what the Vintners buy  
 One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

## 96

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

## 97

Would but some winged Angel ere too late  
 Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,  
 And make the stern Recorder otherwise  
 Enregister, or quite obliterate!

## 98

Ah Love! could you and I with Fate conspire  
 To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
 Would not we shatter it to bits--and then  
 Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

## 99

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,  
 The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again  
 How oft hereafter rising shall she look  
 Through this same Garden after me--in vain!

## 100

And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass  
 Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,  
 And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot  
 Where I made one--turn down an empty Glass!

101

If I myself upon a looser Creed  
Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good deed,  
Let this one thing for my Atonement plead:  
That One for Two I never did misread.

TAMAM SHUD

## ANNOTATIONS

### 1. Literal Translations:

All literal translations have been taken from the Edward Heron-Allen "Source Analysis" (The Sufistic Quatrains of Omar Khayyám, New York and London, 1903), unless specifically designated as this editor's translation, which is used only when the Heron-Allen translation is inaccurate or misleading.

### 2. Manuscript Designations:

Each literal translation is followed by a letter and number which indicates its manuscript source: "O" representing the Ouseley Manuscript in the Bodleian Library, "C" for the Calcutta Manuscript, and "N" for the published Tehran Lithograph used by the French translator, J. B. Nicolas. FitzGerald consulted only these three sources, according to Edward Heron-Allen's "Source Analysis."

### 3. FitzGerald's Editorial Notes:

References to FitzGerald's Editorial Notes are taken from his "Notes" to the third and fourth editions, and follow his numbering. For reader convenience, the Crowell edition of The Rubáiyát has been selected as the standard text.

## 1

- ll. 1-2) The Bedouin Signal for striking camp is the flinging of a stone into a bowl. In this verse, the stone is the sun and the bowl the sky.
- l. 3) Hunter of the East -- in the original, Kai Khosrow, mythical Persian king whose primaeval form was that of a sun god. FitzGerald's term "Hunter of the East" is not only more accessible to the western reader than Kai Khosrow, but also renders poetically organic the word "noose" in line 4. The noose, or lasso, was standard equipment with Persian knights and hunters.

The late A. J. Arberry (Cambridge professor of Persian and Arabic) provides an analysis of the subtleties of the original verse which helps to illuminate FitzGerald's task and accomplishment. Arberry tells us the sun is seen as a royal huntsman about to lead chase (cf. the Greek myth of Helios and the horses of the sun):

The huntsman, already in the saddle visibly, in high spirits casts his lasso and catches the roof-top in its spinning noose; the scene is well-observed--the roof-top is now the broad expanse of the skies, suddenly lit up by the radiance of a Persian sunrise. In his other hand the huntsman holds the bowl into which he has already cast the pebble which is the conventional signal for departure; but the second image merges brilliantly into a third; the bowl of which the poet speaks, heaven's bowl, leads naturally to the recollection of the more customary use of a bowl; the pebble is seen to be red (the rising sun itself), and glows red in the Eastern sky like wine in a glass. Dawn is thus the signal for beginning another day of drinking; the poet therefore



commands his friend, the beloved saki, to drink; for the thought of wine automatically evokes the recollection of love. The last image of the poem is a characteristic touch of blasphemy. Omar is reminded of the mystical legend, that in the beginning Divine Love, the saki of God the Lover, poured wine for God the Beloved on forty successive mornings, and so created the world....Since God on that remote occasion commanded the things to be created to drink of the wine of His creative power, so--according to Omar's bacchanalian logic, the Divine order is still obeyed.<sup>1</sup>

The original version of this quatrain, for comparison, appears as follows:

The sun throws the noose of morning upon the roofs.  
Kai Khosrow of the day throws the pebble into the bowl.  
Drink wine, for the muezzin of the dawn  
Throws the chant "Drink!" into the days.

C. 134--Farhat

FitzGerald omits the "Drink wine" section from this quatrain, as he does from many others, apparently as an editorial choice. This phrase, mai khor, appears in so many of Omar's verses that it becomes a cliché which FitzGerald attempts to avoid. FitzGerald's editorial comment on this matter appears in the introduction to his first edition:

These [quatrains] here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the "Drink and make-merry," which (genuine or not) recurs over frequently in the Original.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. J. Arberry, Omar Khayyam: A New Version (London: John Murray, 1951).

<sup>2</sup>Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Complete Edition Showing Variants in the Five Original Printings (New York: Crowell, 1921), p. 32. Henceforth to be cited as the Crowell edition.

## 2

- l. 1) Phantom of False morning -- according to FitzGerald's

Note II:

The "False Dawn"; Subhi Kazib, a transient Light on the Horizon about an hour before the Subhi sadik, or True Dawn; a well-known Phenomenon in the East.<sup>3</sup>

- ll. 2-3) The tavern and the temple, wine as inebriant and as mystical essence representing the spirit of God, are juxtaposed throughout the Rubáiyát. There was a strong literary tradition in Persia of bacchic verse which predated Islam and survived despite orthodox disapproval. There is neither authority for establishing a purely mystical nor a purely epicurean interpretation of these verses.

## 3

This verse may be considered a rather good example of FitzGerald's adherence to his original, which, literally translated, reads as follows:

There came one morning a cry from our tavern:  
 "Ho! our crazy tavern-haunting profligate (Saki)  
 "Arise! that we may fill the measure with wine  
 Ere they fill up our measure (of life)."

C. 5

## 4

- l. 1) The New Year -- FitzGerald's Note IV:

New Year. Beginning with the Vernal Equinox, it must be remembered; and (however the old Solar Year is practically superseded by the clumsy Lunar Year that dates from the

---

<sup>3</sup>Crowell edition, p. 139.

Mohammedan Hijra) still commemorated by a Festival that is said to have been appointed by the very Jamshyd whom Omar so often talks of, and whose yearly Calendar he helped to rectify.<sup>4</sup>

FitzGerald then goes on to quote his favorite Persian local color source book, Robert Binning's A Journal of Two Years' Travel in Persia and Ceylon, etc. (London, 1857, Vol. I, p. 165):

The sudden approach and rapid advance of the Spring are very striking. Before the Snow is well off the Ground, the trees burst into Blossom, and the Flowers start forth from the Soil. At Now Rooz [their New Year's Day] the Snow was lying in patches on the Hills and the shaded vallies, while the Fruit-trees in the Gardens were budding beautifully, and green Plants and flowers springing up on the Plains on every side...

4. 2) The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires -- a triple allusion to the three great fountainheads of Western culture: the Persian thirteenth day of their New Year at which time everyone retires to the wilderness, Moses' forty days on Mount Sinai, and Jesus' forty days in the desert.
4. 3) The White Hand of Moses -- from the same note (IV) of FitzGerald, quoted above:

The White Hand of Moses. Exodus IV.6; where Moses draws forth his Hand--not, according to the Persians, "leprous as Snow," but white, as our May-blossom in Spring, perhaps. According to them also the Healing Power of Jesus resided in his Breath.

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40.

There are three manuscript versions of this quatrain: O.13, O.80 and N.186. Two of the versions use the word kaf (foam) to describe the action of Moses' hand on the fruit bough, evidently referring to a profusion of white blossoms. The leprosy incident, FitzGerald's assertion to the contrary, is known to the Persians, and appears in the Koran, Surah VII, Verse 108 and again in Surah XXVI, Verse 32.

- l. 4) Jesus from the Ground suspires -- is not healing power, as FitzGerald thought, but rather life-giving power. In the Koran, Surah V, Verse 110, Jesus is instructed by God to form a dove out of clay and then to breathe upon it, at which point the dove comes to life and flies off.

## 5

- l. 1) Iram -- FitzGerald's Note V:

Iram, planted by King Shaddád, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd's Seven-ring'd cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, etc., and was a Divining Cup.<sup>5</sup>

In a later note (XVIII), FitzGerald further identifies Jamshyd with Ján Ibn Ján, who is said to have built the Pyramids before the time of Adam.<sup>6</sup>

## 6

David -- King David, in his capacity as singer and harpist. While King David's inclusion in this verse is FitzGerald's

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

idea, he has authority for such usage in other quatrains, such as the following which appears in a Persian-French edition:<sup>7</sup>

Enjoy wine--for Mahumud's empire is--what it is.  
 And listen to the harp because David's songs are--  
 what they are.  
 Pay no heed to what comes and goes.  
 Be happy, for the end of existence is--what it is.  
 (Farhat)

Pehlevi -- in his Note VI on this word, FitzGerald somewhat misleadingly identifies it as "the old Heroic Sanskrit of Persia."<sup>8</sup> This language is more correctly "Middle Persian" and was spoken in Iran until the Moslem invasion. The native language was suppressed for several centuries, to emerge once more, enlarged and enriched by Arabic loan words. The development of modern Persian resembles the development of Middle English, in its metamorphosis from Anglo-Saxon through Norman French.

FitzGerald further justifies his use of the word Pehlevi in his Note VI: "Hafiz also speaks of the Nightingale's Pehlevi which did not change with the People's."

4. 3) Nightingale -- the love of the nightingale for the rose is as much a cliché in Persian letters as our own moth and candle flame. FitzGerald complained about this ubiquitous theme in

<sup>7</sup> A. G. E'Tessam-Zadeh, ed., Les Rubaiyat d'Omar Khayyam: texte persan et traduction en vers français (Teheran: Librairie-Imprimerie Beroukhim, 1931), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Crowell edition, p. 140.

letters to his friend and mentor, Cowell, and said that he intended to avoid it whenever possible.

Letter to E. B. Cowell, [1846:]

I have read nothing you would care for since I saw you. It would be a good work to give us some of the good things of Hafiz and the Persians; of bulbuls and ghuls we have had enough.<sup>9</sup>

[Bulbul is nightingale and ghul is rose.]

Letter to Cowell, January 22, 1857:

The Germans make a Fuss about the Sufi Doctrine; ...One becomes wearied of the mani-i and du-i [I and Thou] in their Philosophy as of the Bulbul &c. in their Songs.<sup>10</sup>

7

While FitzGerald's rendition of this quatrain is not a strict translation of its main source, it captures its essence and draws its authority from other quatrains of Omar, as well as the work of other Persian poets, knowledge of native folklore, and national custom. FitzGerald does not indulge in fanciful invention.

The original quatrain runs as follows:

Every day I resolve to repent in the evening,  
Repenting of the brimful goblet, and the cup;  
But now that the season of roses has come,  
I cannot grieve,  
Give penitence\* for repentance in the Season  
of Roses, O Lord.

C. 431

\*Permit us to regret our repentance.

<sup>9</sup> Joanna Richardson, ed., FitzGerald: Selected Works (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 539.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 585.

4. 1) Fire of Spring -- FitzGerald has drawn upon his knowledge of Persian custom for this image, which is not in the original. Even today, Persians jump over bonfires on the last Wednesday of the old year, just prior to the Vernal Equinox. The fire is thought to purge away bad luck and to encourage the fires of life to burn with new vigor.
4. 2) Winter Garment of Repentance -- the Moslem month of fasting generally falls before the Persian New Year, and engenders the same emotional dichotomy as Lent does with Easter.
4. 3) The Bird of Time image is not taken from Omar, but from Attár, another of FitzGerald's favorite Persian poets whose work he also translated. Heron-Allen traces the Bird of Time to Attár's line: "The Bird of the Sky flutters along its appointed path."<sup>11</sup>

## 8

4. 1) Naishápúr or Babylon -- according to Heron-Allen, the existing manuscripts are equally divided between "Bagdad and Balkh" and "Naishápúr and Balkh."<sup>12</sup> Balkh remains constant because it is a rhyme word. It seems to this editor that Bagdad is Omar's word rather than Naishápúr, because of its function in this quatrain, both as alliteration and because

---

<sup>11</sup> Edward Heron-Allen, ed., The Sufistic Quatrains of Omar Khayyam (New York and London: Dunn, 1902), p. 49. Henceforth cited as Source Analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

the Balkh-Bagdad combination delimits the extreme reaches of Persia, from north-east to south-west. These cities further represent a contrast between provincial tranquility and cosmopolitan bustle. FitzGerald took the "Naishápúr" from the Nicolas text, which has the subtle advantage of paying tribute, to Omar's native city, and provides the same geographical and social distance as the original Balkh-Bagdad. Bagdad and Babylon are frequently interchanged in Persian poetry.<sup>13</sup> FitzGerald's choice of Babylon, therefore, is justified from a technical point of view, and it adds two further dimensions of comparison for the Western reader: time -- as Babylon extends to the boundaries of human civilized experience; and decadence -- in strong contrast to provincial, pleasant Naishápúr.

## 9

- l. 4) Jamshýd and Kai Kobád -- hero-kings of ancient Persia, celebrated in the epic Sháhmáma.  
This verse was apparently on FitzGerald's mind when he wrote to Cowell, July 1, 1857, while in the process of translating Omar: "June over! A thing I think of with Omar-like sorrow. And the Roses here are blowing -- and going -- as abundantly as even in Persia."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Edward Heron-Allen, ed., The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Facsimile of the MS in the Bodeleian Library (London: H. S. Nichols, Ltd., 2nd edition, 1898), p. 164. Henceforth cited as Facsimile.

<sup>14</sup> Richardson, p. 600.



## 10

- l. 1) Khayyám -- In the Persian originals, Khayyám's name appears much more frequently than in FitzGerald's translations. The use of the poet's name in his verse is regular practice in Persia and serves as a form of copyright.
- l. 2) Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú -- ancient Persian hero-kings. Kaikhosrú is the Kai Khosrow who appears in our annotation for quatrain 1.
- l. 3) Rustum (Rostam) -- in FitzGerald's Note X:

Rustum, the "Hercules" of Persia, and Zál his Father, whose exploits are among the most celebrated in the Sháhname.  
Hátim Tai, a well-known type of Oriental Generosity.<sup>15</sup>

## 11

This quatrain is one of a group of verses found in Omar which deals with a return to the roots of civilization, the most famous of which is Quatrain 12.

FitzGerald has called upon his reading in Binning<sup>16</sup> for the accuracy of the picture he evokes, as nothing in his experience in green, wet, England could have prepared him for the green-and-brown, life-and-death, demarcations in Persia. The last irrigation channel on a Persian farm literally marks the sown from the barren -- and that same line of cultivated

<sup>15</sup> Crowell edition, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Binning, Journal of a Two Year Journey into Persia, India & Ceylon, Etc. (London, 1857), I, p. 165.

herbage marks the departure from the primaeval to the civilized. The throne of Sultan Mahmud itself, and the lives of all the court slaves, are sustained and made luxurious by the development of that very art of agriculture that "just divides the desert from the sown."

## 12

There are numerous instances in Omar manuscripts of a quatrain appearing in several variations. It remains either for the linguist to make an educated guess as to the authentic quatrain, or for the intuitive editor, such as FitzGerald, to do so. In the case of this most famous verse of the FitzGerald rendition, his choice of authentic over spurious is supported by the Persian scholar, Professor Amin Banani,<sup>17</sup> who agrees that the alternate verse is more coarse than one would normally find in Omar's verses, and furthermore uses a term for a wine container, kadu, (gourd), which is anachronistic. The painted miniatures of the time show the wine flask of finely wrought metal or ceramic being used. Below are literal translations of the two variations from which FitzGerald made his selection:

A vessel of ruby wine I want, and a book of verse  
(a rubáiyát)

A half bread--just enough to keep me from my last  
gasp,

And then, if you and I should sit together  
in a deserted spot,

It would be better than the kingdom of a sultan.

O. 149--Farhat

---

<sup>17</sup> Amin Banani is Chairman of the Persian Department, University of California at Los Angeles.

Robert Graves translates O. 155 as follows:

Should our day's portion be one mancel loaf,  
 A haunch of mutton and a gourd of wine  
 Set for us two alone on a wide plain,  
 No Sultán's bounty could evoke such joy.<sup>18</sup>

## 13

4. 3) Cash and Credit -- FitzGerald's translation has a modern ring which, unless one compared it with the original, would be assumed to be a paraphrase or very loose adaptation. The original:

They say the paradise of Eden with Hurís is delightful;  
 I say that the juice of the grape is delightful.  
 Take this cash, and remove your hand from  
that credit.  
 For the song of drums, brother, from afar is delightful.  
 O. 34--Farhat

## 14

This quatrain was included in the second edition (1868) only, and this edition restores it on aesthetic grounds. It serves as a transitional verse between the worldly and abstract vanities shown in Quatrain No. 13, and the roses-of-the-field simple faith of No. 15.

## 15

4. 1) Look to the Rose -- FitzGerald appears to be providing a biblical allusion here: "Look to the lilies of the field," in order to establish for his Western readers a frame of reference which the Persian reader automatically has. Aside

<sup>18</sup> Robert Graves, Omar Ali-Shah, The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam (London: Cassell, 1967).

from the first line, FitzGerald's translation is faithful to the original:

The rose said: I brought a gold-scattering hand,  
Laughing, laughing, have I blown into the world:  
I snatched the noose-string from off the  
head of my purse and I am gone!  
I flung into the world all the ready money I had.  
C. 383

## 16

ll. 3-4) In the East, it is a custom to bury your household treasures when marauders are imminent, and (hopefully) dig them up again when the danger is past. (Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves and the pirates of the Spanish Main are cases in point.)

FitzGerald's translation of this quatrain is not literally faithful to the original, but it is an excellent equivalent.

The original:

Before Fate makes a night assault on your head,  
Order that they bring you rosy-colored wine.  
You are not gold, O heedless dunce, that  
They hide you in the earth and then dig you up again.  
O. 68--Farhat

In the original, the imagery is based on night-raiding, with Fate or Death as marauder, and the human body as treasure that cannot be buried and then resurrected. FitzGerald substitutes agricultural imagery for night-raiding, with digging, harvesting and burying. Gold is either mentioned or implied in each line.

## 17

The preceding group of quatrains moved from court and seminary into garden and field. We now reach the wilderness for the next four verses. The white-on-white color of this verse's landscape becomes the black-and-white of the next verse.

## 18

The original of this quatrain is fairly close to FitzGerald's translation:

This old caravanserai whose name is the world  
 Is the resting place of dawn and dusk,  
     It is a feast left over from a hundred Jamshids,  
 It is the grave that is the resting place of a hundred  
     Bahráms.

C. 95--Farhat

FitzGerald departs from the original in using the more general "Sultáns" for the specific Jamshids and Bahráms, because in the next quatrain, he will use those monarchs more significantly.

As an illustration of how FitzGerald's work reflected the entire body of his Persian studies, Heron-Allen provides the following story from the poet Saadi, which FitzGerald had read:

One day, Ibrahim bin Adhem was seated at the gate of his palace, and his pages stood near him in a line. A dervish, [sic] bearing the insignia [sic] of his condition, came up and attempted to enter the palace. "Old man," said the pages, "whither goest thou?" "I am going into this caravanserai," said the old man. The pages answered, "It is not a caravanserai; it is the palace of Ibrahim, Shah of Balkh." Ibrahim caused the old man to be brought before him, and said to him: "Darvish, this is my palace." "To whom," asked the

old man, "did this palace originally belong?" To my grandfather." "After him, who was its owner?" "My father." "And to whom did it pass on his death?" "To me." "When you die, to whom will it belong?" "To my son." "Ibrahim," said the Darvish, "a place whither one enters and whence another departs is not a palace, it is a caravanserai."<sup>19</sup>

For a further quatrain based on the above theme, see No. 47.

## 19

With this quatrain, FitzGerald encountered that nightmare of the translator, a poem so splendid in the original that it could not possibly be dealt with justly. His efforts were further complicated by the lack of agreement in the various manuscripts and lithographs from which he worked. This verse seemed to suffer more than the usual amount from scribal error and variation; the animals differ from one text to another; in some there is a lasso, and in others, none. The presence of King Bahrám without King Jamshýd caught FitzGerald's attention, because no other quatrain in the whole body of work that FitzGerald studied ever used a single ancient hero in biographical fashion as this quatrain seemed to do. FitzGerald thereupon made an editorial decision which has been vindicated in the face of present day Persian scholarship. In the E'Tessam-Zadeh text, the Persian original is shown with Jamshýd mentioned first and Bahrám second, exactly as FitzGerald placed them. The following is the

---

<sup>19</sup> Heron-Allen, A Facsimile, p. 296.

Persian text which FitzGerald used:

Ān qasr ke Bahrám dar u jám gereft  
 Rubáh bache kard o shir áram gereft  
 Bahrám ke gur migerefti da'im  
 Emruz negar ke gur Bahrám gereft.

C. 99, Heron-Allen transliteration.

That castle where Bahrám took from the bowl,  
 The fox has babies and the lion rests.  
 Bahrám, who eternally hunted the wild ass  
 Today see how the tomb (ass) has taken Bahrám.

Literal translation--Farhat

Whinfield, however, gives us another Persian text, used by quite a few of the other translators:

Ān qasr ke Bahrám dar u jám gereft  
 Āhu bache kard o shir áram gereft  
 Bahrám ke gur migerefti be kamand  
 Didi ke che guné gur Bahrám gereft.

That castle where Bahrám took from the bowl  
 The deer has babies and the lion rests.

Bahrám, who hunted the wild ass with lasso,  
 See in which way the tomb (ass) has taken Bahrám.

Literal translation--Farhat

The E'Tessam-Zadeh edition reconstructs this quatrain as follows:

Ān qasr ke Jamshýd dar u jam gereft  
 Āhu bache kard o rubá áram gereft  
 Bahrám ke gur migerefti hame omr  
 Didi ke che guné gur Bahrám gereft.

That castle where Jamshýd took (wine) from the bowl  
 The deer gives birth and the fox takes rest.  
 Bahrám who hunted the wild ass all his life  
 You see how the tomb (ass) took Bahrám.

Literal translation--Farhat

Gur, the word for wild ass, is also the word for tomb, which produces the pun in the last line. Bahrám, one of the Sassanian hero kings, is described by FitzGerald in his Note XVIII:

Bahrám Gur--Bahrám of the Wild Ass--a Sassanian Sovereign--had also his Seven Castles (like the King of Bohemia!) each of a different Colour; each with a Royal Mistress within; each of whom tells him a story, as told in one of the most famous Poems of Persia, written by Amir Khusraw: all these Sevens also figuring (according to Eastern Mysticism) the Seven Heavens; and perhaps the Book itself that Eighth, into which the mystical Seven transcend, and within which they resolve. The Ruins of three of Those Towers are yet shown by the Peasantry; as also the Swamp in which Bahrám, sunk, like the master of Ravenswood, while pursuing his Gur.<sup>20</sup>

FitzGerald seemed to know that Bahrám was not the right monarch for line 1, however, in spite of the text in hand. The word *jám* in the first line appeared to him a reference to Jamshýd's seven ringed cup, called in Persian *jám-e Jamshýd*, a phrase which brings in its own seven references which are then echoes in the seven references of Bahrám. (See Quatrain 5 for a discussion of Jamshýd's cup.) A further allusion that supports substituting Jamshýd for Bahrám lies in the ruins of Persepolis, the royal Achaemenian city destroyed by Alexander the Great, which still stands and reminds Persians of their vanished world empire. The ruined city is called by the natives Takht-e Jamshýd, or Jamshýd's Throne. FitzGerald indicates his knowledge of Persepolis in Note XVIII:

Persepolis: call'd also Takht-i Jamshýd--the Throne of Jamshýd, "King Splendid," of the mythical Peshdááian Dynasty, and supposed (according to the

---

<sup>20</sup> Crowell edition, p. 141.



Sháhnáma) to have been founded and built by him. Others refer it to the Work of the Genie King, Jan Ibn Jan--who also built the pyramids--before the time of Adam.<sup>21</sup>

## 20

- l. 1) The magical aspect of Persepolis, Persia's ancient capital, is captured in FitzGerald's personification of the city itself, which throws up its own pillars and drags crowned heads down on its threshold. But the little ringdove, alive in the midst of all of this death and emptiness, sits forlornly on the wall and coos. FitzGerald comments on the double meaning of "coo" in his Note XVIII:

This Quatrain Mr. Binning found, among several of Hafiz and others, inscribed by some stray hand among the ruins of Persepolis. The Ringdove's ancient Pehlevi Coo, Coo, Coo, signifies also in Persian "Where? Where? Where?" In Attár's "Bird-parliament" she is reproved by the Leader of the Birds for sitting still, and for ever harping on that one note of lamentation for her lost Yusuf.<sup>22</sup>

This verse illustrates one of the problems of the translator. The dove's sound, coo, has a second meaning in Persian which could only be handled by a footnote. There is a counterpart in English, however, in the owl with its question "who?" which could not be translated into Persian.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

## 21

The original of this quatrain is as follows:

Every place where there has been a rose or bright tulip,  
 There has been spilled the red blood of a king.  
 Every violet shoot that springs from the earth  
 Is a mole that was once upon the cheek of a lovely one.  
 O. 43

- ll. 2-3) FitzGerald not only understood the myth-making of his Persian poet in regard to the rose and the violet but he draws upon specific parallels in his own tradition in the references to Caesar and the myth of Hyacinthus. His note XVIII illuminates his mental process:

Apropos of Omar's Red Roses in Stanza XIX, I am reminded of an old English Superstition, that our Anemone Pulsatilla, or purple "Pasque Flower" (which grows plentifully about the Fleam Dyke, near Cambridge), grows only where Danish Blood has been spilt.<sup>23</sup>

## 24

- l. 2) The striking image of rolling Time and his Vintage is FitzGerald's. The rest of the verse, however, appears to represent the original closely:

All my sympathetic friends have left me,  
 One by one they have sunk low at the foot of death  
 In the fellowship of souls they were cup-  
 companions,  
 A turn or two before me they became drunk.  
 C. 185

## 26

One of the favorite techniques of Persian versification is the extensive use of alliteration and assonance. One such

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

example is found in another of Omar's quatrains, this edition's No. 87: "Ku kuzegar-o Kuzekhar-o kuzeforush?" (Where is the pot-maker and the pot-seller and the pot-buyer?) FitzGerald's rendering of this quatrain emulates the alliteration of Persian verse in the use of Dust descend in line 2, Dust used three times in line 3, and the s's in line 4. He appears to have chosen the s's as an echo from the word Dust.

## 27

4. 3) Muezzin--the man who calls the faithful to prayer from the minaret of a mosque. FitzGerald has used Tower of Darkness here instead of minaret, a reference to the Zoroastrian exposure towers for the dead. While Omar's Persian readers are aware of their nation's religious and political history, FitzGerald has chosen to supply this particular allusion for the Western reader. This is not an altogether unjustified image on the part of FitzGerald, moreover, in the face of the original line: "Suddenly a muezzin, from his lurking place, cries out." The original verse is as follows:

Some are immersed in contemplation of doctrine and faith,  
Others stand stupefied between doubt and certainty.

Suddenly a muezzin, from his lurking place,  
cries out

"O Fools! The Road is neither here nor there."

C. 396

4. 1) Saints and Sages -- FitzGerald's alliteration. The original refers only to scholars.
4. 3) Foolish Prophets -- FitzGerald's attack, not Omar's. FitzGerald seems to be referring to fanatics of any sort, but his use of the word prophets can be taken as a theological attack -- which is a possible though narrow interpretation of the original:

Those who are tied to intellect and hair-splitting  
 Have perished in bickerings about being and not being.  
 Go, you know-nothing, and choose instead the  
                   juice of the grape,  
 Because those know-nothings with their sour grapes,  
                   have turned into vinegar!

O. 50--Farhat

#### 29 and 30

According to Heron-Allen, these two quatrains are expanded from one original, O. 121, with some influence from O. 72 and C. 281. The original quatrain reads:

For a while, when young, we frequented a teacher,  
 For a while we were contented with our proficiency;  
                   Behold the foundations of the discourse;--what  
                   happened to us?  
 We came in like water and we depart like wind.  
                   O. 121

A footnote in FitzGerald's introductory essay (Crowell, p. 29) casts some light on this verse:

Some of Omar's Rubáiyát warn us of the danger of Greatness, the instability of Fortune, and while advocating charity to all men, recommending us to be too intimate with none. Attár makes Nizám-ul-Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar, "When Nizám-ul-Mulk was in the Agony (of Death) he said, 'Oh God! I am passing away in the hand of the wind.'"

Although FitzGerald uses agricultural imagery in No. 30 which is not found in the original, his imagery brings with it a Zoroastrian note of the holy elements of earth, water and air. Zoroastrian allusions are not infrequent in Persian verse as they refer back to a time of national independence and glory. (See, for example, in No. 100: "Magian" Wine.)

## 33

- l. 1) FitzGerald's Note XXXI: "Saturn, Lord of the Seventh Heaven."<sup>24</sup> FitzGerald emphasizes Omar's role as astrologer in the use of the term "Seventh Gate" and in the image of sitting on Saturn's throne, while the original shows Omar as astronomer. The Persian was expected to fill both posts for his patron.

## 34

- l. 1) The door and key are FitzGerald's attempt to render the imagery of the first two lines as concrete as the last two lines of the original. FitzGerald applies the riddle form to the first two lines based on the use of the word "riddle" or "enigma" in the original;

Neither thou nor I know the secret of eternity,  
And neither thou nor I can de-cypher this riddle;  
There is a talk behind the Curtain of me and thee  
But when the curtain falls neither thou nor I are there.  
C. 387

---

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

## 35 and 36

Verse 35 is not a translation from Omar, but is identified by Heron-Allen as inspired by Attár, No. 972.<sup>25</sup> Its inclusion here is explained by its function as part of a subject cluster, the "quest," or "questioning Destiny" category. In No. 33, Omar established his authority as a scientist; in No. 34, he sets up the sphinx-like riddle; in No. 35 he seeks answers from the sea to the heavens, (reminding us once more of Omar's Astronomy); No. 36 also from Attár,<sup>26</sup> solves the problem by offering blind faith rather than scientific rationalism. The two verses taken from Attár are decidedly more mystical than the skeptical position more regularly found in Omar, as in, say, No. 37; yet there are mystical verses attributed to Omar. Perhaps FitzGerald, by using Attár rather than Omar, is telling us that he does not believe that the attributed mystical verses are authentic. It is more likely, however, that he includes these "cuckoos' eggs" to clarify a subject grouping.

## 37

## FitzGerald's Note XXXVII:

One of the Persian Poets--Attár, I think--has a pretty story about this. A thirsty Traveller dips his hand into a Spring of Water to drink from. By-and-by comes another who draws up and

---

<sup>25</sup>Heron-Allen, Source Analysis, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

drinks from an earthen Bowl, and then departs, leaving his Bowl behind him. The first Traveller takes it up for another draught; but is surprised to find that the same Water which had tasted sweet from his own hand tastes bitter from the earthen Bowl. But a Voice--from Heaven, I think--tells him the clay from which the Bowl is made was once Man; and, into whatever shape renewed, can never lose the bitter flavour of Mortality.<sup>27</sup>

This note illustrates FitzGerald's intense involvement with Persian literature beyond his immediate task. There is continual evidence throughout his notes and his correspondence of a tendency toward cross reference, surely an asset in an arranger of a "retrospective."

## 38

- l. 4) While FitzGerald emphasizes the lip-to-lip aspect of drinking, which follows upon the verse in which the bowl speaks, Omar plays with the idea of the jug handle as a lover's arm, as follows:

This jug was once a plaintive lover, as I am,  
And was in pursuit of one of comely face;  
This handle that thou seest upon its neck  
Is an arm that once lay around the neck of a friend.  
O. 9

## 39

This quatrain plays upon the grotesque imagery of the two originals from which it was derived:

I pondered over the workshop of a potter;  
In the shadow of the wheel I saw that the master,  
with his feet,  
Made handles and covers for goblets and jars,  
Out of the skulls of Kings and the feet of beggars.  
C. 475

---

<sup>27</sup>Crowell edition, p. 142.

I made my way into the abode of the potters of the age,  
 Every moment showed some new skill with clay;  
 I saw, though men devoid of vision saw it not,  
 My ancestors' dust on the hands of every potter.  
 C. 488

When there are two quatrains as similar as the above, there is a strong possibility that one is a variant of the other, produced by either a careless or inventive copyist. Some of the so-called freedom that FitzGerald took in arrangement, expansion, contraction, etc., was obviously based on his recognition of the need for editing doubtful texts. If this editor were confronted with deciding between these two texts, C. 475 would probably be selected as authentic and C. 488 as doubtful, in part due to the concrete vitality of the former. Our method is no more arbitrary than that of a Persian authority, E'Tessam-Zadeh, who claims that he divides authentic quatrains from spurious by their "vigueur, à leur concision, à leur élégance, en un mot à leur perfection."<sup>28</sup> We believe that FitzGerald used the same method.

## 40

In this verse FitzGerald comments upon the preceding clay/pot groupings, but has no specific original.

## 41

FitzGerald's Note XXXIX refers to this quatrain as follows:

The custom of throwing a little Wine on the ground  
 before drinking still continues in Persia, and  
 perhaps generally in the East. Mons. Nicolas

---

<sup>28</sup>E'Tessam-Zadeh, p. 15.



considers it "un signe de libéralité, et en même temps un avertissement que le buveur doit vider sa coupe jusqu'à la dernière goutte." Is it not more likely an ancient Superstition; a Libation to propitiate Earth, or make her an Accomplice in the illicit Revel? Or, perhaps, to divert the Jealous Eye by some sacrifice of superfluity, as with the Ancients of the West? With Omar, we see something more is signified; the precious Liquor is not lost, but sinks into the ground to refresh the dust of some poor Wine-worshipper foregone.

Thus Hafiz, copying Omar in so many ways: "When thou drinkest Wine pour a draught on the ground. Wherefore fear the Sin which brings to another Gain?"<sup>29</sup>

FitzGerald demonstrates once more his capacity for cross-reference. Comparable material, drawn from other Persian poets as well as from contemporary folklorists, is noted, compared, and used to lend authority to his translation. Quatrains 41-45 provide a subject cluster of cups and earth -- an excursion which begins and ends with the potter and his pot.

The wine is spilled from cup to ground, and up from the ground rises another cup, the tulip. The tulip merges into a waving cypress (the Persian maiden appears conventionally in poetry as a cypress with tulip cheeks), which then becomes another female, Mother Earth. With No. 45, we return to the cup -- this time with the Angel of Death as Saki (cup bearer).

## 43

4. 2) The cypress image is commonly used in Persia to describe a slender, graceful female form. The cypress in European

<sup>29</sup> Crowell edition, p. 142.

terms, however, is funereal. FitzGerald allows us to grasp both meanings.

- l. 3) The mother -- the Great Goddess, Kali, Ashtarte, etc. FitzGerald here does not seem to be merely referring to Mother Earth, who is another aspect of the Great Goddess. He gives us a two-fold "Feminine Principal" reference: the erotic cypress and the deadly mother.

## 44

Although FitzGerald has translated closely from the original in this quatrain, his translation hints at parody of mathematical logic in his use of the word "nothing" as though it were "zero." The Western reader is reminded that "zero" is a mathematical concept which originated in India and was adopted by the Moslems who introduced it to the West during the Crusades. Advanced mathematics is difficult with the old Roman system, a disadvantage immediately recognized by the European military and economic advanced thinkers. Thus, the humble "nothing," or zero, is in reality the mighty basis for all advanced calculation.

Khayyám, if from wine you are drunk, be happy.  
 If with a tulip-cheeked one you sit, be happy.  
     Since the end of all things is that you will  
     be nothing,  
 While you are, imagine that you are not,--and be happy.  
     O. 102

The FitzGerald translation is largely monosyllabic and terse, with the exceptions of the words "nothing," "Khayyam," and

"Happy," which are thereby emphasized. In the original, the three rhyming verbs are also terse and monosyllabic: khosh bash (be happy).

By FitzGerald's final edition, this quatrain becomes over-polished and loses its verve and sense of mathematical parody:

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,  
 End in the All begins and ends in--yes;  
     Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY  
 You were--TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

## 45

This is one instance in which the final effort of FitzGerald appears more satisfactory than the first attempt. The original Persian verse has a remarkable "full circle" image: the circle of the firmament, the cup (which echoes the Jamshýd's Cup of previous quatrains), and the wheel ("when thy turn comes"). The original appears as follows:

In the circle of the firmament, whose depths are  
     invisible,  
 There is a cup which, in due time, they will cause  
     all to drink;  
     When thy turn comes, do not utter lamentations.  
 Drink wine gaily for it has come to be thy turn.  
                                 C. 256

FitzGerald does not attempt to deal with the wheel image. Instead, he employs the more Western death and water imagery in the dark drink and the River Styx. His first translation, which he later revised, appears as follows:

While the Rose blows along the River Brink,  
 With old Khayyám the Ruby Vintage drink:  
     And when the Angel with his darker Draught  
 Draws up to Thee--take that, and do not shrink.

His second attempt runs:

So when at last the Angel of the Drink  
 Of Darkness finds you by the river-brink,  
     And, proffering his Cup, invites your Soul  
 Forth to your Lips to quaff it--do not shrink.

FitzGerald's final version more closely approaches Omar's simplicity, directness, and spirit. The second and final attempts also draw upon a recurring figure in Persian verse in which a dying man's soul comes up to his lips with his last breath. FitzGerald discusses this in his Note XLIII:

According to one beautiful Oriental Legend, Azrael accomplishes his mission by holding to the nostril an Apple from the Tree of Life.<sup>30</sup>

## 47

4. 3) Ferrásh -- Persian for steward. FitzGerald leaves this word untranslated, apparently in consideration of its sound and its mystery.

This quatrain is actually an expansion of C. 95, which is the source for both this edition's No. 18 and No. 47. These two quatrains would fit in sequence quite as well as do Nos. 46 and 47.

## 48

4. 3) Sáki -- Persian Sáqi, a beautiful maiden or youth who serves wine at a drinking party.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

The original verse appears as follows:

Khayyám! although the pavilion of heaven  
 Has spread its tent and closed the door upon all  
     discussion,  
     In the goblet of existence, like bubbles of wine  
 The Eternal Sâki brings to light a thousand Khayyâms.  
 N. 137

The tent image was used by FitzGerald in Quatrain No. 47,  
 which may account for his not observing it as it appears in  
 the striking original.

## 49

- t. 4) As much as Ocean of a pebble-cast -- the ocean and pebble are  
 FitzGerald's. Omar rarely uses sea imagery. FitzGerald  
 first encountered a striking sea image while reading Attâr,  
 and in a letter to Cowell dated March 12, 1857, he discusses  
 this issue:

While I think of it, why is the Sea (in that Apologue  
 of Attâr once quoted by Falconer) supposed to have lost  
 God? Did the Persians agree with something I remember  
 in Plato about the Sea and all in it being of an  
 inferior Nature, in spite of Homer's "divine Ocean  
 &c."<sup>31</sup>

## 50

- t. 1) Annihilation's Waste -- the first two lines are FitzGerald's,  
 and represent, perhaps, FitzGerald's knowledge of the Persian  
 landscape by way of Binning's book. There is a central  
 desert in Iran which was once a salt sea. Travelers today  
 describe it as resembling the face of the moon in its total  
 sterility.

---

<sup>31</sup>Richardson, p. 589.

## 51 and 52

- l. 3) Hair and Alif - Alif, the Arabic letter A is formed by a vertical pen stroke, or, in FitzGerald's imagination, a single hair. FitzGerald appears to be using the cabalistic concept that Alif, as the beginning of the alphabet, is also the beginning of all things, since "In the Beginning, there was the Word." The Word, or Logos, is the clue to the mystery of the godhead, in Gnostic philosophy.
- Verse 52 runs on into 53, a violation of the quatrain rule which requires the self containment of each verse. FitzGerald elsewhere disregards this rule in clustering by subject matter (e.g., in the "Pot Book"), but running a sentence from one verse to another is exceedingly rare.

## 53

- l. 3) Máh to Máhi -- Moon to fish. FitzGerald uses this alliterated and untranslated phrase, exotic and mythologically fascinating, which he takes from Attár's Bird Parliament, Distich 38: "From the back of the Fish to the Moon every atom attests Him." According to M. E. Harding,<sup>32</sup> the moon was the earliest deity who presided over all earthly waters; and the fish, subject to the moon and living in her domain, represents the masculine essence of spirit and quest.

---

<sup>32</sup>Mary Esther Harding, Women's Mysteries (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1935), pp. 27, 193.

One of the two original quatrains drawn upon by FitzGerald for this verse employs lunar metamorphosis to illustrate change of form but permanence of essence:

That Moon which is by Nature Skilled in metamorphosis  
 Is sometimes animal and sometimes vegetable.  
 Do not imagine that it will become non-existent --  
 away with thought!  
 It is always possessed of its essence though its  
 qualities cease to be.

C. 72

The second quatrain provides the quicksilver image:

Place wine in my hand for my heart is aglow,  
 And this fleet-footed existence is like quicksilver.  
 Arise! for the wakefulness of good fortune turns  
 to slumber;  
 Know thou that the fire of youth is (fugitive) like  
 water.

C. 40

56

FitzGerald's translation is crisp and concise, lacking only the pithy insults of Omar's original, O. 50, which was also used as the source for this edition's No. 28:

Those who are tied to intellect and hair-splitting  
 Have perished in bickerings about being and not being.  
 Go, you know-nothing, and choose instead the juice of  
 the grape,  
 Because those know-nothings, with their sour grapes,  
 have turned into vinegar.

The use of the grape is far more varied in Persia than in Europe, and because of this, Omar was able to provide a subtle, malevolent grape imagery which is quite untranslatable. In Persia, the grape is used in its unripe state in a meat and eggplant stew; the new leaf is used to wrap around rice and meat, as we use stuffed cabbage; the





FitzGerald's Note LVI comments: "A Jest, of course, at his Studies."<sup>34</sup> FitzGerald has provided an accurate parallel of the original:

I know the outwardness of existence and non existence,  
 I know the inwardness of all that is high and low;  
     Nevertheless, let me be ashamed (weary of) my own  
     knowledge  
 If I recognize any degree higher than drunkenness.

O. 120

4. 1) "For is" and "is not" -- FitzGerald has focused on the word "existence," which in Persian is zistan, an archaic form of "to be." The "Rule and Line" is FitzGerald's reminder that Omar was a mathematician, just as "by Logic I define" is a reminder that he was a logician as well. Omar accomplishes the same end by saying "I know..." His readers already knew who he was. The last two lines are equivalent in both versions -- with the word "degree," in the original, having a pun on rank, class, and mathematics, while FitzGerald's pun is on profundity and immersion.
- The "outwardness" and "inwardness," and the "high and low" of the first two lines inspired the first line of Quatrain No. 70: "For in and out, above, about, below," which effectively combines the magic shadow show with a Victorian carrousel.

---

<sup>34</sup>Crowell edition, p. 143.

- l. 1) My Computations -- in FitzGerald's introductory essay to his verse translations of 1868 and 1872, he discusses Omar's fame as astrologer and mathematician, and quotes Omar's famous contemporary, the great prime minister at Bagdad, Nizám-ul-Mulk: (FitzGerald's asides are interspersed with those of the Vizier.)

When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it, the result was the Jalali era (so called from Jalal-ud-din, one of the king's names)-- "a computation of time," says Gibbon "which surpasses the Julian and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style." He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled "Ziji-Malikshahi," and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.<sup>35</sup>

- l. 2) Angel Shape -- FitzGerald's mistaken translation of pari for piri, the former being fairy; the latter, old man. The original of this verse is considerably less delicate than FitzGerald's rendition:

Yesterday whilst drunk, I was passing a tavern,  
I saw a drunken old man bearing a vessel on his Shoulder.  
I said, "Old man, does not God make thee ashamed?"  
He replied, "God is merciful, go, drink wine!"

C. 297

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-7.

- l. 2) The two-and Seventy jarring Sects -- FitzGerald's Note LIX:

The Seventy-two Religions supposed to divide the World,  
including Islamism, as some think: but others not.<sup>36</sup>

This editor does not agree with the above. The Persian word malat seems to refer to nationality rather than sect. In Omar's day, moreover, seventy-two kingdoms could be more readily conceived than the seventy-two sects more jarringly found in FitzGerald's day. The original verse runs:

Drink wine that it may carry off a multitude of  
calamities,  
And carry off reflection on the seventy-two  
nationalities.  
Don't avoid that alchemist from whom  
You take one drink and he carries off a thousand  
calamities.

O. 77-Farhat

- l. 3) Alchemist -- in Omar, of course, the chemist of the Islamic world, from whom we of the West derive both the word and the pharmacopoeia. The Moslem chemist prepared drugs and medicines, as well as metallurgical and other industrial formulas. In his latter capacity, the alchemist who sought the secret of transmuting lead into gold, came into European common lore during the Renaissance. The "al" (meaning the) was dropped from the medical variety of chemist in Europe, retaining the older form for the esoteric metallurgist. FitzGerald, seeing the word "Alkhemi" in the original, turns the meaning from Omar's drug dispenser to its more exotic

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

European connotation. The effect of FitzGerald's change of emphasis does not really falsify the translation, as Omar's Alchemist embraces both meanings; but it does remind the Western reader of the Islamic origin of chemistry.

## 62

## l. 1) Mahmúd -- FitzGerald's Note LX:

Alluding to Sultan Mahmúd's conquest of India and its dark people.<sup>37</sup>

FitzGerald was fascinated with the idea of India and its dark peoples, as he notes in a wistful letter to Cowell, dated January 22, 1857:

It was only yesterday I heard from your Brother of a Letter from you, telling of your safe Arrival; of the Dark Faces about you at your Calcutta Caravanserri! Methinks how I should like to be there!<sup>38</sup>

In this verse, FitzGerald not only provides a glimpse of Oriental history (one of the varieties of allusion the translator must accommodate), but also mirrors Omar's alliterative method and onomatopoeia in the sword slashing "s" sounds.

## 67

## l. 2) Prophets -- once more, as in No. 28, FitzGerald takes it upon himself to use the word Prophets, which Omar never does. Islam bases its authority upon the progressive revelations of

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Richardson, p. 584.

all the prophets from Abraham to Mohammad. Omar frequently attacks hypocrisy in his verses, but never the basis of his religion.

The original verse reads:

Those who have become oceans of excellence and  
cultivation,  
And from the collections of their perfections have  
become lights of their fellows,  
Have not made a road out of this dark night,  
They have told a fable and have gone to sleep.  
C. 127

68 and 69

The Heavenly vault is a girdle cast from my weary body.  
Jihun (River Oxus) is a water course worn by my  
filtered tears.  
Hell is a spark from my useless worries,  
Paradise is a moment of time when I am tranquil.  
O. 33

The imagery of the first line of the original is not easy to picture, much less translate. It does suggest, however, a vast darkness girdled by stars. The second line gives us a great river, in this case the river which forms the easternmost border of Persia, beyond which lie the Steppes of Central Asia -- once more, vast, dark space. Against all this immensity, Omar gives us the Astronomer's view of man's hell and paradise: a tiny spark, a brief moment. Fitzgerald reverses the order of the thoughts, yet retains in part the original dichotomy of man's smallness and the universe's vastness. The image of the river of tears is replaced by the "Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire." The

next line, "Cast on the Darkness" takes the reader into the next quatrain, the magic lantern, or magic shadow-show verse.

## 70

4. 2) Magic Shadow-show -- FitzGerald's Note LXVIII:

Fanusi khiyal, a Magic-lantern still used in India; the cylindrical Interior being painted with various Figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the lighted Candle within.<sup>39</sup>

The original quatrain runs:

This vault of heaven, beneath which we stand bewildered,  
 We know to be a sort of Magic-Lantern:  
     Know thou that the Sun is the lamp-flame and the  
                   universe is the lamp,  
 We are like figures that revolve in it.  
   O. 108

## 71

4. 1) Chequer-board of Nights and Days -- FitzGerald's rendering of the "Chessboard of existence." FitzGerald's choice of phrase further emphasizes the black and white, night and day imagery that is understood but not stressed in the original. The same imagery has been previously encountered in the verse which FitzGerald translates:

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
 Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day....

The original which inspired FitzGerald's superior effort is:

To speak plain language, and not in parables (in the  
     Manner of truth, and not in the manner of metaphor)

---

<sup>39</sup>Crowell edition, p. 144.

We are the pieces and heaven plays the game,  
 We are played together in a baby-game upon the  
 chessboard of existence,  
 (and) One by one we return to the box of non-existence.  
 O. 94

FitzGerald has improved upon Omar's imagery in this verse. The "baby-game," Omar's scornful reference to chess (which undoubtedly had as many obsessive devotees in his time as in FitzGerald's), becomes for FitzGerald an opportunity to superimpose upon game terminology life's major events.

## 72

l. 4) He knows about it -- FitzGerald's imagination was captured by the last line of the original, which he comments upon in Note LXX:

A very mysterious Line in the Original:

O dánad O dánad O dánad O----  
 breaking off something like our Woodpidgeon's Note  
 which she is said to take up just where she left off.<sup>40</sup>

If FitzGerald has known how that line is pronounced in native Persian rather than in the North Indian version of Persian which most Englishmen trained for the civil service learned, he would have been even more impressed. His line would then become:

Oo dánad, oo dánad, oo dánad, ooo...

The original verse indicates clearly the polo reference:

O thou who are driven like a ball by the mallet of Fate,  
 Go to the right or take the left, but say nothing;  
 For He who set thee running and galloping  
 He knows, he knows, he knows, he----

C. 422

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

## 73

There is a composite source for this quatrain. FitzGerald appears to use his verse to summarize all the game quatrains, from magic lantern through polo.

## 74

- l. 1) The Moving Finger -- FitzGerald transforms the "pen" of the original into this allusion to Belshazzar's Feast, thus incorporating a reference to Persian history. Belshazzar was the king who was found wanting, and who lost his kingdom to Cyrus, the first great Persian emperor. FitzGerald bases his verse on two quatrains which are similar enough to suggest that they might be scribal variations on one original:

From the beginning was written what shall be;  
Unhaltingly the Pen writes, and is heedless of good  
and bad;

On the First Day He appointed everything that  
must be--

Our grief and our efforts are vain.

O. 31

What the Pen has written never changes;  
And grieving only results in deep affliction;  
Even though, all thy life, thou sufferest anguish,  
Not one drop becomes increased beyond what it is.

O. 54

## 76

- l. 3) First Morning of Creation wrote -- FitzGerald produces here another quatrain based on the moving finger or writing pen quatrains cited for No. 74.



78-79-80-81

These angry quatrains have been attacked by the mystical school of Omar interpretation as pure fabrication. Heron-Allen, however, claims that FitzGerald did not invent these verses; he compiled them from existing quatrains: C. 85, N. 226, C. 201, O. 148, C. 115, C. 286, and C. 510.<sup>41</sup>

The dramatic effectiveness of this quatrain group benefits from the cumulative power of the sequence, an advantage that is lacking in the non-sequential arrangement of the original anthology.

The snake in No. 81, however, appears to be FitzGerald's idea; it does not appear in the Bodleian Manuscript, and Heron-Allen could not find it in any of the other manuscripts used by FitzGerald.

82

## KÚZA NÁMA (Pot Saga)

All of this material is taken from an assortment of original quatrains, with little sequential relationship evident.

FitzGerald has expanded and arranged this material to form a striking commentary on the mystery of man's relationship with God, predestination, and free will.

l. 2) Ramazán -- FitzGerald's Note XC:

At the close of the Fasting Month, Ramazán, (which makes the Musulman unhealthy and unamiable), the first Glimpse of the New Moon (who rules their division of the Year), is looked for with the utmost Anxiety, and

<sup>41</sup>The Sufistic Quatrains, pp. 92-94.

hailed with Acclamation. Then it is that the Porter's Knot may be heard--toward the Cellar. Omar has elsewhere a pretty Quatrain about the same Moon--

"Be of Good Cheer--the sullen Month will die,  
"And a young Moon requite us by and by;

"Look how the Old one, meagre, bent, and wan  
"With Age and Fast, is fainting from the Sky!"<sup>42</sup>

The original quatrain upon which FitzGerald based his above elegant translation is as follows:

Be happy! For the Moon of thy festival will come,  
Thy means of mirth will all be propitious:  
This moon has become lean, bent figured and thin,  
Thou may'st say that it will sink under this trouble.  
C. 218

## 84

This verse appears to be derived from a charming original:

There is a cup which wisdom loud acclaims,  
And for its beauty gives it a hundred kisses on the brow,  
Such a sweet cup, this Potter of the World  
Makes, and then shatters it upon the ground.  
C. 198

The anger of FitzGerald's verse stands in sharp contrast to Omar's light-hearted wit. The point of the verses is the same; the manner, however, differs. Omar gives his cup a life sufficient to embrace wisdom, beauty, and acclaim; FitzGerald's pot is made and broken.

## 87

FitzGerald had a great deal of difficulty with this quatrain, as is attested by his multiple efforts to translate it. The original from which this quatrain, as well as Nos. 82 and 83,

---

<sup>42</sup>Crowell edition, p. 146.

are all derived is as follows: (In this case, the Persian is given to further illustrate FitzGerald's dilemma.)

Be kárgahe Kuzegari raftam dush  
 Didam do hezar kuze guyá va Khamush  
 Nagá yeki kuze bar ávard khorush  
 Ku kuzegar o kuzekhar o kuze forush.

O. 103

To the workshop of the pot maker I went last night  
 I saw two thousand pots talking and silent  
 Suddenly one of the pots brought forth a crow (cry)  
 Where are the pot maker and pot buyer and pot seller?

The entire verse is a play on the word pot (kuze) and multiple alliterations of K and Kh. The last line is dramatically enigmatic. The word for "cry" in line 3 is khorush, which also signifies cockcrow, thus the "ku" in line 4 is both bird sound and contraction of "koja," or "where." In FitzGerald's first edition, he achieves his closest translation to the original, although even here he diverts the first line to a separate quatrain, (No. 82).

FitzGerald First Edition, LX:

And Strange to tell, among the Earthen lot  
 Some could articulate, while others not;  
 And suddenly one more impatient cried--  
 "Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

He has all the material here, but the alliteration and the word play do not approach his model.

FitzGerald Second Edition, XCIV:

Thus with the Dead or with the Living, What?  
 And Why? So ready, but the Wherefor not,  
 One on a sudden peevishly exclaim'd,  
 "Which is the Potter, pray, and which the Pot?"

Accuracy is sacrificed in this rendition, but the "p" alliteration is improved. There is also "w" alliteration in the first two lines.

FitzGerald Third Edition, LXXXVII:

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot--  
 I think a Súfi pipkin--waxing hot--  
     "All this of Pot and Potter--Tell me, then,  
 Who makes--Who sells--Who buys--Who is the Pot?"

The pot word game is decidedly fuller in this attempt, and the accuracy of pot maker, pot seller, and pot buyer, is retained. FitzGerald even manages a pot pun of his own, in true Omarian style, in the "pipkin," small earthen pot. The Sufi reference is FitzGerald's own liberty, not justified by the original. Our choice of FitzGerald's fifth edition over the other attempts is not based on very solid ground. The third edition translation is better in many ways, but its last line is too long and awkward. One cannot ever be satisfied, any more than FitzGerald was, with any translation of that particular tour de force of Persian verse making.

## 89

FitzGerald has taken the idea for this quatrain from the last two lines of the following:

When I am abased beneath the foot of Destiny,  
 And am rooted up from the hope of life,  
     Take heed that thou makest nothing but a  
         goblet of my clay,  
 Haply when it is full of wine I may revive.

O. 116

- l. 2) The New Moon signifying the end of Ramazan, the fasting month.
- l. 4) The wine bearers -- porters, who carry the wine on knotted shoulder yokes.
- FitzGerald comments on this quatrain in Note XC, which has already been used to explain Quatrain No. 82.

- l. 2) Wash my body -- Robert Graves tells us that wine is used as an antiseptic for corpses, in his attempt to explain away all wine references as mystical.<sup>43</sup>
- l. 3) Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt -- not in the original, which has instead a coffin made of vine wood, an equally improbable and outrageous suggestion. It seems that FitzGerald drew upon his knowledge of Persian custom for his delightful joke. Vine leaves are used to make a Near Eastern delicacy called Dolmé, (stuffed grape-leaves.) FitzGerald has Omar, in effect, saying: "All parts of the grape are good. Make a dolmé of me!" The original source for this quatrain is as follows:

Take heed to stay me with the wine-cup,  
 And make this amber face like a ruby;  
 When I die, wash me with wine,  
 And out of the wood of the vine make the planks  
 of my coffin.

O. 69

<sup>43</sup> The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam, p. 25.

## 92

The original of this quatrain creates problems for the Sufi interpreters of Omar's verse. It appears to be deliberately defiant of the orthodox injunction against intoxicants:

So much wine will I drink that the smell of it  
 Will waft from the dust when I go beneath the dust,  
     That when tipplers will visit my grave,  
 From the smell of wine they will fall rotten-drunk  
 (dead drunk.)

## N. 14--Farhat

Nicolas notes that this verse is entirely mystical, however it may seem. For a further discussion of this matter, refer to FitzGerald's biography of Omar in standard editions of the *Rubáiyát*.

## 93

According to Heron-Allen, this quatrain is inspired by C. 170. It appears also to be related to Omar's witty allusion to his pen name (tentmaker) in a verse to which FitzGerald refers in his introduction:

Khayyam, who stitched the tents of science,  
 Has fallen in grief's furnace and been suddenly burned;  
     The Shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes  
     of his life,  
 And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing.

## O. 22

## 94

This is the second verse which appears to be derived from the same source as No. 7:

Every day I resolve to repent in the evening.  
 Repenting of the brimful goblet, and the cup;  
     But now that the season of roses has come,  
     I cannot grieve,  
 Give penitence for repentance in the season of Roses,  
     O Lord.

It is interesting to note how much closer this version is to the original than is No. 7. And yet that earlier verse has extraordinary vitality and picks up a spring allusion (the bonfire leaping) which is not adequately expressed in "the season of Roses." For a further discussion of these two verses, see the introduction to this volume.

## 95

Quatrains 93 and 95 are each derived in part from the following original:

Although wine has rent my veil (of reputation)  
 So long as I have a soul I will not be separated  
     from wine;  
     I am in perplexity concerning vintners, for they--  
 What will they buy that is better than what they sell?

## 96

4. 2) Sweet-scented Manuscript -- Persian illuminated manuscripts were written on the finest of paper, often dusted with gold leaf and, of course, delicately scented.

The original quatrain, which FitzGerald has closely, as well as beautifully translated, is as follows:

Alas! that the book of youth is folded up;  
 And that this fresh purple spring is winter-stricken;  
     That bird of joy, whose name is Youth,  
 Alas! I know not when it came nor when it went.

This is an excellent translation of the original, diverging only in FitzGerald's removing it partially from the category of Shikayat-i rosgar (complaints against the "wheel of heaven") to that of Firakiya and Wisaliya (love poems) by the addition of "Ah, Love! could you and I..."

The original:

Had I, like God, control of the heavens,  
 Would I not do away with the heavens altogether,  
     Would I not so construct another heaven  
             from the beginning  
 That, being free, one might attain to the heart's  
     desire?

C. 395

U. 1-2) FitzGerald manages to bring into his verse two of the word plays on the moon which appear in the original in his use of "Moon of my Delight" and "Moon of Heaven," and a reference to the moon's cycle in "know'st no wane," and in line 3 "oft hereafter rising." The original is a remarkable example of word play and archetypal moon mythology in its last two lines:

Mai nush be nure máh, ai máh, ke máh  
 Besyar bejuyad o niabad mará.

Drink wine in the moonlight, O Moon (Beloved),  
     for the Moon  
 will seek us very much and not find us.

O. 5--Farhat

L. 1) And when Thyself with shining Foot -- in his final edition, FitzGerald alters this line to read: "And when like her, Oh



Saki," which loses the mythologically fascinating reference to the moon's foot. One of the earliest symbols for the moon in antiquity is a long cross with a globe or circle on top -- a sort of moon tree, the foot of which fertilizes the earth. The primitive swastika is another symbol of the moon, the earliest form of which is three connected feet in a spoke arrangement, which symbolizes the fleet-footed aspect of the moon.<sup>44</sup> FitzGerald took inspiration for this quatrain from two much less dramatic verses of Omar:

Dear ones, when you meet together,  
 You must remember me very warmly.  
     When you drink health-giving wine together  
 And my turn comes, turn my wine bowl over.  
   O. 83--Farhat

The following is apparently a variant of the above, with the word "Magian," which refers to Zoroastrian wine, the wine of the idealized, pre-Islamic past:

Dear ones, when you agree to gather together  
 For the sake of delight in one another's company,  
     When the Saki takes Magian wine around in his  
   hand,  
 Make a toast to the memory of a certain luckless one!  
   O. 84--Farhat

## 101

This verse appears, out of the usual alphabetical order, as the opening quatrain of the Bodleian manuscript. It serves as a disclaimer of sorts, so that the reader will know that Omar is a member of the Faith in good standing, notwithstanding his wit at the expense of pompous fools, be they

<sup>44</sup>Harding, p. 205.

clerics or his fellow professors. Since this was the first quatrain FitzGerald read, he must have taken great care in translating it, although it appears only in his introductory essay rather than in the text. The second line of the original, however, may well have inspired FitzGerald's decision to organize the verses as a loosely strung jewel -- a necklace of rubies.

By placing this verse at the end of the edition, I, too, hopefully affirm: "That One for two I never did mis-read."

TAMAM SHUD

Comparative Chart of Quatrain Numbers

FitzGerald's Editions

Quatrain No.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th & 5th
1	I			
2		II	II	II
3	III	III	III	III
4	IV	IV	IV	IV
5	V			
6	VI			
7	VII			
8		VIII	VIII	VIII
9	VIII			
10	IX			
11	X			
12	XI			
13			XIII	XIII
14		XIV		
15	XIII			
16	XV	XVI	XV	XV
17	XIV			XVI
18	XVI			
19		XIX	XVIII	XVIII
20 (Introduction)				
21	XVIII	XXIV	XIX	XXIX
22	XIX			
23			XXI	
24				XXII
25	XXII	XXIII	XXIII	XXIII
26	XXIII	XXVI	XXIV	XXIV
27		XXVII	XXV	XXV
28	XXV	XXIX	XXVI	
29			XXVII	XXVII
30	XXVIII			
31	XXIX	XXXII	XXIX	XXIX
32	XXX			
33			XXXI	XXXI
34	XXXII			
35		XXXVI		
36	XXXIII			
37	XXXIV			
38			XXXVI	XXXVI
39	XXXVI			
40				XXXVII
41			XXXIX	XXXIX
42			XL	XL
43		XLIV		
44	XLVII			

XUM

Quatrain No.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th & 5th
45				XLIII
46			XLIV	XLIV
47			XLV	XLV
48			XLVI	XLVI
49		XLVIII		
50	XXXVIII			
51				XLIX
52		LI		
53		LII	LI	LI
54				LII
55				LIII
56	XXXIX			
57			LV	LV
58		LVIII	LVI	LVI
59			LVII	LVII
60	XLII			
61	XLIII			
62		LXII	LX	LX
63		LXIII	LXI	LXI
64		LXIV		
65		LXVI	LXIII	LXIII
66		LXVII	LXIV	LXIV
67			LXV	LXV
68			LXVI	LXVI
69				LXVII
70	XLVI			
71	LXIX			
72		LXXV	LXX	
73	XLV			
74		LXXVI		LXXI
75		LXXVIII	LXXII	
76		LXXIX	LXXIII	LXXIII
77		LXXX	LXXIV	LXXIV
78		LXXXIV	LXXIX	
79		LXXXV	LXXIX	
80				LXXX
81			LXXXI	LXXXI
82		LXXXIX	LXXXII	LXXXII
83		XC		
84		XCI		
85	LCII			
86	LXIII			
87				LXXXVII
88			LXXXVIII	LXXXVIII
89	LXV			

Quatrain No.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th & 5th
90			XC	XC
91	LXVII			
92		C	XCII	XCII
93	LXIX			
94	LXX	CII	XCIV	XCIV
95			XCV	XCV
96	LXXII			
97			XCVIII	XCVIII
98		CVIII		
99	LXXIV			
100	LXXV			
101 (Introduction)				

## A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arberry, A. J. Classical Persian Literature. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Omar Khayyam: A New Version. London: John Murray, 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Persian Poems: An Anthology of Verse Translations. 1954; rpt. London: Dent, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Romance of the Rubaiyat: E. FitzGerald's First Edition with Introduction and Notes. London: Ruskin House, 1959.
- Bentham, George. Variorum and Definitive Edition of E. FitzGerald. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902-3, 7 vols.
- Binning, Robert. Journal of a Two Year Journey into Persia, India and Ceylon, etc. London, 1857, 2 vols.
- Bowen, John Charles Edward. A New Selection from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Rendered into English Verse, Literal Translation by A. J. Arberry. London: Unicorn Press, 1961.
- Browne, Edward Granville. A Literary History of Persia, from Firdawsi to Sa'di. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906, Volume II.
- Draper, John W. "FitzGerald's Persian Local Color," West Virginia University Philological Papers, XIV, 1963, pp. 26-56.
- Edward FitzGerald: Letters & Literary Remains. Ed. W. A. Wright. London: Limited edition of 725 copies; 1902-3, 7 vols.
- E'Tessam-Zadeh, A. G. Les Rubaiyat D'OMAR KHAYYAM (texte persan et traduction en vers francais.) Teheran: Librairie-Imprimerie Beroukhim, 1931.
- FitzGerald's Rubaiyat. Ed. Carl J. Weber. Centennial Edition. Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1959.
- FitzGerald's Selected Works. Ed. Joanna Richardson. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962.
- Gail, Marzieh. Persia and the Victorians. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1951.
- Graves, Robert and Ali-Shah, Omar. The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam: A New Translation with Critical Commentaries. London: Cassell, 1967.
- Harding, Mary Esther. Women's Mysteries. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1935.

- Heron-Allen, Edward. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: a Facsimile of the Manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, with a Transcript into Modern Persian Characters, translated, with an Introduction and Notes, and a Bibliography, and Some Sidelights upon Edward FitzGerald's Poem by Edward Heron-Allen, 2nd edition, revised and enlarged. London: Nichols, 1898.
- Some Sidelights on Edward FitzGerald's Poem.  
London: Nichols, 1898.
- Jones, Sir William. A Grammar of the Persian Language. London: W. Nicol, 1828, 9th ed.
- Nicolas, J. B. Les Quatrains de Kheyam, (Persian text with French translation). Paris, 1867.
- Nicholson, R. A. Studies in Islamic Mysticism. Cambridge University Press, 1921.
- Norton, Charles Eliot. North American Review, Vol. 109, 1869, pp. 565-583. A review of J. B. Nicolas' Les Quatrains de Kheyam, Traduits du Persan (1867) and the anonymously translated English version (the as yet unknown Edward FitzGerald).
- The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Comprising the Metrical Translations by Edward FitzGerald and E. H. Whinfield and the Prose Version of Justin Huntly McCarthy. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1900.
- Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Multi-variorum Edition. Ed. Nathan Haskell Dole. Boston: Joseph Night Co., 1896, 2 vols.
- The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Rendered into English Verse by Edward FitzGerald, Complete Edition Showing Variants in the Five Original Printings. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1921.
- Saklatwalla, Jamshedji E. The Voice of Omar Khayyam. Bombay, Qayyimah Press, 1936.
- The Sufistic Quatrains of Omar Khayyam, in Definitive Form including Translation of E. FitzGerald (101 quatrains) with Edward Heron-Allen's Analysis, E. H. Whinfield (500 quatrains) and J. B. Nicolas (464 quatrains). Ed. Edward Heron-Allen. New York and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1903.
- Tutin, J. R. A Concordance to FitzGerald's Translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. London, 1900.

Thonet, Jeanne-Marie H. Étude sur E. FitzGerald et la littérature persane. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège. Fasc. XLI.

Whinfield, E. H. The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam: Persian Text with English Verse Translation. London: Trubner & Co., 1883.

Wright, Thomas. The Life of Edward FitzGerald. London: Grant Richards, 1904, 2 vols.



**APPENDIX**

### Other Translators

In the more than one hundred years since the FitzGerald translation was published, a number of translator-scholars have entered the field of Rubaiyat translation. Almost all of these works are of interest to the specialist who wants to compare FitzGerald's efforts with other more verbatim attempts, but none of these translations has enjoyed wide public success. FitzGerald's work remains to this day the definitive living translation.

The Nathan Haskell Dole Multi-Variorum Edition of the Rubaiyat (Boston, 1905) offers an interesting comparative exposition of the major 19th Century translations of Omar, using the FitzGerald translation as the point of comparison. Some of the leading figures discussed by Dole are as follows:

1. Edward Byles Cowell, FitzGerald's friend and teacher, who contributed to the Calcutta Review (March 1858) a long article containing a number of metrical versions of Omar Khayyam's poem.
2. J. B. Nicolas, first French translator of the Rubaiyat (1867). Nicolas served as Chief Interpreter at the French Embassy in Persia. His edition contains 464 quatrains from the Tehran Lithograph copy, together with prose translation and a great array of notes. Dole comments that "M. Nicolas's versions are often flat and unsatisfactory," and later, "he is open to the severer charge of frequent inaccuracy, and he is on the whole an untrustworthy guide." A 20th Century Persian scholar, E'Tessam-Zadeh, refers to Nicolas' work as follows: "Cette traduction est détestablement mauvaise." (Les Rubaiyat d'Omar Khayyam, Tehran, 1931, p. 14.) Nicolas' work is significant for the

position it assumes in regard to the Omar as Sufi, which is discussed at length in the introduction to this volume.

3. Friedrich von Bodenstedt, (1878), a great German linguist and Slavic languages specialist. In his biography, there is neither record of formal Persian study nor of Persian travel.

4. Graf von Schack (1878), German translator of three hundred thirty-six Rubaiyat, thirty of which were retranslated from FitzGerald. Von Schack's work is considered the most poetic German translation. This scholar was a specialist in Islamic Spain, a field of study which provides excellent entrée into the intricacies of Islamic Persia.

5. Edward Whinfield (1882-83), British translator of five hundred quatrains accompanied by the Persian text. This work is most useful to the specialist. Whinfield studied Persian in India as a civil servant.

6. Justin H. McCarthy (1888), British M.P., an edition of four hundred sixty-six quatrains in prose. His work appears to be largely a retranslation of the Nicolas translation.

7. John Leslie Garner (1888), the only American translator of note, one hundred fifty-two quatrains.

8. Michael Kerney (1900), modest British translator who signed all of his work with the anonymity of his initials. He produced fifty quatrains in metrical renderings, the first to represent in English the rhythm of the Persian.

9. Mrs. Jesse Cadell (1879), Scottish, and the only significant woman translator. She wrote an important article in Fraser's Magazine, May, 1879, which was the first attempt to make an extended exposition of Omar's poetry and philosophy as contrasted to FitzGerald's interpretation of Omar.

10. Charles J. Pickering (1890), British author of an article in National Review, (Vol. XVI, pp. 506-521) with a selection of his translations. In the article, Pickering compares passages from Omar with the poetry in the apocryphal Book of Esdras.

There have been many twentieth century translators, especially in the earlier part of the century; none of them, however, has achieved lasting recognition. Among them, one might note:

British Brigadier General E. H. Rodwell (1931), who brought out an edition with Persian text, paraphrases, first and fourth editions of FitzGerald's work, and Rodwell's own translation.

The Persian scholar A. G. E'Tessam-Zadeh, who produced a French verse translation with Persian text, an enormous improvement over the old Nicolas prose version. E'Tessam-Zadeh is one of the Persian proponents of Omar as Sufi.

A New Selection from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (1961), rendered into English verse by John Charles Edward Bowen, literal translation by A. J. Arberry, is the collaboration of two eminent Persian scholars. Arberry had earlier published Omar Khayyam: A New Version, in 1951 upon receipt of two Omar manuscripts considerably older than the Ouseley Manuscript used by FitzGerald. Although the scholarship is distinguished, the verse is not.

British poet Robert Graves and Afghan military man Omar Ali-Shah are responsible for the most recent translation (1967). This work is based on a family manuscript belonging to Ali-Shah, which scholars have not been permitted to examine.