

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Studies on Khayyām's quatrains

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

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

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

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

■ The Contents of the Quatrains

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

■ Man, the World and the Hereafter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Doubt versus Certainty

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

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

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

The Knot of Death

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Flora and Fauna

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Pot and the Pot-Maker

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

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

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

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

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

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

در کارگاه کوزه گری رفتم دوش
نگاه یکی کوزه برآورد خروش

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

Who is the Beloved?

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

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

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

People with Discernment (*khiradmandān*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who would have his courage in the two worlds!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In vino veritas

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

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

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

Activities in the World

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

The Present Volume

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

58 Quatrains 87 and 88.

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

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