

Short Bibliography

Works: (New York 1887)

Letters and Literary Remains (7 vols. 1920-23) edited by W. Aldis Wright.

More Letters: (1923) edited by F. R. Barton.

Life (1905) by E. F. Benson.

Variorum edition of *The Rubaiyat* (1896) by N. H. Dole.

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam – a facsimile of the MS in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, with a transcript into modern Persian characters, translated with an introduction and notes and a bibliography. By Edward Heron Allen, London 1898.

Edward Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with their Original Persian Sources collated from his own MSS and literally translated. By Edward Heron Allen, London 1899.

Professor A. J. Arberry's edition of the Chester Beatty MS of *Khayyam's quatrains* (dated 658 A. H. Lunar, or 1259-60).

Omar Khayyam: A new Version Based upon Recent Discoveries. By Professor A. J. Arberry.

This consists of a long, learned introduction, followed by a verse translation of the Cambridge Manuscript of Khayyam dated 604 A. H. Lunar (1207).

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vexed question of how far Edward Fitzgerald's incomparable poem may be regarded as a translation of the Persian originals, how far as an adaptation and how far as an original work". He was successful in his researches to such a remarkable degree that he eventually found himself" in the interesting position of having the whole of Fitzgerald's material" before him. His conclusions, summarised by himself, are recorded on page 11 of his introduction to the book mentioned, and are as follows:

"1. Of Edward Fitzgerald's quatrains, forty-nine are faithful and beautiful paraphrases of single quatrains to be found in the Ouseley of Calcutta MSS, or both.

"2. Forty-four are traceable to more than one quatrain, and may therefore be termed the 'composite' quatrains.

"3. Two are inspired by quatrains found by Fitzgerald only in Nicolas' text.

"4. Two are quatrains reflecting the whole spirit of the original poem,

"5. Two are traceable exclusively to the influence of the "Mantik-ut-tair" of Attar.

"6. Two quatrains, primarily inspired by Omar, were influenced by the Odes of Hafez.

"7. And three, which appeared only in the first and second editions and were afterwards suppressed by Edward Fitzgerald himself are not – so far as a careful search enables me to judge – attributable to any lines of the original textes. Other authors may have inspired the, but their identification is not useful in this case."

Fitzgerald's poem, in spite of certain minor flaws here and there, has deservedly joined the great collection of immortal English classics. One reason for this success may be " the expression which it gave to the perplexity of the times". However that may be, nothingless brilliant can be expected when two men of genius collaborate so closely.

Many other English versions from the Persian quatrains attributed to Khayyam have since appeared in English, among others those by Whinfield, Costello, Garner, Mc Carthy, Payne, Powell, Roe and Rogers. Not one of them, however, has approached Fitzgerald's poem even to be a remote rival to it.

ous artistic entity in English, where each quatrain forms a stanza with a definite relation to the whole, as well as to its immediate neighbour stanzas. It is this original critical designer, this inspired artistic architect, who is responsible, so to speak, for producing the blue-print of the magnificent poetic edifice built from the splendid but scattered bits of raw material imported from Persia. Thus, rather than accuse Fitzgerald of being a 'free' translator and a paraphraser, let us duly recognise this other, and extremely important, side of his genius, and respect and admire him all the more because of it. Critical creative faculty of this nature will be needed in greater or less degree, according to occasion, by many another translator who would attempt to turn a Persian poetic classic into an English one."

[“Hafez and His Poems” p. 10.
Lecture delivered before a joint
meeting on the Royal Asiatic
Society and the Iran Society at
the Islamic Cultural Center,
London, on January 6th, 1949.]

To me, it seems that Fitzgerald set out to write an English poem chiefly as a result of the inspiration which he got from a study of a collection of Persian quatrains most but not all of which were written by Khayyam. For one thing, the idea of creating a unity out of the self-contained but separate Persian quatrains is entirely Fitzgerald's. This meant that a certain sequence should also be created. The sequence devised by Fitzgerald may be open to improvement particularly as a result of recent and as yet incomplete critical studies on the Persian text of Khayyam. In fact, apart from Fitzgerald I know of no person except my friend and honoured collaborator, the late Sadegh Hedayat, who has attempted to arrange the quatrains of Khayyam in anything like a design based on the sequence of moods and similarity of thoughts. When we consider that this critical design, this sequence of units, completely dominated Fitzgerald's work in connection with the writing of his Khayyam-inspired poem, we shall be less liable to insist on describing his work as “translation”, free or otherwise.

Edward Heron Allen wrote a whole book (“Edward Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with their Original Sources collated from His Own MSS and literally Translated”, London, 1899) to settle “the

lated several tragedies, "Agamemnon" among others. From the Spanish, too, he translated plays, his most important product in this field being "Six Dianas of Calderon", published in

However, by far the greatest measure of Fitzgerald's fame rests on his translations from the Persian. Three separate Persian poets inspired him to make translations. We consequently have his metrical versions of Jami's beautiful allegory "Salaman and Absal", and Attar's great mystical book "Mantegh-ot-teyr", which Fitzgerald called "Bird-Parliament" in English; a title which is, incidentally, quite similar to Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls" and strongly reminiscent of John Day's "Parliament of Bees".

Guided and supported by his friend E. B. Cowell, Fitzgerald reached the culmination of his Persian intellectual adventures when he produced the English poetic masterpiece which he entitled "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam". His preoccupation with this poem, based essentially on the Bodleian manuscript of Khayyam which was copied in 856 A. H. Lunar (1460-1) and contains 158 quatrains, lasted no less than twenty years. During this period he repeatedly rewrote his poem and even considerably changed the number of quatrains it contained several times, as shown by the following table:

Edition	Date	Number of Quatrains
1st	1859	75
2nd	1868	110
3rd	1872	101
4th	1879	101

There is, of course, also the fifth edition (1889) published in "Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Fitzgerald" edited by W. Aldis Wright.

Here I may perhaps be pardoned if I repeat what I wrote about Fitzgerald and Khayyam on a former occasion:

"We have incidentally formed the habit of thinking of Fitzgerald as exclusively a supreme practitioner of the art of translation. I believe, however, that in him, it was the critical creator that set to work before the translator; formig the quatrains (each of which is in Persian a complete, independent poem) into a full-sized, glori-

revolt of the scientist against the half truths, half baked truths, which were just handed out by inferior minds.

The reason why Fitzgerald's translation of him, or Fitzgerald's adaptation of him was so popular. There is nothing probably in the mass of English translations or reproductions of the poetry of East to be compared with this little volume in point of value as *English* poetry . . . It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction, not a translation but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration.

Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) was a man of independent means, "an idle fellow" with a passion for "seclusion, leisure, flowers, music and books". His whole life was associated almost exclusively with his native Suffolk, the sea, freindships, letter-writing and translation. When we consider this general background, we can see how consistent with his character was his apparently strange insistence on anonymity whenever one of his books was published.

He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and happy memories of these days were subsequently reflected in his Platonic dialogue "Euphranor". which was published in 1851.

Of his freindships it has been said that they were "more like loves". His friends included, on the one hand, the people of his native Suffolk, and on the other, such distinguished figures as Thackeray, Tennyson and Carlyle. Fitzgerald was also a confirmed lover of the sea and of sailing. Especially from 1861 onwards, "his greatest interest contred in the sea", and for some years, until 1871, he spent June to Octobre mainly in "knocking about somewhere outside of Lowestoft".

In 1856 he married Lucy, daughter of the Quaker poet Bernard Barton, but not long afterwards the marriage ended in an amicable separation.

The manner of Fitzgerald's death was consistent with the manner of his life, for he "passed away painlessly in his sleep".

He was a facile and charming letter writer. Some of his letters were edited by W. Aldis Wright, and others by F. R. Barton. A further, and unpublished collection, has recently become the subject of carefull studies by the eminent Arabic and Persian scholar, Professor A. J. Arberry, of Cambridge; and the publication of these studies will no doubt throw much light on a highly significant aspect of Fitzgerald's life and work.

In the realm of translation Fitzgerald occupied himself chiefly with three languages, Greek, Spanish and Persian. From the Greek he trans-

wrongly a type of thought or sentiment and a type of expression has always been associated with him, not with much reason I believe, but when one says Omar Khayyam one usually knows the type of person he means, and therefore everyone has his own idea of the type of poetry he wrote.

Many critics have edited him in Persian, but usually not one of them has any scientific basis for the conclusions he reaches, saying these are what he wrote and those are not, he didn't write those quatrains. Well, one person says, I have edited Omar Khayyam and these are the quatrains I think he wrote, but the chief basis for my opinion is my personal taste and I haven't got any reason or documents for evidence. And that is the edition which a translator, a recent translator of Omar Khayyam into French called the classic edition of Omar Khayyam in Persian. You may easily form your own opinion about the validity of opinions of other critics of Omar Khayyam.

The first problem is to go scientifically and really critically about the problems of gathering all the quatrains attributed to him and finding out what he actually wrote or what he most probably wrote. And only after that we can form an opinion about his good poetry, or mediocre poetry or his opinions, whether we agree with him or against him about this and that. Not one opinion based on anything attributed to him can be considered as final because the text hasn't been finalised at all. And the main subjects which he discussed in his poetry, they haven't been rationally interpreted either. The fact that for instance he speaks about wine a great deal and even how he is being portrayed in many Persian carpets. It's just like – I mean the opposite of what he should have been – an old man, usually bare foot, usually in the middle of a desert full of bushes and thorns, and one doesn't know how he got there. There is no horse, he didn't have a car and his feet are not bare feet. With a wine jar and a beautiful girl. Yes, although I am a Persian and although I hope I'm not saying anything to hurt anybody's feelings, I really think that is a silly picture. And it's not representative of the man who was one of the greatest astronomers of his age and one of the great mathematicians of all time. And also one of the greatest thinkers in a country which has been producing great thinkers for some eleven centuries. What he means – what he steers by wine for instance. He uses it as symbolic of the rebellion of the rational and legitimate rebellion of a great spirit, of a great soul, of a great mind, against the limitations of fanatics – in every sphere of thinking. He was a free man, he represented perhaps the

great mastery gives one a sense of humour, a sense of rising superior to any problems that life makes one face. At another time there was – these are stories that just come to my mind – he was teaching philosophy to a man, quite a well known man, but the man came to him in the mornings, had his lesson, went out and spoke ill of Omar Khayyam. And Omar Khayyam heard about this. On one of the occasions in preparation for the man the story has come down to us that he asked a drummer and a trumpeter, musicians of that sort, to his house and he hid them behind a curtain or in the other room. When the man came, the pupil came to get his lesson, Khayyam signed to his musicians and they began to make a lot of noise – the drummer drummed and the trumpeter blew into his trumpet, and there was a great noise rising from Omar Khayyam's house. And people gathered from all over the street to find out what was the noise about. Omar Khayyam came out, showed the man, he said well, you see, this is the man who comes here and gets lessons from me. But then he goes out among you and speaks ill of me. Now you see him here, please ask him, if I am a good man why does he speak so ill of me? If I am bad why does he come here?

We know so much about him and so much has been written about it in other languages that one has been accustomed to the idea unconsciously perhaps that this is a subject which has been studied a great deal and a great deal about it has been found. It may come as a surprise to us – it came as a surprise to me – that the most fundamental question about Omar Khayyam remains unsolved. And that is what were the quatrains which he wrote and what did he write? At the moment now merely 1,400 quatrains have been attributed to him. I have a list here of about 1,100 which I have drawn up from various sources, but a complete list does exist of nearly 1,400 quatrains that have been attributed to him. There is however no doubt that all of those are not his – a great deal of extraneous matter is contained in that total. And not one person in the whole world unfortunately, including Persia, has dealt scientifically, critically, adequately with the question: out of this mass what are the quatrains which he actually wrote, or what are the quatrains which he most probably wrote? And so long as we don't know with reasonable certainty what he actually wrote, how on earth can we take the next step, and say this is what he thought, that is what he felt, and that was the kind of person, he was and the kind of mental picture of him which we should have. There however is a mental picture, has been a mental picture of Omar Khayyam for many centuries. Rightly or

mental. – again the laboratory and the scientist speak there. He writes very beautiful Persian, great eloquence, but there is the economy of the scientist and the laboratory about all his poetry. For instance, ...

“I threw last night on a stone a tile jug” – usually we could be sure that the tile was also a greenish blue colour, as we have in many Persian shops today. Why the tile? Because he is so real, he is so alive, and he is such a realistic man. In that sense he participates of the great quality of Shakespeare. I don't say that he postulates both – they both have the same attitudes to life, they look at it in the face and express it with all the honesty of a great man.

His chief point, his chief subjects, is the expression of the philosophy of life as seen by a very realistic man. He knows about people, he knows about himself, he is a very deeply read man in philosophy as well as in science, and we may be sure that he was a very deeply read man in literature as well. In his quatrains we don't have any traces of reference to the books he had read. He just says the purest and the hardest facts, he expresses them – he expresses those facts in the most original and the most straightforward way he can.

We have heard a lot about his urging us to profit by the moment. As a matter of fact because of that he has sometimes been called something of a hedonist – have your pleasure today and don't live for tomorrow. On the surface and in the wrong way, looked at the wrong way, it might give us the impression that he was an irresponsible man. In fact it is exactly the opposite. He is very keenly conscious of the tangents of life – he is natural, he can't help it and he is not afraid of it. He is not sentimental about it, not sentimental about life or about death. He just realises the fact which is obvious and what does he say?

It is the most practical thing he could say, that we shouldn't waste time. We shouldn't waste our opportunities, we shouldn't leave for tomorrow what we can do today. Walter de la Mare, who died quite recently, one of his most beautiful passages is – if I can recite it correctly – is “Look thy last on all things lovely every hour”. Isn't that exactly the same message as one of the messages of Omar Khayyam? And Walter de la Mare has never been called a hedonist. It is the same with every other aspect of life and philosophy and sentiment.

He had a sense of humour too – I have perhaps been giving the impression that he was a very sourfaced and a very serious man. He was serious, but because he was so serious he was the master of life, and

crucial questions about the personality of Omar Khayyam. You know, in Persian as in English, we have longer forms of poetry: we have the Ghazal which could be considered as the equivalent of the sonnet in English; we have the Ghasideh which could be considered as the equivalent of the ode; and we have the couplet which is very useful for the writing of very long stories, epics and romances. There are other forms of poetry as well. Why did he choose the Quatrain? There I believe the scientist in Khayyam comes to our aid. He was a mathematician, he dealt with formulas, very crisp, very economical statements of fact. And I believe that was the chief cause, the chief factor which induced him to choose the same type of formula for the expression of his thoughts on life, on his contemporaries, when he wanted to express any sentiment. It is – if we just consider it another way, or from the other end. One could not imagine Omar Khayyam standing up in court or in a little society and reciting long poems about his horse for instance, or somebody, or about a very long discussion of a philosophical subject. His mind was the mind of a scientist, it was instrumental in the way, in the choice of the way in which he looked at life and in which he expressed his sentiments about it.

Apart from that it was again instrumental, and fundamentally important, in the way he looked at life and the points he considered worth discussion, and the points he observed and the way he expressed them. The quatrain usually tells us about one point, the first three lines are a preparation for the expression of that culminating point in the last line. Or sometimes it is one point expressed two or three times, or even four times – once in each of the lines.

The subjects which he chooses are interesting again. He didn't speak much about love for instance, not much about personal sorrows. In fact he is not an individual, not as such, when he writes his poetry. He is a type, the type of a very rational man, very reasonable man, a man with great commonsense, faced with the ordinary situations of life, not only on the surface but in the very depths of reality and at each point he manages to crystallise, to delve into the depths of the problem, find out for himself what the problem is, and express it as crisply as if the problem was not one of psychology, one of philosophy, or one of sentiment, but of hard laboratory facts, a formula in physics or a hypothesis in mathematics.

That again is the reason why he is so modern. How he saw life is more or less how we see it today.

He hated hypocrites, he was very forthright, his style is not orna-

religious school about Carlyle, because Carlyle has written a biography of the Prophet Mohammad, that was the reason for his speech in that place. In the course of the speech which I read in the paper next day he had somehow brought the discussion to the consideration of the theory of relativity – I don't know how he had done it, but he did it. And for that theory he said, unfortunately I haven't got time to explain it to you tonight. And at the time I was a very much younger than I am now, and I thought otherwise. I said well, he speaks as if the only obstacle for the explanation of the theory of relativity is time for him. If he had time he could do it.

Now when I say that I haven't time and I haven't been able to prepare anything worthy of you, please think of that Professor and his theory of relativity.

Now Omar Khayyam lived and worked and flourished nearly nine centuries ago. But when we consider how very rational and how very deep and how very modern his thinking and his thought and his emotions were, his attitude towards life was, then the nine centuries I believe will be wiped away and you will be induced to consider him rather as a contemporary. We know him these days more as a poet, more than anything else. But of course it's no secret that his mind was very adaptable mind. He had several sides to his mental capacities, and he was at least three men – a philosopher, a poet and a scientist. We have all heard that he was really an outstanding astronomer, and he was instrumental in making calendar reform which even today hasn't – one could say that it hasn't been surpassed even by other nations. And in philosophy his contemporaries considered him as a second Avicenna. His fame as a poet developed a bit later. He wasn't so well known as a poet in his own lifetime, or even for about a century after his death. But by and by his quatrains, that was the form in which he wrote practically all his poetry, attracted more and more attention. They began to be quoted in various books, various books of prose at the time after his death, and these quotations are sometimes accompanied with the name of Omar Khayyam. And sometimes they are anonymous. The anonymous quotations are rather interesting because they showed so far as they go that he was so well known, so well known a poet at the time, that it wasn't necessary at every junction on every occasion to mention his name, as the author of the particular quoted passages.

One question is why he choose the quatrain form for his poetry. I believe if we consider that we will come to the answer to one of the most

Omar Khayyam and his Famous translator Edward Fitzgerald

Masud Farzad

Former professor of Persian
literature at Shiraz University

The late Masud Farzad, former professor of Persian literature at Shiraz University, was one of the greatest specialists of Khayyam's quatrains.

Between the papers which have been discovered after his death, are two unpublished English texts on this subject.

We have combined them in order to form the following article:

... Mr. M. Farzaad, the Cultural Counsellor of the Iranian Embassy, has always an especial interest towards our Society; he has always been present – nearly always – in our social gatherings and has accepted an invitation to come along and make a speech. In these respects we are very grateful to him, and we hope that we will make use of his co-operation later on in the future. Tonight he is going to give us some ideas about one of the most well known and distinguished personalities in the world of Persian poetry, that is: Omar Khayyam.

* * *

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. I consider it an honour and a delight to be present here to speak about a subject which has been near to my heart for many years. The one snag is that I am not prepared – I have been very busy at the Embassy these days and I haven't been able to prepare anything worthy of you. Perhaps there is an element of fault in that statement because that presupposes that if I had time I would have been able to prepare something worthy of you. I remember a professor of Tehran University many years ago, he went to speak at a