An Arab Perspective on the Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam

Elias Agel

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AN ARAB PERSPECTIVE ON THE RUBAIYYAT
OF OMAR KHAYYAM

BY
ELIAS AGEL

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, Major in English, South Dakota State University
1972
AN ARAB PERSPECTIVE ON THE RUBAIYYAT
OF OMAR KHAYYAM

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Arts, and is acceptable as meeting the thesis requirements for this degree, but without implying that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

//Thesis Adviser//

Date

Head, English Department

Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be ungrateful of me to accept credit for this thesis without paying due respect to many people who were around me when I needed them. I am particularly indebted to Professor J. W. Yarbrough who provided me with detailed critiques which resulted in many changes, large and small. I would like also to extend a special thanks to Professor Jack Marken, Head of the English Department, for his ready generosity in responding to my questions and problems. Finally, many thanks to all other members of the English staff, professors and graduate assistants, whose friendship and encouragement contributed in making the last two years of my graduate study at this university a very happy experience.

Elias Agel
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE RUBAIYYAT

Any examination of Omar Khayyam's literary works would definitely culminate in his Rubaiyyat (quatrain). They are the accumulation of his philosophy and the collection of his thoughts which have attracted the attention of many diverse minds. And perhaps there is no other poet who has suffered from both his friends and foes as much as Omar Khayyam.

Through many years there has been persistent controversy about the primary texts and the number of quatrains of the Rubaiyyat. In fact, the quatrains printed in Persia and India exceeded 750, but there is a general belief among scholars that their number ranges between 120-150,¹ and that whatever has been farfetched in the Rubaiyyat belongs to other Persian poets like Jalal Al-Din, Sadi, Hafiz, and Rumi.² The great dispute about the number of the quatrains arose from the confusion about the authenticity of the manuscripts that were available in the eighteenth century. There is no evidence upon which researchers can rely to determine the authenticity of any of the manuscripts. It is only known that Omar Khayyam did not compile his works

¹Ahmad Hamed Al-Saraf, Omar Khayyam (Baghdad: The people's Press, 1949), p. 91. This and other subsequent references from this edition are translated by the author of this thesis.

²Wadih Al-Bustani, Omar Khayyam (Cairo: Egypt Educational Press, 1959), p. 26. This and other subsequent references from this edition are translated by the author of this thesis.
during his life as other poets did, but left them to the mercy of his students and the reciters of his poetry. If he had only left a copy of his work in his own handwriting, it would have been easy to detect the right one by modern experts with their microscopes, cameras, measuring instruments, and all the rest of their scientific equipment.

Researchers dug vehemently in an effort to harvest the earliest possible manuscript in existence. They were able in the latter half of the eighteenth century to lay their hands on one now known as the Ousely Manuscript or the Bodleian Manuscript, written at Shiraz in 1460. This manuscript contains only 158 quatrains. Other manuscripts have been found; generally, the more recent they were the more quatrains they had. More than five thousand rubaiyyat are attributed to Khayyam in the existing manuscripts. Other important manuscripts are: the Calcutta Asiatic Society's Manuscript of 1548, containing 516 quatrains; the India Office Manuscript, containing 512 quatrains; the Calcutta Edition, containing 438 quatrains with an appendix of 54 additional quatrains; the Paris Edition of Monsieur J. B. Nicolas of 1867, containing 464 quatrains, and the Lucknow Lithographed Edition of 1894, containing 763 quatrains.4

There are two other manuscripts which are said to be

3Al-Bustani, p. 25.

earlier than the Bodleian Manuscript. One of them which was translated by Arthur J. Arberry in 1952 belongs to the thirteenth century and is now kept at Cambridge. The other one is a very recent discovery by Robert Graves who made a new translation based on a twelfth century text which was available to Sufic students in Afghanistan shortly after Khayyam's death. This latter manuscript which is described by Arthur J. Arberry as the "earliest and most authoritative Rubaiyyat" was kept through many generations in the family of Omar Ali-Shah, a Persian Sufi poet and a close friend of Robert Graves.

This jumble about the number of the quatrains and the puzzle about the primacy of the manuscripts can only be understood by considering what really happened at the time of Omar's death. One suggestion is that Omar's admirers tumbled over his work copying it one from the other until it became through copyist errors and expansion a different bauble in every hand. Another suggestion is that some poets, fascinated by the humor of his Rubaiyyat and the profundity of his expression in an age of intellectual conflicts, were motivated to follow his suit and imitate his Rubaiyyat in great numbers. Thus Khayyam emerged as the founder of a new school of poetry and philosophy. And because some of the poets were not famous at the time, or


6Ibid., p. 1.
perhaps they were afraid of dispersing publicly their ideas under their own name, they found in Khayyam an advantageous mask. Also in years after Omar's death, there was a great desire on the part of scribes to add as many quatrains as they could attribute to Khayyam for commercial reasons. It might also be that some scribes intentionally attributed to Khayyam a good number of quatrains which call for repentance and faith in God, matters with which Khayyam himself was not concerned, in an effort to make the Rubaiyyat more acceptable to the public. And so the Rubaiyyat increased in number like a snowball rolling down the cliffs.

Researchers stood puzzled facing this huge mass of incongruous quatrains. But with great effort, patience, and perception scholars were able to separate some of the quatrains which belong to Omar Khayyam. Many people shared in this task. Valentin Zhukovski, the Russian Orientalist, was one of them. He developed his theory of the "wandering quatrains," for he noticed that some of the quatrains appear in the poetry of other Persian poets. He assumed that these quatrains were attributed to Khayyam, but actually belonged to other poets. Later, he had to confess that his theory could not be adopted as a final means to determine which of the quatrains belong to Khayyam and which do not. Certain quatrains which he had ascribed to other poets were found in manuscripts earlier than the lifetime of these poets. There were other attempts made by people who tried to

7Al-Bustani, p. 25.
collect all the quatrains in which Khayyam's name was mentioned, or in which there was any presentation of wine. So far, no one knows exactly the number of rubaiyyat written by the Persian astronomer, and the possibilities of future discoveries, if not impossible, are dubious.

Like The Arabian Nights, the Rubaiyyat were translated into almost every major language in the East and the West. Wadi Al-Bustani, in 1912, was the first Arab poet to translate eighty quatrains into Arabic based upon Fitzgerald's English text of the Rubaiyyat. Like Fitzgerald, Al-Bustani is considered to have taken great liberties in his version of the Rubaiyyat. His use of the seven line stanza is entirely his own creation. Nevertheless, he is considered to be the first to open the door upon the Rubaiyyat for the Arab people in their new cultural era. Al-Subai, an Egyptian man of letters, followed Al-Bustani with a new translation of 101 quatrains which were again translated from Fitzgerald's version which, in turn, is very far from the original Rubaiyyat. Yet, this work is thought to be an inferior one to that of Al-Bustani in its lack of smoothness and its use of harsh diction and disagreeable expressions. The first to translate the Rubaiyyat directly from a Persian version into Arabic was Al-Hashimi. His version came to be very close in meaning to the

8Al-Bustani, p. 5.
9Al-Saraf, p. 40.
10Ibid., p. 42.
original Persian manuscript and maintained its smoothness. Then, Al-Safi followed with a very successful translation. It is even said that Khayyam himself who had great skill in Arabic would have not been able to translate it the way Al-Safi did. It is amazing how both poets shared the same poetical spirit. Rami came out in 1924 with a translation based on a Persian manuscript. Then came Al-Saraf in 1949 with a prose translation based on his scholastic knowledge of Persian and Arabic. This translation was also praised for its exactness in carrying the meaning of the Persian quatrains. Finally Abdul-Hak Fadel followed in 1951 with the largest number of quatrains ever translated into Arabic. He used for his translation six different Persian manuscripts and tried to preserve the form of the Rubaiyat as well as their meaning. In order to establish this exactness, he avoided language deformities for poetical necessities. Thus he was able to reflect in his translation the exact poetical mood of every quatrain with its colorful insights and metaphors. Fadel himself describes his translation: "I have not tried to pervert the Persian quatrains to suit the Arabic taste, but I tried to convey the Persian taste and Omar's style to the readers of Arabic." Nevertheless, Fadel has obviously given himself

11 Al-Saraf, p. 44.
12 Ibid., p. 1.
13 Abdul-Hak Fadel, Thawrat Al-Khayyam (Cairo: Committee of Writers and Publishers, 1051), p. 1. This and other subsequent references from this edition are translated by the author of this thesis.
14 Ibid., p. 6.
the liberty of adding a word or dropping one for rhyming purposes. And since he was dealing with more than one manuscript, he discovered by comparing the different versions that some quatrains differed in context. This, in turn, enabled him to select the quatrain he thought to be most probably Omar's work.

Having seen some of the attempts made by Arab poets to reproduce the Persian Rubaiyyat in Arabic, it is appropriate, here, to mention the names of a few scholars who are accredited for a similar attempt at recasting the Rubaiyyat in English and other European languages, and whose works will be considered later on in this discussion. The earliest reference to Omar Khayyam in Europe dates from the year 1700 when Professor Thomas Hyde published a critical analysis of Khayyam's poetry. In 1818, the Austrian Orientalist Hammar Purgstal translated twenty-five quatrains and published them in his book The History of the Ottoman Empire, claiming that the Rubaiyyat contradict the doctrine of Islam. In 1857, there was another attempt made by Gorcin De Tassey who translated only ten quatrains into French. Then Fitzgerald followed with a very successful translation in 1859 which enchanted the English and American poetry readers alike. It was one of the celebrated things to happen in oriental studies, and still today it enjoys the same exquisite reputation. Other attempts to translate the Rubaiyyat into English were made

15 Al-Saraf, p. 36.
16 Ibid., p. 36.
17 Ibid., p. 37.
by Whinfield, Hallen, and Hirson, but these translations did not arrive at the level of superiority of Fitzgerald’s translation.  

In France, Monsieur J. B. Nicolas created a French prose translation using a Persian manuscript which was published in Bombay. This translation is noted for its large number of quatrains (464) and for its significance in implying that Khayyam was a Sufi poet. Finally, Robert Graves, under the surveillance of Omar Ali-Shah the Sufi poet and the classical Persian scholar, published the most recent English verse translation of the Rubaiyyat.

In general, there is a great difference between the structure of Semitic languages and Indo-European languages, and hence between English and Arabic. The most characteristic feature of the Arabic language is that the great majority of its words are built up from roots of three consonants (triconsonantal root). By using these roots as a base and by adding prefixes, infixes, and suffixes according to certain patterns, the actual words are produced. The triconsonantal root is equated with the infinitive in English. The syntactical relationships of nouns are indicated by case endings and verbs are inflected by means of prefixes, infixes, and suffixes to indicate the various persons, numbers, genders, and tenses.

Arabic syntax is also quite different from English. There are two types of sentences: verbal and nominal. The dominant one is the verbal sentence, which is always introduced by a verb. Thus, in a verbal sentence, one says: “Roads Kan

18Al-Saraf, p. 37.

19Ibid., p. 37.
CHAPTER II

ARABIC POETRY IN TRANSLATION

Since this study is concerned with a comparative study of the Rubaiyyat in both Arabic and English poetry, and since the main purpose is to arrive at some understanding of the Rubaiyyat through a knowledge of the Islamic literature, it is essential here to give a short introductory note of some technical terms and facts about the Arabic language and Arabic poetry in particular.

In general, there is a great difference between the structure of Semitic languages and Indo-European languages, and hence between English and Arabic. The most characteristic feature of the Arabic language is that the great majority of its words are built up from roots of three consonants (triconsonantal root). By using these roots as a base and by adding prefixes, infixes, and suffixes according to certain patterns, the actual words are produced. The triconsonantal root is equated with the infinitive in English. The syntactical relationships of nouns is indicated by case endings and verbs are inflected by means of prefixes, infixes, and suffixes to indicate the various persons, numbers, genders, and tenses.

Arabic syntax is also quite different from English. There are two basic types of sentences: verbal and nominal. The dominant type is the verbal sentence which is always introduced by a verb. Thus, in a verbal sentence, one says: "Reads Ken
the book," not "Ken reads a book." A nominal sentence is one that is introduced by a noun. Thus the sentence "The man is tall" would be expressed as "The man tall."

Furthermore, Arabic is one of the most difficult languages because of its wide range of vocabulary. Arabic also has a wealth of literature, both medieval and modern. It is the spoken language of a hundred million people and the "Latin" of at least four hundred million Muslims.

Any attempt to discuss Islamic literature could not be adequately and honestly done without some understanding of the Islamic culture. It may be well to mention here that Islamic literature does not mean Arabic literature only, but also the literature of other Islamic countries like Persia, Turkey, and Pakistan. Although these countries are historically diverse and their languages have nothing in common, the religion of Islam has without doubt contributed in bringing some sort of homogeneity among the peoples of these countries which is very striking. The spread of Arabic and Persian languages over wide areas of the Northern and Western parts of Africa and the Western and Southern parts of Asia through many generations helped also in developing this homogeneity. And the fact that many of the leading literary figures of Islam were bilingual (Arabic and Persian) testifies to this feature.

Islamic literatures, as mentioned earlier, have not been discussed in the West until very recently. The reason for this goes back to the thirteenth century during the coexistence
of Islam and Christianity, when both religions exhibited no intellectual curiosity about one another. However, when Islamic literature began to be discussed in the West it was studied in most cases badly. Sometimes these studies have distorted the facts because of mere prejudice and distaste for its literature. But in most cases the real damage has been done through translation. No one denies the hardships that every translator encounters, for to avoid inaccuracy and bowdlerization the translator often becomes a victim to the harshness of literalism. Thus many examples of awkward translations from Islamic literature can be cited here. A. J. Arberry who has provided English readers with more translations from Islamic literature than anyone else is another victim of such conditions. An example of his translations is this poem by Maruf Al-Rusafi, an Iraqi poet:

Thou charmedst angels, ere that man was made,
The sun desired thee, while the moon yet slept,
Ere sight descried, the ear in thee was glad,
The poem sang thee, ere the strings were swept:
Maiden so lovely, and so nobly staid!  

Few Arabs would recognize that these harsh lines were originally written by Al-Rusafi who is known for his wealth of feelings and profundity of expression. And perhaps not many among English readers would appreciate such a translation for its use of archaic diction such as "charmedst" and "staid," nor would

they comprehend the distasteful metaphor embodied in the third line where Arberry gives a very awkward relation of "sight" and "ear." For this reason, among others, Islamic literature (poetry in particular) has been badly interpreted and wrongly understood as being sensual, exotic, devious, erotic, and fantastic. Yet a better approach can be achieved by explaining some of the important aspects of Islamic literature, its mechanism of form and wealth of theme. And since our present concern is poetry, it is better to limit ourselves to explaining the strict conventions of Arabic poetry as an example of Islamic poetry in general.

The Arabs inherited from their desert ancestry during their pre-Islamic period an exceedingly elaborate poetic convention which, in turn, exerted great influence upon Persian poetry. This poetry was couched in elaborate meters, of which sixteen were recognized when Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad developed, in the eighth century, his metrical system which he called "al-arood" (science of prosody). The purpose of this system was to help in determining any break in meter or rhyme, and it was based on a complicated process of breaking the line of verse into short and long syllables according to its musical beats.

2Kritzeck, p. 11.

3Mahmoud Fakhouri, Safinat Al-Shuarah (Aleppo: Aleppo Educational Press, 1970), p. 8. This and other subsequent references from this edition are translated by the author of this thesis.
Under the influence of the Koran, this poetic language became the standard language of the Arab people. The pre-Islamic people knew three kinds of poetry: short poems of war and revenge which were used by the poet to praise his own tribe, or abuse his foes; longer elegiac and panegyrical poems in which the poet lamented, or praised the dead; and odes which were not restricted to any subject. Usually these odes begin with the poet starting on a journey: he stops at a deserted ruin where moldering traces recall an ancient passion. He laments the loss of happy days (usually the loss of his beloved), then he continues his journey and describes his horse and camel. Finally he ends by praising the heroic deeds of his tribe, the gallantry of a member of his tribe, or expresses his sorrows over the loss of a dear friend.

But during the first century after Mohammed, Arabic poetry underwent some drastic changes. Although it carried on the traditions of tribal poetry, the new conditions of Islam brought some changes in manners which in turn led to the rise of new modes in poetry. The love lyric was established as an independent form by Omar Abi-Rabiah of Mecca, and a sort of Platonic love became the theme of several poetic romances such as "Majnoon Lyla."⁴ The new poets gave up the mystique of the Arab desert and developed a new kind of poetry which was more obscene and witty to suit the tastes of the courts. Poets also started to express their cynicism and skepticism concerning matters of

⁴Kritzeck, pp. 69-72.
faith, hope, justice, and destiny long before Khayyam thought of writing his Rubaiyyat. In fact, Khayyam's name is always linked with Al-Maarri (an Arab poet of the tenth century) because of their great resemblance in spirit and attitude. The following citation from Al-Maarri, in D. S. Margoliouth's translation, reveals his rebellion against the values of his age:

Winter came on us. Under it
A beggar naked, the prince in his quilt.
The stars deny one a day's rations,
Feed the other the corpus of nations.
This earth, though often a bride, has killed
Her many grooms, and is still maiden.\(^5\)

And he said describing the omnipotent power of God:

God is above. We never shall attain
Our liberty from hands that overshroud;
Or can we shake aside this heavy cloud
More than a slave can shake aside the chain?\(^6\)

Furthermore, Arabic poetry underwent some changes in form as well as in theme. Many poets broke with the traditional system of Al-Khalil. They decided that they could not possibly restrict themselves to such laws which limited their scope of expression. Thus they started creating their own meters which were considerably lighter than the usual forms. Abu Al-Atahia who lived in the ninth century was the most distinguished poet of his time. When he was asked what he thought of "al-arood," he said: "I am bigger than al-arood."\(^7\) A sample of his poetry (translated by R. A. Nicholson) might explain what he meant:

\(^5\)Kritzeck, p. 126.
\(^6\)Ibid., p. 126.
\(^7\)Fakhouri, p. 177.
Every summary has a trend
Every question has an answer
Every event has an hour
Every action has its account
Every ascent has its limit
Every man has his book of fate.  

Having tried to evaluate what is not known with what appears to be known, it seems to be the appropriate time to mention that traces of Khayyam's poetry in Arabic have reached us without being distorted. Of course, in his Arabic poetry, Khayyam followed the classical meters of Al-Khalil, and manifested his great skill in using them. His Arabic poetry, although very small in quantity, reflects higher qualities of his poetic genius. His verses are couched with elaborate metaphors and similes, and they carry many images of constellations, wind, and shadows which remind us that Khayyam was an astronomer before he was a poet. He says in one of his poems that "The mind wonders why one should count on what tomorrow will bring, knowing tomorrow will always be changing like the wind—and every happiness tomorrow brings will come to an end."  

8 Kritzeck, p. 88.

9 Al-Bustani, p. 22.
CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF KHAYYAM

Omar Khayyam was born in 1015 A.D. at Nishabur into an age of strange contrasts, political conflicts and philosophical debates. The Abassid dynasty was weakening and becoming an easy target for voracious invaders. On the other hand, there was a great demand for more books in science, philosophy, and art.¹ People were discussing matters of high esteem like reason and existence. They were reading Plato and Aristotle among many other great scholars. The dispute over religion and philosophy was at its peak. Almost all layers of society were preoccupied in one way or another with philosophic and religious questions, and that is why everyone agrees that Khayyam must have been influenced by his age, if not actually involved. Though it is not possible to cover all events that took place during Omar's lifetime, yet some of these events which had greater impact on the age than others should be mentioned.

It all started right after Mohammed's sudden death in 632 A.D. when Islam itself divided into a melange of sects. The split came over the choice of Mohammed's successor. One faction saw in Mohammed's son-in-law Ali and his successors the only rightful ruler (Imam) of Islam. Ali's followers, the Shia, subsequently split into sects such as Ismailiya, Karmatians, and Alawites. The rest of the Moslems, the great majority, remained faithful to the caliphate and came to be known as Sunnite.

¹For all historical data and generalization I have relied heavily on Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb, and Anthology of Islamic Literature, ed. by James Kritzeck.
(orthodox moslems). And since that day followers of these two main sects have had bitter feelings toward each other.

The Arabs dominated Persia in the middle of the seventh century and continued ruling it until the middle of the eleventh century when the political disputes among Islamic leaders brought a series of invasions which marked drastic changes in the history of this Empire. The first of the invaders were Turks of the Seljuk tribes who were able to overrule all of Khurasan, Kurman, Iraq, South Arabia, Yemen, and Persia.

The age of Omar Khayyam begins with the fall of Baghdad to Tughril Beg when the Seljukians entered the city victorious in A.D. 1055. The monarchy of Tughril Beg was legitimized by the Abbasid Caliph on the basis that it would support the Sunni against Shiah; it stayed in power for about thirty-seven years. Khayyam lived during the reign of Alp Arslan and his son Malikshah. Both rulers were noted for their great prestige in leadership and love of learning.

Another great event which took place during the life of Omar Khayyam was the invasion of the Crusaders from Europe which started in 1095 A.D. and lasted for two centuries. These Crusades had a special impact on the political, social, and economic conditions of the age, yet the worst to happen did not come from abroad but started at home by the revival of the Batiniya movement which later became known also as Hashshashin (hashish addicts).

Batiniya is a name applied to a sect of Shiah Muslims.
The word itself is a derivation from "batin" (Arabic word for inner) which explains why Batiniya adopted this name. It was a movement which aimed at reaching the spiritual meaning of the Koran rather than the exoteric or material meaning. It was characterized by its secrecy and its adaptation of the allegorical method of interpretation which is known by Muslims as "taweeel." However, Batiniya itself is the stem of two smaller sects known as Ismailiya and Karamatians. Officially Ismailiya began in 765 A.D. on the death of Ismail, son of Imam Jaafar Al-Sadik. The Ismailiya accepted one of the sons of Mohammed Ben Ismail as their hereditary Imam. But the Karamatians refused to accept any successor to Imam Ben Ismail because they believed that he was the Imam who was to return on the last day.\(^2\)

By the end of the ninth century, Batiniya had a large number of followers in Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and Persia. They committed horrible crimes and spread terror all over the continent until their leader, Suliman Ben Hassan, was murdered toward the end of the tenth century. At his death the movement died out until it was revived by Hassan Sabbah, a fellow student of Khayyam.

Sheikh Merkand, author of Rawdat Al-Safa, mentioned that Omar Khayyam was a student of Sheikh Mawaffikuddin.\(^3\) His two

\(^2\)Al-Saraf, pp. 55-64.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 100.
companions and close friends were Abdul-Kassem and Hassan Sabbah. Nevertheless, Sabbah at this age was not yet involved in Batiniya which enforces the fact that Khayyam could not possibly have been influenced by his secret teachings. The problem of whether Khayyam met with Sabbah after his involvement or not has not been solved yet, and there is no historical document to prove that such a meeting happened. Yet, we cannot dismiss the possibility that Khayyam might have known the movement and discussed it since it was the dominant prodigy of the age.

However, it is known that after the three friends had ended their studies they separated, each taking a different path in life. Khayyam went back to his village to begin a new period of study and productivity in poetry, astronomy, and mathematics. Abdul-Kassem joined the court of Alp Arslan, the second monarch of the Seljuk dynasty, and soon became the private secretary of Arslan. Later he became the prime minister under a new name, Nizam Al-Moulik. Hassan Sabbah adopted the dogmas of Batiniya which had survived in Syria and resolved to spread them in Persia, adding to them other novelties with the aim of building a strong army and becoming a symbol of terror. He and his followers took refuge in a castle, later known as the Castle of Death. Thus he succeeded in establishing a new dynasty which lasted for 171 years and was ruled by his successors.

Our knowledge about the doctrine of Batiniya is derived mostly from hostile Sunni sources and some unauthentic secret
books. Nevertheless, most researchers believe that its main doctrines had been inherited from some ancient pagan philosophies. Some stories tell that Batiniya adopted free sexuality to strengthen the ties among its followers.\(^4\) It is even said that Abi Zakaria Al-Tami, one of its leaders in the tenth century, commanded that the youth who refuses homosexuality should be killed, and that whoever puts out a fire should be punished by having his hand or his tongue cut. Batiniya followers worshiped fire— and believed in worldly pleasures. They refused the conviction of inspiration and prophecy; they claimed that prophets were men who loved leadership and ruled the common man by falsehood, deception, and hypocrisy. In a letter sent by Al-Kayrawani to Suliman ben Saiid, he advises him of how to be the master of the situation:

> Let people approach you with what they like, and make every one of them believe that you are one of his party. Reveal our secrets to those whom you trust, and if you win a philosopher protect him—it is on philosophers that we will build our empire.... Teach people that paradise is worldly pleasures, and that pain is the outcome of religious dogmas which burden man with heavy tasks like prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and jihad.... I advise you to incite people to doubt the teachings of the Koran, the Apocalypse, and the Bible. Make people denounce all sorts of dogmas: no resurrection, no heavenly angels, no devils in hell.... It is strange how a man who has a beautiful daughter or sister claims to be wise, and yet he forbids himself the pleasure of having her and offers her to a stranger. If the ignorant could only understand that he has more right in his sister and his daughter than a stranger, and that by doing what he did he is only denying them their right of pleasure and

\(^4\)Al-Saraf, p. 57.
creating in them the fear of an imposter—they call God.  

Batiniya followers were clever in their propaganda and in converting people. Their leaders wrote many books—Al-Midan, Al-Niran, and Al-Balaghat Al-Sabh (Seven Books of Rhetoric)—to help in spreading their ideas. Most of these books were kept away from public use, and were circulated only among friendly connections.

However, not everything that has reached us about Batiniya is wrapped in dimness and darkness. There are other aspects which are more interesting and agreeable. One of the basic canons of Batiniya was the importance of reasoning in knowing God. People were considered to be of two branches: those who believe in the "outer piety and righteous life," and those who believe in the "esoteric meaning of religious commandments of the Koran." There is no outer phenomenon without its corresponding inner meaning. Thus, Batiniya tends to explain religion in terms of science and philosophy. It emphasizes the parallelism between the macrocosmos and microcosmos. It refuses to accept as faith anything which contradicts experience gained from the senses. It also has great regard for superstitions and astrology. Mysterious numbers or letters played a great part in their speculations. For example, the number seven stood for the seven periods of the history of Earth.

5Al-Saraf, p. 58.

6Ibid., p. 60.
marked the seven prophets who ruled through these periods: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed; the seventh is expected to come at the end of the world. And it also indicated the seven divisions of its hierarchy: the sheikh comes first as the supreme ruler followed by his advisors, apostles, comrades, commandos, disciples, and commoners.

The commandos were blindly loyal to the sheikh. For them, nothing was more valuable than fulfilling the sheikh's wish—even to sacrificing their own lives. It is told that before a disciple was to be promoted to become a commando, he was invited by the sheikh to have dinner with him. During the dinner, the sheikh offers him hashish to smoke on the pretense of showing gratitude. Having been intoxicated, he is taken to an enchanting garden where he is offered wine to drink by charming women, then he is put to sleep on a bed of roses. While still under the ecstasy of sensual delight, he is taken back to where he was in the first place beside the sheikh. When he wakes up, he is told that his spirit—not his body—has had this sensual experience by the sheikh's order. The young man, amazed by the sheikh's power, promises him complete obedience and loyalty on the hope of having more of such experiences.

Whoever examines the Rubaiyyat, taking into consideration the possibility of Khayyam's involvement in Batiniya, will definitely catch some echoes of its doctrines. Khayyam's presentation of wine, his anti-religious views, his rejection of heaven and hell, and his emblematic treatment of sensual

7Al-Saraf, p. 65.
pleasure exist in most of his Rubaiyyat in the different translations. Fitzgerald insisted on presenting Khayyam as an Epicurean and a subverter of faith:

\[ \text{Alike for those who for Today prepare,} \\
\text{And those that after some Tomorrow stare,} \\
\text{A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,} \\
\text{"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor There."}\]

Again to the same point:

\[ \text{Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn} \\
\text{I leaned, the Secret of my Life to learn;} \\
\text{And Lip to Lip murmured--"While you live,} \\
\text{Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."}\]

E. H. Whinfield, in his version, has also translated a number of quatrains which reveal Khayyam's disbelief in heaven and hell:

\[ \text{Drunkards are doomed to hell, so men declare,} \\
\text{Believe it not, 'tis but a foolish scare;} \\
\text{Heaven will be empty as this hand of mine,} \\
\text{If none who love good drink find entrance there.}\]

Al-Saraf emphasized this aspect in the following quatrain in which Khayyam addresses God and his fellow men at the same time:

\[ \text{"A cup of wine worth much more than a paradise you have promised. Believe not what they tell you about heaven and hell. Have you heard of someone who was sent to hell or another who came from paradise?"}\]


9 Ibid., p. 427.

10 SQOK, p. 157.

11 Al-Saraf, p. 190.
CHAPTER IV

KHAYYAM AND SUFISM

The same quatrains of Khayyam which have been accepted by many scholars as those of a hedonistic poet who neither believed in God nor in divine justice and wisdom can be interpreted according to Sufic meanings in a reversed way. Khayyam's fondness of wine is a natural attitude as stated by Sufic logic. Wine stands for heavenly love and the ecstasy of mystical union. Robert Graves who suggested that Khayyam was a Sufi poet tried to defend his desire for wine: "Khayyam treats wine in Sufic fashion as a metaphor of the ecstasy excited by divine love." J. B. Nicolas was one among many others who tried to modify Khayyam's blemished image by showing him as a pantheist and a mystic. E. H. Whinfield, in his translation of the Rubaiyyat, excluded a number of quatrains in praise of wine which occurred in the manuscripts he used in an attempt to offer a religious Khayyam. Edward Cowell who introduced Khayyam's Persian quatrains to Fitzgerald in 1859 disagreed with him in interpretation. Cowell believed that Omar was a Sufi and that his poetry was mystical while Fitzgerald was more inclined to admire him as a Lucretius figure. This is not surprising when we know

1OROK, p. 9.
that Wadih Al-Bustani who was fascinated by Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyyat to the extent that he himself composed his own Arabic translation while keeping a close eye on Fitzgerald's work did not comply with him in determining Khayyam's philosophy. Al-Bustani was more disposed to view him as an orthodox Moslem who was free of the bonds of conventionalities:

Some have claimed that Khayyam was a materialist philosopher like Lucretius who took life to be finite and man to be predestinated; but unlike Lucretius he did not say "eat and drink today for tomorrow you die," but get drunk and forget the miseries of this life and grab your chance before it is too late. Those who arrived at this conclusion were misled by Khayyam's overuse of wine and cups in his Rubaiyyat. Others claimed that Khayyam was a Sufi poet and that he praised wine referring to the glory of God. Whether he was a clumsy drunkard or a dignified philosopher no one really knows. There have been many answers, in fact too many, but the problem is still unsolved.²

The matter of determining Khayyam's personality is still strongly debated; but before ejecting any final judgment it would be appropriate to know something about Sufism. During Khayyam's age Sufism was beginning to take shape although no definite date has been given to its origin. The Sufis were people who either improvised a bizarre philosophy and believed in it, or fabricated a dream and lived it. Sufism bloomed by the growth of Islam, yet it is not a sect of Islam. According to Ali Al-Hujwiri, an early Sufi poet, the Prophet Mohammed said: "He who hears the voice of the Sufi people and does not

²Al-Bustani, pp. 16-17.
say Amen is recorded in God’s presence as one of the heedless."³

Yet it is believed that Sufism was the secret teachings and the
mystical movement within all religions long before Islam—that
is why it is often associated in modern terminology with freemasonry. In fact, it has often been said that Sufism was the
spring of freemasonry. It is also true that Sufism is not an
organized order, and it is not bound by religious dogma al-
though it respects the rituals of religion. The word "Sufi" is
derived from the Arabic root "soof" meaning wool; Sufi (literally
a man who wears wool) is used to refer to a man who with-
draws from the world, lives in solitary self-denial, and gener-
ally puts himself under vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. A Sufi would strongly emphasize the power of love—knowledge comes with love which is a reflection of the higher truth—which is God. A poem by Rumi translated by R. A. Nicholson
summarizes the Sufi idea:

Love, Love alone can kill what seemed dead,
The frozen snake of passion. Love alone
By tearful prayers and fiery longing fed,
Reveals a knowledge schools have never known.⁴

Rumi also said: "Wherever you are, whatever your condition is,
always try to be a lover."⁵

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³Idries Shah, The Sufis (Garden City, New York: Doubleday
& Company, 1964), p. IX.

⁴Ibid., p. 322.

⁵Ibid., p. 317.
It is not easy to define the method or the elements of Sufism in a few words, yet a number of definitions have reached us which although they seem to be confusing express the same fundamental beliefs in the unity of the human spirit with God. Al-Junayd said: "Sufism is the preservation of the moment: that is, that a man does not consider what is outside his limits, does not agree with any but God, and only associates with his proper moment."\(^6\) Abu Yazid said: "The Sufis are children in the lap of God."\(^7\) However, this union would not take place unless man becomes inwardly separated from all but God, and listens to none but God. Once the union is established, it leads to a new revelation of the heart and a contemplation of the conscience. Al-Ghazzali, an Arab Sufi poet who lived in the second half of the eleventh century, defined the process perhaps most effectively: "I knew that the complete mystic way includes both intellectual belief and practical activity; the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him."\(^8\)

Sufism is difficult to discuss because of its secret

\(^6\)Kritzeck, p. 112.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 112.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 175.
qualities. There is no direct awareness of its convictions nor of its principles. Nevertheless, it is known that there are no hierarchical degrees among Sufis except a general recognition of poets on whom lies the task of spreading Sufic thought by means of metaphorical language and ciphers. Nizami, a Persian poet who lived in the second half of the twelfth century, summed up the process in these words: "Under the poet's tongue lies the key of the treasury." Of course this does not necessarily mean that he was justifying the need of secret language for literary expressions. However, Sufis claim to have certain peculiar expressions and technical terms which they themselves can understand, and nobody else. This explains why Sufic teachers refused to accept disciples who lacked an inborn sense of mystery.

It is very difficult to give a full account of all the systems of the secret language used by Sufis, but it is possible to point out some basic examples which might help clarify their functions. The secret language (or the hidden tongue) is very complicated in effect because its essence is not only ciphers. Any Sufic poem has its expression in its apparent words which is independent of its inner implications—at least for a non-Sufi reader. Thus it can stand as an independent form of art. On the other hand, the same poem might carry a

9Shah, p. xi.
hidden message for a Sufi.

The basic system of encipherment which is used by Sufis is the Abjad (Arabic alphabet). Moreover, Arabic and Persian languages use the same numerical equivalents for their letters although in some cases letters differ slightly in sound.

Idries Shah, the author of *The Sufis*, gives this table of the Abjad letters and their equivalents: 10

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Then he gives a number of examples of how this system operates. One of these examples deals with the word Sufi itself, which he calls "the mysterious Sufi." To find the numerical value of the name, he simply works out the total of the individual values of its consonant letters as follows: $S=90$; $W=6$; $F=80$; $Y=10$. They total 186. In order to decode this number, he simply rearranges the numbers in hundreds, tens, and units: 100, 80, 6. Then he retransforms these numbers into their equivalent letters as they appear on the table: $100=Q$; $80=F$; $6=U$. These three consonants become the basis for three-letter

10Shah, p. 174.
roots which are indicative of some aspects of Sufism. Shah gives only one formation "FUQ" which means in Arabic "above, transcending." However, another formation is possible "UQF" which means "stood, challenged." Thus Sufism implies not only the "transcendent philosophy" as Shah suggested, but also the "unchallenged philosophy."

Shah also claims that the names of Sufi authors, poets, and teachers convey a hidden meaning which emphasizes the things that should be read into their works. Thus Sufis do not approach such names externally, but internally. Shah gives some examples of some famous Sufi names like Attar, a Persian Sufi poet who lived in Khurasan during the second half of the twelfth century and well into the thirteenth, and whose major concern was the mystical search for God. The name Attar literally means the druggist or the chemist, but by decoding the name by the same process, Shah arrives at the root "RF" which means in Arabic "the fluttering of a bird." This, in turn, conveys the alternative meanings: to flash (light), to twinkle, to shine, and to be shaken by wind. Then Shah gives this interpretation of these meanings:

The flash refers to intuition, the shining to the projection of teaching and the use of colors by the Sufis. The shaking, used in this root as of a plant in the wind, means the movement of the exercises of the dervish. Attar further chooses the plant allegory because Sufism is of a growing, adaptive, organic and necessary nature, according to its followers. The wind which is taken as shaking the plant is the divine wind, the impalpable force
which is known by its effect (on the plant) as much as by anything else.\footnote{Shah, p. xxii.}

It is regrettable that Idries Shah does not explain what possibilities might occur if this system of codes and ciphers is applied to the name Khayyam. Nevertheless, by decoding "Al-Khayyam" (literally the tent maker), the Arabic root AKHF (hide, hidden) can be reached. Of course, any non-Sufi examiner of this root would eventually link it with what Sufism itself implies—complete secrecy. So, whether Khayyam's name was selected on purpose to convey the informative message that his poetry should be read allegorically or not is impossible for us to determine, but the possibility is there. As Robert Graves puts it in his introduction to \textit{The Sufis}: "The book will at least be available to a great number of people who share this peculiar way of thinking with one or two intimate friends, and whom it will doubtless surprise as much as it has surprised me."\footnote{Ibid., p. xxii.}

Among the many drawbacks to this kind of reasoning, the principal one is that there is no basic logic or firm foundation to support such a system which is built on mere subjective speculations. There is no clear specific argument to challenge with an unbiased critical view. Even among Sufi supporters,
a poet like Ali-Shah has no inside knowledge of Sufism to over-
come his own inconsistencies in his argument:

Though the Rubaiyyat was clearly written for readers
with a grounding in the Sufi lore to which it tradi-
tionally belongs, a stubborn rear-guard of Oriental
and Occidental scholars will doubtless continue to
cite alleged instances of Khayyam's anti-Sufic
verses. This will be simply because the poem's
technical terms, semantic nuances and argumentative
judo—obvious enough to readers trained in the Sufic
way of thinking—baffle and provoke natural resent-
ment in non-initiates. 13

In a similar effort to reaffirm his colleague's claims, Robert
Graves, who has no emotional stake in his claim that Khayyam was
definitely a Sufi who practiced the secret meanings of Sufic
thinking, cites a quatrain which he attributes to Khayyam and
calls the fugitive quatrain:

Conceal the mystery revealed to you
From all nonentities, likewise from fools:
In carefulness approach men's inner selves,
Letting none intercept your scrutiny. (OROK, 31)

Thus, it is most probable that Sufis might have adapted
the quatrains to suit their own ways and needs just as the anti-
Stratfordians did in the early years of this century when they
adapted their own cryptographic arguments in an effort to prove
that Shakespeare was not the real author of his plays. The
only remedy Sufis have left for people all over the world who
appreciate and enjoy the literary value of Khayyam's Rubaiyyat
can be read immediately into Shah's climactic statement: "From
the Sufi point of view, Khayyam's poetry has multiple functions.

13Graves and Ali-Shah, p. 32.
It may be read for its apparent content alone; it may be recited under certain conditions in order to provide special improvements in the range of consciousness; it may be 'decoded' to obtain material of use in Sufic studies."\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Shah, p. 168.
The most persistent question that forces itself at this time is whether Khayyam is a representative of his age or not. Is it possible to see in him a typical philosopher of his time? Was the age in which he lived shaped enough to produce a great poet and thinker like Khayyam, or was Khayyam a singular case? Arab and Persian historians like Al-Zamkhashri, Nizami Samarcand (a student of Khayyam), Al-Shahrouzi, and Al-Kufti seem to agree that Khayyam lived in an age of great performances in the fields of science, literature, and philosophy. It was an age which produced Ikhwan Al-Safa, a group of young people who established a secret society toward the middle of the tenth century; they wrote 150 important letters which combined all the novelties and discoveries of their time. Their aim was to save Islamic dogmas from the clutch of illusions and fraud by reviving the knowledge of psychology which was known to pre-Islamic philosophers and laymen. Khayyam's age also knew Avicenna (980-1037), the Arab physician and philosopher.

Nevertheless, some scholars seem to have agreed that Khayyam's philosophical ideas were basically destructive to the morality of his society—his poetry conveyed negativeness. Others claimed that Khayyam was nothing more than a mere poet who spoke subjectively and never was a philosopher. People who look into Khayyam's poetry for the first time would most
probably see him as an ordinary poet who never had any deep knowledge of man and destiny, or could have undertaken the task of teaching truth for the welfare of his fellow man. Such people do him great injustice when they condemn him with severe accusations without even trying to see the other side of his Rubaiyyat. Khayyam insisted on scolding life, and described it as the ugliest of all pictures. He even wished that he never had been born into this world:

> Disinclined into this world he brought me,  
> And gained nothing but more wonderment.  
> Reluctantly we leave, not knowing  
> Why we came, stayed, or why going!  
> (Al-Saraf, 165, XVIII)

However, it would be interesting to notice here how easily a specific quatrain could undergo such drastic changes in meaning that it would be extremely difficult to determine what Khayyam really meant. Fitzgerald took the same quatrain mentioned above, a literal translation of the Persian version, and adapted it in a way to suit his own Victorian taste:

> Into this Universe, and Why not knowing  
> Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing;  
> And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,  
> I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.  
> (EF, 427, XXIX)

Graves, who represents the other extreme of Khayyam's interpreters came out with the following translation:

> In agitation I was brought to birth  
> And learned nothing from life but wonder at it;  
> Reluctantly we leave, still uninformed  
> Why in the world we came, or went, or were.  
> (OROK, 56, XXXI)
A literal translation by Robert Arnot of Nicolas' French quatrain reveals a sense of surrender: "In the first place, my being was given me without my consent, which makes my own existence a lasting problem to me. Then, we leave this world with regret, and without having accomplished the aim of our coming, of our stay, or our departure" (*SQQK*, 308, CXVII). Fadel, in his Arabic translation, reveals remarkable resemblance to Graves' version:

Reluctantly, into this world of dust He brought me. Amazed as I was, became more ignorant and puzzled. Then unwillingly, I passed; not knowing when to be back.

Why I came? Why I stayed? And why I went?

(Fadel, 205, LXLII)

Finally, Al-Bustani creates more astonishment by reminding us of man's free will:

Without my consent, into this world I came; Reluctantly, I cannot stay; Yet, willingly I can decide to dwell.

(Al-Bustani, 67, XXVII)

All of the above translations reflect a sort of resentment that cannot be escaped. However, it would be unfair to believe that Khayyam's attitude in life was simply to condemn the world and to urge people to submerge themselves in worldly pleasures, to grasp every opportunity in life, and to be indifferent to all responsibilities. Khayyam was never an immoral person from what is known of his social and scientific background. He was not a sick-minded person; his education and literary production reveal high qualities of mind. He was not vicious and ill-tempered; historians have found him to be very
intelligent and sophisticated. He was not corrupt or mean; he was the favorite friend of Nizam Al-Moulk who was noted for his remarkable ethical standard. Also there is no evidence that he was a drunkard. Therefore, the possibility that he urged people to drink wine for its intoxicating effect is very remote. Khayyam surely was motivated by his deep sensitiveness and concern for his fellow man. His unique philosophy is the outcome of his delicate taste and sensitive walk in life. He was never an enemy of the people, nor their friend. He never wished them harm, nor provoked their hatred. He was busy keeping with his tortured and irritated self, trying to reach for higher values and impeccable meanings. Thus Khayyam could not possibly be an escapist and a mere sensualist as Fitzgerald tried to picture him:

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow! (EF, 426, XII)

And to the same point:

Some for the Glories of This World; and some  
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!  
(EF, 426, XIII)

Yet, neither was Khayyam a mystical Sufi in a state of meditation calling for God's justice:

If sinfully I drudge, where is Your mercy?  
If clouds darken my heart, where is Your light?  
Heaven rewards my practice of obedience;  
Rewards well-earned are good—but what of grace?  
(OROK, 70, LXXXVI)
Again to the same point:

Ordaining every cause for life or death,
Guarding this tattered robe we call the Sky,
Say, am I sinful? Are you not my Master?
Who sins when You alone created me?

(OROK, 70, LXXXVIII)

J. B. Nicolas and E. H. Whinfield supplied in their translations a closer literal reflection of each separate quatrain of the Rubaiyyat. Robert Graves provided his translation of the Rubaiyyat with mild expressions to suppress Khayyam's sense of restlessness; nevertheless, he kept very close to the original. Although Fitzgerald successfully imitated Omar's form, that is, a decasyllabic iambic quatrain with three rhyming lines and one unrhymed in imitation of the Persian verse, he failed in producing the concept of the original. He joined scattered phrases from more than one quatrain of what he found in the manuscript. Thus, he accomplished new meanings which were entirely his own. Then he arranged those quatrains that he worked out in a way to give them a sort of thematic unity. However, Robert Graves denies Fitzgerald this privilege, for which he has been applauded, on the ground that the original Persian version is also well structured: "Yet it needed no Sufi to recognize the Rubaiyyat's temporal pattern from dawn to dead of night, from youth to old age; its central verses recording the metaphysical noontide torments of a passionate mind" (OROK, 23). Thus, the criticism of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyyat has revolved mostly around the extent to which Fitzgerald remained faithful in spirit to the original.
Fitzgerald himself, in a number of letters, talked about the many problems that he encountered when he was translating the Rubaiyyat. In a letter to E. B. Cowell, written September 3, 1858, Fitzgerald wrote: "My Translation will interest you from its Form, and also in many respects in its Detail: very unilateral as it is. Many Quatrains are mashed together: and something lost, I doubt, of Omar's Simplicity, which is so much a Virtue in him. But there it is, such as it is. . . ."\(^1\) In another letter to E. B. Cowell, dated January 13, 1859, Fitzgerald wrote: "My Translation has its merit: but it misses a main one in Omar, which I will leave you to find out. . . ."\(^2\)

Obviously, Fitzgerald himself was aware that his translation has its own merits and demerits. He knew that he could not retain the exactness of the original because there was something he could not understand due to cultural differences. He tried his best to overcome most of the barriers that stood in his way, but when he failed he simply suppressed the metaphor, the idea, and sometimes the whole quatrain. Robert Graves cites a good example of Fitzgerald's careless inversion of some of the quatrains. In quatrain seventy-five of


\(^2\)Ibid., p. xxxii.
Fitzgerald's fourth version, he wrote:

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

(CW, Vol. II, 38)

Graves wonders why Fitzgerald has suppressed Omar's polo metaphor and complicated a comparatively simple quatrain which he himself translated:

Poor ball, struck by Fate's heavy polo-mallet,
Running whichever way it drives you, numbed
Of sense, though He who set you on your course,
He knows, He knows, He knows. (OROK, 67, LXXIV)

In the Arabic versions, the polo-metaphor is retained and made more explicit--"poor ball" is specifically referred to by Fadel as "young fellow" (quatrain 115). Graves also accuses Fitzgerald of suppressing some of Khayyam's quatrains which define his position as a Sufi poet. Fitzgerald wrote:

Alike for those who for Today prepare,
And those that after some Tomorrow stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor There."

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of the Two Worlds so wisely--they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopped
with Dust. (EF, 427, XXV & XXVI)

According to Graves the original runs:

Some ponder long on doctrine and belief,
Some teeter between certitude and doubt.
Suddenly out of hiding leaps the Guide
With: 'Fools, the Way is neither that nor this.'

Most of them, gone before we go, my Saki,
Drowse in their dusty bed of pride, my Saki.
Drink yet again and hear the truth at last:
'Whatever words they spoke were wind, my Saki.'
(OROK, 55, XXV & XXVI)

Obviously, the Muezzin is Fitzgerald's own creation; there is no mention of him in any of the Arabic versions. Even Al-Bustani who regards Fitzgerald with great esteem does not agree with him for the simple reason that the Muezzin and his religious function (he calls people to prayer at the proper hours) is highly respected among Moslems. While the Persian version does not make specific who utters the words of the Muezzin, Al-Bustani refers to him as a voice from the past which is even more acceptable than Graves' "Guide." Again there is no mention of saints, prophets, and two worlds as Fitzgerald has indicated in quatrain twenty-nine; a literal translation of the Persian version runs: "My Saki, those who left before us are sleeping now on the dust of pride. Go, drink wine and listen to my truthful words—all they said was babble in the air" (Al-Saraf, 202, CXI).

However, if Fitzgerald did not fully apprehend the essence of Omar's philosophy, at least he had the courage to say so.

Unlike Fitzgerald, most of the other poets who translated the Rubaiyyat claimed to be right and honest in their interpretations. Ali-Shah, in his introduction to Graves's translation, gives a very superficial excuse to cover his own prejudice for marking Khayyam as a Sufi poet:

It is not easy for me, who as a child read and spoke
classical Persian, to have patience with Western mistranslations of Khayyam. I feel outraged by such wilful ignorance combined with the crooked manipulation of verses to make them fit alien patterns of thought. (OROK, 39)

Graves himself reversed the concept of some of the quatrains to make them fit a craft of symbolism, or perhaps a system of codes and ciphers which is only comprehensible to a Sufi. When Khayyam says "Bring wine to allay the fever of my heart" (OROK, LVI), he is obviously not referring to divine love, but pleading for real wine to soothe his burning self. J. B. Nicolas insisted that Khayyam was a Sufi and that his poems must be interpreted in this light for the simple reason that he wanted to explore the glamour of mysticism. Finally, Arberry characterized Khayyam as a poet of rationalistic pessimism in order to take a moderate stand rather than either of the two extreme views.

Considering this strange amalgamation of opinions, what then could be the body of Khayyam's philosophy? It is true that Khayyam did not plan any definite arrangement for his Rubaiyyat; nevertheless, one should think of them as scattered pieces of a broken statue in the hand of a sculptor trying to restore the original shape. In a similar way, the scattered rubaiyyat could be assembled in groups to show the growth and the defeat of Khayyam's idealism. He started as a rebel against the conventions and corruptions of his age, and ended with

_3SOOK, p. 278._
more frustrations than he could stand. Not being able to fight back, he simply surrendered himself completely to wine to escape the anguish and bitterness of defeat. In a way, he saw in wine a symbol of death and that explains why he praised it so much and loved it so much.
CHAPTER VI

A NEW APPROACH TO THE RUBAIYYAT

Khayyam's age, like ours, was an age of war and social conflicts. This was enough to set his mind and heart astir. Having been caught in the turmoil of the social crisis, Khayyam began to question all existing theories and values, and to rebel against them. The significance of his Rubaiyyat is that they give the highest creative expression of his rebellion, and later of his defeat. However, it is rather difficult to grasp the essence of his revolt and characterize its different aspects directly from the Rubaiyyat for the simple reason that they reflect swift intermingled moods. Nevertheless, Khayyam's thin production in Arabic can be used together with his Rubaiyyat to solve the problem of analyzing his revolt and his defeat. But under all conditions, the Rubaiyyat must be considered as the major source for any attempt to discuss Khayyam's philosophy regardless of their contradictory aspects: partly they call for withdrawal from life and its attractions, and partly they invite people to enjoy its pleasures; partly they express blasphemy, and partly rejoice in the rapture of beauty; partly they remind people of death, and partly mock death; partly they celebrate the greatness of knowledge, and partly ridicule those who claim to possess knowledge. In short, the Rubaiyyat are the perception of ambiguity and contradiction in
his own response to experience.

Khayyam looked at life with great dissatisfaction. He saw farther and deeper than his contemporaries and was able to project his vision in the most expressive verse. He realized that there was a great need for social protest, yet he lacked the strength and energy to rise above himself and fulfill those demands. His enormous desire to rebel was unmatched by enough fervor to kindle his rebellion. Thus he said in one of his Arabic poems: "The world, the skies, and the heavens will bow down at my request. I retract from evil to preserve my chastity, yet I sin by worshiping him who rebels. I have helped many people to find their path of truth, yet my path stretches over a valley of blindness" (Fadel, 43).

Why then did Khayyam have this peculiar feeling of enervation? Was he physically unfit, an eccentric person, or simply an escapist? He himself explained why he was unable to put his own views into effect: "All my life I have been looking for a brother who would direct me if I erred. I have met many people, befriended more, and exchanged much more. Finally, I said to my soul when it was impossible to console her—for God's sake never dream of a friend" (Fadel, 45). Khayyam was certain that he could not lead a one-man fight against a corrupted society. He was looking for someone on whom he could lay some of the burden of carrying his protest against the decadence of conventions and existing manners to the people,
but he was dismayed when he could not find a faithful friend. Thus he was defeated in his quest and his dilemma grew more and more until finally he ended in a state of serious meditation trying to solve the puzzle behind man's existence. He became involved in matters which are ultimately unresolvable, except on a basis of faith. He began asking questions about man, creation, and duty which usually culminate in negativness and lead to pessimism through a process of increasing doubts and skepticism. Khayyam was full of determination when he started his revolt against the morality of his society, but when he became the victim of his own doubts, he said: "If the harvest of life is death, what could be the difference between activity and idleness" (Saraf, 86). In other words, he decided that if life can bring nothing but fatigue to the tortured self, why fight for it? He found in death the answer for all his worries, and in wine a substitute for death.

If Khayyam's Arabic poems can be used to outline his thought and project his role in life, his Rubaiyyat can be used to support and enforce the various aspects of his performance. His revolt can be examined under the following stages: his revolt against society, against religion, against the heavens, against destiny, against the puzzle of existence, against the mind, and finally against death. His defeat which marks the longest chapter in his life can be discussed under the following stages: the overturn of his revolt, the escape of the rebel,
and the rebel in exile. In exile, Khayyam drinks a number of toasts: a toast to agony, a toast to death, a toast to religion, a toast to the present moment, and a toast to wine.

Khayyam detested the morality of his society and its standard of ethics. He revolted against the ignorance of his people and their anti-intellectualism:

My heart complained: 'I long for inspiration,
I long for wisdom, to be taught and learn.'
I breathed the letter A. My heart replied:
'A is enough to occupy this house.'

(OROK, 62, LIV)

Khayyam was very distressed by the rotten values of his society which were used both to shape man's ambitions and seal his fate. He was greatly shaken by the hostility of his people toward the learned, the scientist, and the philosopher. He saw in their behavior a dangerous disease of greed and lust that should be destroyed:

Men's lusts, like house-dogs, still the house distress
With clamour, barking for mere wantonness;
Foxes are they, and sleep the sleep of hares;
Crafty as wolves, as tigers pitiless.

(SOOK, 156, LXI)

Furthermore, Khayyam rejected the conventional assent to protect and greet the ignorant, and to eject and harm the thinker. He warned his people against the danger of listening to the phony educators:

Exemplars of the cultured and genteel
Though moulding candles from these predicates
Have never lighted one to mark the way
By night; but told their fables and slept on.

(OROK, 66, LXIX)
He even described them with the most repulsive names:

These fools, by dint of ignorance most
crass,
Think they in wisdom all mankind surpass;
And glibly do they damn as infidel,
Whoever is not, like themselves, an ass.

(SOOK, 180, CLVI)

Khayyam also ridiculed the wealthy who were manipulating the poor. He laughed at their worries and shallowness: "These numerous great lords, so proud of their titles, are so gnawed by cares and sorrows that existence to them is a burden. And most ridiculous it is that they deign not to call by the name of men those who, unlike to them, are not slaves to their passions" (SOOK, 310, CXXVI). Khayyam also believed in the freedom of the individual and the significance of retaining his dignity. Thus he urged his people not to subject themselves to the authority of the ruler and not to show gratitude or return favors to their benefactors:

One ample draught outdoes the fame of
Kawus,
Kobad the Glorious or Imperial Tus.
Friend, never bow your neck even to
Rustum
Nor proffer thanks even to Hatim Tai.

(OROK, 51, X)

Khayyam himself decided to live in seclusion and poverty rather
than to live in luxury and sacrifice his dignity.

For the devout Moslem, the Koran is not just a book of prayers, but also a code of civil and religious law, and a guide to conduct and meditation. Naturally, people during Khayyam's age regarded their preachers with great respect and
took their words as their guiding light. But Khayyam noticed that people went astray because they were misled by some impostors who took religions as a means to deceive people by taking advantage of their gullibility, and by feeding their brains with superstitions and deception. Thus, he undertook the task of exposing their crooked methods:

O City Mufti, you go more astray
Than I do, though to wine I do give way;
I drink the blood of grapes, you that of men:
Which of us is the more bloodthirsty, pray?

(KSOQ, 217, CCCVII)

Khayyam even longed to possess the power of God to destroy such impostors who confuse the people. He warned them against the wrath of God: "All thy secrets are known to the wisdom of Heaven [God]; He knows them hair by hair and vein by vein. I admit that by power of hypocrisy you may be able to deceive men, but what will you do before Him who knows your misdeeds one by one in every detail?" (KSOQ, 318, CLVIII). Khayyam saw more rectitude and integrity in a prostitute than in a Sheikh (preacher of the Mosque):

A Shaikh [sic] Beheld a harlot, and quoth he,
"You seem a slave to drink and lechery";
And she made answer, "What I seem I am,
But, Master, are you all you seem to be?"

(KSOQ, 259, CDLXXXIII)

While Khayyam revolted against the falsehood of those who preached the Koran, he began questioning the incongruity of religion itself. But in order to convince others of the
soundness of his opinion, he based his arguments on a process of reasoning in which a coherent series of facts were presented before he made any final judgment. Thus he concluded that if the dogmas of religion deny the sinner the comfort of paradise, and at the same time proclaim all men to be sinners then who is to be in paradise:

If but the Vine and Love-abjuring Band
Are in the Prophet's Paradise to stand,
Alack, I doubt the Prophet's Paradise
Were empty as the hollow of one's Hand.

(CW, Vol. II, 36, LXV)

Khayyam also wondered why God should promise the righteous a paradise peopled with houris (seductively beautiful women) and furnished with good wine, and prohibit him such pleasures on Earth:

In Paradise, they tell us, Houris dwell,
And fountains run with wine and oxymel:
If these be lawful in the world to come
Surely 'tis right to love them here as well.

(SQOK, 187, CLXXXV)

Thereupon Khayyam investigated more deeply the various inconsistencies that he found in religion, and questioned God's justice. He realized that reform cannot be achieved unless people learn how to avoid the snares of religion and how to distinguish between true and false. Such ideas, he conceived, must be accompanied by convincing arguments if they were to be accepted by the public. So the first thing for him to do was to suggest that religion is a mere fabrication of man's imagination:
The Revelations of Devout and Learned
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
They told their comrades, and to Sleep returned. (EF, 429, LXV)

Then Khayyam regarded man's life on earth as a troubled exile.

Why should God confront man by temptations and then punish him if he erred:

That sin is irresistible, He knows;
Yet He commands us to abstain from sin.
Thus irresistibility confounds us
With prohibition:--'Lean, but never fall!'

(OROK, 69, LXXXIII)

In his own account of his troubles, Khayyam said:

On every path I take, Your snares are spread
To entrap me, should I walk without due care.
Utter extremes acknowledge Your vast sway.
You order all things--yet You call me rebel? (OROK, 70, LXXXV)

Khayyam, having rejected both the reward and the penalty, decided that heaven and hell have no real existence outside the self, and that man should do what he thinks is right for him to do:

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell;
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered, "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell"-- (EF, 429, LXVI)

Khayyam was keenly aware of the problem of man's predestination and free will. Man was created without his consent and with
him he brought his fears and hopes:

My presence here has been no choice of mine;
Fate hounds me most unwillingly away.
Rise, wrap a cloth about your loins,
my Saki,
And swill away the misery of this world.

(OROK, 56, XXXII)

If man follows the dictates of his passion, he will be judged and punished. God created in him the appetite to sin and prohibited him from committing sin. God created him a sinner and wanted him to be virtuous:

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

(EF, 430, LXXX)

Khayyam also started questioning the qualities of God. If He is generous, then why should He offer paradise only to those who obey Him? If He is merciful, then why should He reward evil with hell, which is of more evil:

If sinfully I drudge, where is Your mercy?
If clouds darken my heart, where is Your light?
Heaven rewards my practice of obedience;
Rewards well-earned are good—but what of grace? (OROK, 70, LXXXVI)

Khayyam was skeptical in his apprehension of God. Sometimes he admitted his failure to comprehend the essence of God and asked for His mercy:

You always cognisant of every secret;
Who succour all flesh in its hour of need,
Grant me repentance, grant me mercy too—
You who forgive all, You who punish all,

(OROK, 70, LXXXVII)

Sometimes Khayyam grew skeptical and expressed his doubts about God's benevolence:

Ordaining every cause for life or death,
Guarding this tattered robe we call the Sky,
Say, am I sinful? Are you not my Master?
Who sins when You alone created me?

(OROK, 70, LXXXVIII)

Having reached this point of interrogation, Khayyam begins to wonder who might be the mover of our existence. Is it the wheel of fortune? Khayyam refuses this idea because fortune, a spurious identification of fate, showers the mean and the covetous with riches and blessings while it takes vengeance on the innocent and the free. Khayyam reminds his fellow men not to count on fortune:

Crave not of worldly sweets to take your fill,
Nor wait on turns of fortune, good or ill;
Be of light heart, as are the skies above,
They roll a round or two, and then lie still. (SQQK, 138, CXCI)

Is it possible that the Earth controls our existence? Again Khayyam refuses to accept this as an answer. The Earth is as cruel and stupid as fortune itself. If Khayyam had the power to destroy the Earth, he would have done so, and then created another one in which the seekers of freedom could live and fulfill their noble cause:
If only I controlled God's Universe,
Would I not wipe away these faulty
Heavens
And build from nothing a true Paradise
Where all souls could achieve their
hearts' desire? (OROK, 75, CV)

Not being able to answer these questions, Khayyam returns
from his journey into the depth of the unknown with empty
hands. Who is responsible for this huge universe whom
Khayyam might seek to settle some problems, or revolt against
if he refused to negotiate? Who is going to tell Khayyam why
he came into this universe, or why he should leave? Can any-
one explain to him why God created man in His image and left
him alone on the stage of life? Why did God mould man from
clay and then smash him with ferocity:

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure molded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

Who can solve all these mysteries for Khayyam? Could
it be the mind? Having revolted against almost everything,
Khayyam was left only with his mind to guide him in his
blindness. If he had not rejected the sufficiency of religion,
he could have found all the answers, or at any rate avoided
the questions. If he had not repudiated the existence of God,
he could have surrendered all his worries and troubles to Him.
However, unable to accept these possibilities, Khayyam left
all the burden of his doubts to the potency of his mind. But
soon Khayyam was disappointed. His mind could not grasp the essence behind man's existence in this world, but simply conveyed a simple material picture of reality. His mind saw, but could not interpret or understand what it saw. Thus Khayyam rebelled against the power of the mind and welcomed the obscurity of ignorance. He even called upon man to search for ignorance rather than wisdom; the truly ignorant is the one who does not comprehend the virtue of ignorance:

Those dupes of intellect and logic die
In arguments on being or not being;
Go, ignoramus, choose your vintage well--
From dust like theirs grow none but unripe grapes. (OROK, 63, LIX)

In this state of gloominess, perplexity, and uncertainty, a huge ugly giant appears to block all escapes in the way of Khayyam and to paralyze him physically and mentally. It is Death swallowing everything: the rich and the poor, the good and the evil, the learned and the ignorant, the miserable and the cheerful, and even hopes and ideas. Having been framed in this horrible situation, Khayyam began to see Death everywhere and at all times. Corpses spread everywhere beneath the crust of earth; so, man, be careful where you step:

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean--
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs
unseen! (EF, 426, XX)

If Khayyam were handed a jug of wine, he halted for it reminded him that one day his body might be transformed into a jug:
This jug was, ages past, a doleful lover
Like me—who had pursued a dream, like
me.
This handle at its neck was once an arm
Entwined about some neck he loved too
well. (OROK, 58, XXXVII)

If Khayyam saw a potter pounding relentlessly on wet clay, he
shrank with horror and imagined that it was pleading for mercy:

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay;
And with its all-obiterated Tongue
It murmured—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!" (EF, 427, XXXVII)

And if he saw a rose or violet, he recalled the destiny of a
king or the fate of a maiden:

Each rose or tulip bed that you encounter
Is sure to mark a king's last resting-place,
While scented violets, rising from black
soil,
Record the burial of some lovely girl.

(OROK, 53, XIX)

Khayyam never resented or feared anything as he resented and
feared death. However, he did not rebel against death, but
simply accepted its harsh verdicts. Somehow he was convinced
of the impossibility of revealing the secret of death. For
him it was a thing that everybody must experience and discover
by himself:

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

(EF, 429, LXIV)

What is the importance of life now that youth has
elapsed, now that hopes have been drained, and now that miseries and agonies have piled up. Khayyam regretted the impotence of a life which passes wastefully as passes a night of drunkenness. We are nothing, he conceived, but a plaything in the hands of destiny placed in a life full of disappointments and illusions. Khayyam, looking back into his lost past and forward into his gloomy future, retracted into isolation and waited for his end, wishing that he had never been born. Then, in a spirit of complete surrender, he began to tell of Khayyam, the tent maker, who used to make tents of wisdom before he was robbed of his soul:

Khayaam, who stitched the hides for
Wisdom's tent
Has tumbled in Grief's clutches. He
lies burning;
The shears of Death have closed upon
his guys
And Hope the Broker sells him for a
song. (OROK, 75, CVIII)

Then Khayyam, realizing that he might be misunderstood, pleaded for the concern and forgiveness of his fellow men, thus ending his rebellion in defeat:

Though pearls in praise of God I never
strung,
Though dust of sin lies clotted on my
brow,
Yet will I not despair of mercy. When
Did Omar argue that the One was Two?
(OROK, 76, CX)

Khayyam, having announced his defeat and moved into exile, is overtaken by a desire to express his disgust with
life and to affirm its emptiness. He first reminds man not to feel sorry if he has missed comfort and luxury, and not to be dejected if he has been overwhelmed by pain and fatigue all his life. Since the inevitable end is death, there is no difference between comfort and pain, or between riches and poverty:

Against death's arrows what are buckles worth?
What all the pomps and riches of the earth?
When I survey the world, I see no good
But goodness, all beside is nothing worth. (SOOK, 165, XCVII)

This universe is nothing but an illusion, and whatever has been said in praise of it is mere lies. Life is nothing but this fugitive moment of depression; out of dust we were born and on swift wind we are carried away. Our existence is nothing but an arrogant dream and an empty mirage:

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End! (EF, 426, XXIV)

Then Khayyam soliloquizes in an effort to convince himself of the uselessness of struggle in a life which is void of any meaning. Were Khayyam able to accomplish all his necessities and desires, life would still be meaningless because the ultimate end is death:

Think of this world as modelled at your whim,
Perfectly trimmed for you from east to west;
Yet know yourself a snowdrift on the sand
Heaped for two days or three, then thawed
and gone. (OROK, 53, XVI)

What thrill is there if Khayyam were able to solve the secret
of man's existence? Is there any excitement if Khayyam were
to succeed in dominating both the land and the sea, or lived a
century or two? Is there any reward after all these accom-
plishments except the grave?

Suppose the world goes well with you,
what then?
When life's last page is read and turned,
what then?
Suppose you live a hundred years of bliss,
Yea, and a hundred years besides, what
then? (SCOK, 244, CDXV)

Khayyam undertook the task of rejecting the ways of
men in this universe and exploring philosophically the mys-
teries of this life as it is manifested in the apparent disor-
der of its events. Having drawn upon his extensive feelings
that he was victimized by forces beyond his control, he
rejected the idea that true happiness is to be found only in
enjoyment. If man considered the beginning and the end of his
existence, he would discover no difference between joy and
agony, beauty and ugliness, and good and evil. Therefore man
is born into a world of nothingness; whether he runs in the
world or stays at home nothing but the inevitable end is his
reward:

The Worldly Hope

men set their Hearts
upon

Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.
(EE, 426, XVI)

Man's body is worthless, this earth is worthless, and if man
is trapped in its turmoil he should not feel sad because it is
not even worth that:

Allow no shadow of regret to cloud you,
No absurd grief to overcast your days.
Never renounce love-songs, or lawns,
or kisses
Until your clay lies mixed with elder
clay. (QIROK, 54, XXIV)

In exile (moral isolation) an atmosphere of depression
and loneliness begins to prevail, and soon Khayyam begins to
lose his patience. Is there any medicine to soothe his wounds
and reduce his pain? Is there any way to drown his thoughts
and worries? Suddenly Khayyam is awakened by the arrival of
the Saki (the cupbearer) with his jug of wine. The Saki comes
to relieve Khayyam of all his suffering and torment. Khayyam,
responding with warmth to the arrival of the Saki, starts
lamenting to him the loss of his tranquility; too much wor-
rying about the questions of life and death, religion and man,
earth and heaven have exhausted his body and weakened his heart.
Khayyam pleads with the Saki to tell him if he knows of a
place where he can rest:

If only I could find some tranquil spot
For sleep; if only this long road would end!
If only from some inner core of earth
We might spring up once more to bud
and blossom! (QIROK, 74, CIV)
Realizing that on this earth there is no tranquillity, Khayyam turns to justify the use of wine as a healing tonic:

Wine's power is known to wine-bibbers alone,
To narrow heads and hearts 'tis never shown;
I blame not them who never felt its force,
For, till they feel it, how can it be known. (SQOK, 182, CLXIV)

Then Khayyam calls upon the Saki to pour him wine; he wants to drown his suffering for one moment. Wine might help him to forget the torture and the agony that were inflicted upon him by the events of life:

A draught of wine would make a mountain dance,
Base is the churl who looks at wine askance;
Wine is a soul our bodies to inspire,
A truce to this vain talk of temperance!

(SQOK, 187, CLXXXVI)

Having defended the use of wine, Khayyam begins to satiate his thirst for it. He drinks several toasts, and starts with a toast to agonies. Raising his cup of wine, he admits that he never had an honest friend like wine:

Cupbearer, come! from thy full-throated ewer
Pour blood-red wine, the world's despite to cure!
Where can I find another friend like wine,
So genuine, so solacing, so pure?

(SQOK, 257, CDLXIV)

Then Khayyam appeals to the Saki not to waste good wine because it is his last remedy; wine will shorten the duration of his
Why should Khayyam worry about the hidden frustrations of tomorrow? Not being able to find a reasonable answer, Khayyam calls upon the Saki to pour for him more wine in order to drink a toast to Death before fate overtakes him:

Before Fate springs her ambush for your life,
Command our tavern-lad to fetch you drink.
Fool, your dry corpse will be no treasure trove
For proud posterity to disinter!

(OROK, 52, XV)

Then Khayyam, carrying on the tradition of the Arabic tribal poetry, addresses the imaginary friend or lover (thou) who was wrongly interpreted by some critics as a handsome young lad for whom the poet had some sort of sinister affection. Khayyam calls upon his friend to restrain his selfishness, to give up his worries, and to drink wine. This swift and ugly life offers only two virtues: sleep and wine. Why then should his friend be concerned and gloomy when he knows that every living being is doomed to leave this earth sooner or later, and never to return? Khayyam also reminds his friend to grasp the ecstasy of every moment by drinking wine before death deprives him of worldly pleasure:

Raise the bowl high, like tulip-cups
at Nauroz,
And if the moon-faced one has time to spare
Drink gloriously deep, for brutal Time
Will strike you down with never a warning yell. (OROK, 59, XLII)
Dear love, look at the moon spreading its silvery rays as it mounts the darkness of night. Is there anything more thrilling than the glory of this moment? This incident will go on forever, but one day the moon will be looking for us and we will not be here:

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for one
in vain! (EF, 431, C)

Dawn is here with its warm and blazing sun to welcome our presence. Dear friend, pour me some wine to rejoice the sublimity of this moment before our lives cease to exist:

Rarest of lads, rising to greet the dawn;
Favour my bowl of crystal, pour red wine!
This moment filched from the grey corpse of night
We long may sigh for, never repossess. (OROK, 49, IV)

Then Khayyam tells how one day he pressed his lips to the cup of wine hoping that wine might offer him long life, and how wine, in a whisper, affirmed to him the uselessness of his efforts to reach immortality:

Greedily to the bowl my lips I pressed
And asked how might I sue for green old age.
Pressing its lips to mine it muttered darkly:
"Drink up! Once gone, you shall return no more!" (OROK, 57, XXXVI)

Having rejected the dogmas of religion and having declared the falsehood of its edification, Khayyam decides to
drink a toast to religion. He calls upon the Saki to trade his rug of prayer for a cup of wine. Khayyam is no more interested in religion, nor in worshiping God. And for those who preach that the penalty for drinking wine is very severe, Khayyam has only one answer; wine is more precious than anything that might be found in both heaven and hell:

They say: "Be sober, lest you die of drink
And earn Hell fire on God's Last Judgement Day."
Nevertheless my blaze of drunkenness
Outshines both worlds: your Now and your Hereafter. (OROK, 65, LXVII)

Once again Khayyam turns to his friend to encourage him not to waste any moment of pleasure that he can find on this earth, and not to dream of a promised paradise that might not be there:

Some for the Glories of This World;
and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

(EP, 426, XIII)

Then Khayyam raises his third toast to the present moment. Nothing is more thrilling than the magic of the present moment; man cannot grasp the past nor reach the future, but he can enjoy the present if he forgets about everything else:

Never anticipate tomorrow's sorrow;
Live always in this paradisal Now—
Fated however soon to house, instead,
With others gone these seven thousand years: (OROK, 54, XXI)
Then Khayyam grants himself the permission to follow the desires of his body:

Khayaam, should you be drunk with love, rejoice!
Or bedded with your heart's delight, rejoice!
Your end is no more than the whole world's end.
Fancy yourself no longer there; then smile. (OROK, 59, XLIV)

Finally, Khayyam drinks a toast to wine--the crimson juice of grapes that heals all wounds. Each drop of wine can bring relief to both the living and the dead:

Each drop of wine that Saki negligently
Spills on the ground may quench the
fires of grief
In some sore heart. All praise to Him who offers
Such medicine to relieve its melancholy! (OROK, 59, XLI)

Then Khayyam delivers his last wish. He entreats his tavern friends not to forget him after his death; he wants them to wash his body with wine, to build his casket from wood of the grapevine, to bury him underneath the tavern and later to mould from the dust of his body a jug for wine:

When this existence finds an end at last,
When all I am scatters to the four winds,
Let them remould me as a jug, that then
I may revive, well soured in glorious drink. (OROK, 72, XCV)

And to the same point:

Should I fall dead, wash my poor corpse
in wine;
Read it into the grave with drinking songs.
On Judgement Day, if you have need of me,
Delve in the soil beneath our tavern door. (OROK, 73, XCVIII)

Having made his wish, Khayyam ends his prayer with the most expressive words. He reminds his tavern friends to remember him whenever they get together to drink wine, and when his turn comes not to forget to turn down his empty cup:

Sweet friends, in joy assembled here together,
Never forget us, once your sweetest friends.
Before you greet the jug, Khayyam adjures you:
When his turn comes, turn down his empty bowl. (OROK, 75, CVII)
CHAPTER VII

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STRUCTURE AND FORM

Thus far the possibility of rearranging the different quatrains (whether genuine or not) in such a way as to give a new interpretation of Khayyam's mind has been manifested. The question remains whether this sort of remodeling the *Rubaiyyat* can be used to compromise between the two major conflicting views embodied in the translations of Fitzgerald and Graves. It might be argued that this new outlook on the *Rubaiyyat* could not have been possible without referring to a number of sources to supply the proper quatrain to fit in the sequence of the analysis as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter. Such a claim can be refuted by mentioning that Edward Heron-Allen who devoted a lifetime to the study of Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyyat* was able to prove that it is jammed with all sorts of quatrains. According to him Fitzgerald used forty-nine quatrains from the Ousely Manuscript and the Calcutta Manuscript, forty-four composite quatrains that can be traced to more than one quatrain, two quatrains taken from Nicolas' text, four from the works of other Persian poets like Attar and Hafiz, and two quatrains are entirely a new creation. Furthermore, Fitzgerald had only seventy-five quatrains in his first edition, one hundred and ten quatrains
in his second edition, and finally reduced the number of quatrains to a hundred and one in his third and fourth editions. Graves's edition exceeds the number of quatrains in Fitzgerald's fourth edition by ten quatrains. In general, the two translations share a majority of identical quatrains, yet they differ sometimes in the wording of individual quatrains, sometimes in meaning, and sometimes in the order of presentation, each to serve a different purpose. Nevertheless, both translations are full of good taste and reflect two basic viewpoints on Khayyam's particular philosophy. On the one hand, Fitzgerald had adopted his own method of presenting Khayyam as the materialist Epicurian who "after vainly endeavouring to un-shackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of Tomorrow, fell back upon Today (which has out-last ed so many Tomorrows!) as the only Ground he got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet." In order to accomplish this effect, Fitzgerald simply opened his Rubaiyyat with a successful quatrain of his own creation that aimed to shock his readers by reflecting a sense of awe:

Wake! For the Sun, who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n and strikes
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

(GF, 425, I)

1CW, Vol II, p. 15.
Edward Heron-Allen stated that Fitzgerald was inspired to write this quatrain by quatrain number 134 of the Calcutta Manuscript which reads:

The Sun casts the noose of morning upon the roofs,
Kai Khoosru of the day, he throws a stone into the bowl:
Drink wine! for the Herald of the Dawn,
rising up,
Hurls into the days the cry of "Drink ye!"

(SQOK, 44)

By comparing Heron-Allen's translation with Saraf's Arabic translation of the same quatrain it becomes obvious that even Heron-Allen failed in interpreting some of the images that exist in the Persian quatrain. In his footnotes Heron-Allen does not explain what "Kai Khoosru" means, but he defends his second line saying: "The matter rests upon the word 'stone' in the second line. The word means 'to fling a stone into a cup or pot,' which is the signal for 'striking camp' among tribes of nomad Arabs." Saraf who is supposed to be a more reliable source because of his scholastic faculties in Persian and Arabic differs with Heron-Allen in his translation of the same line. And if it were possible to make a few changes in Heron-Allen's quatrain, the resulting quatrain would be very close to Saraf's translation of the same quatrain:

The Sun casts the noose of morning upon the heights,
The King of the Day has poured Wine into the bowl:

2Heron-Allen, cited in SQOK, p. 45.
Drink wine! for the Herald of the Dawn,
rising up,
Hurls into the days the cry of "Drink ye!"

Of course, regardless of the slight variations that exist between the two versions of the same quatrain by Heron-Allen and Saraf, the fact remains that not one of the two versions carry the same implication that subsist in Fitzgerald's first quatrain.

Fitzgerald then proceeds by introducing a number of quatrains that he carefully selected from different sources to strengthen the sense of awe that he created in his first quatrain and to insinuate future intimidation. According to Edward Heron-Allen, quatrain three of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyyat can be traced to four quatrains of the Calcutta Manuscript: the cock as a symbol of reality as opposed to the dream existence of the present is mentioned in quatrain 641, the notion of life slipping away is inspired by quatrain 207, and finally quatrains 247 and 273 convey the metaphor which is constantly recurrent in the Rubaiyyat--wine as a remedy. In quatrain five Fitzgerald skillfully mentions the Garden of Irâm to create a sense of wonder that he wanted to prevail over his Rubaiyyat:

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ringed Cup where no one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

(EE, 425)
By mentioning Iram, Fitzgerald aimed to revive a sense of wonder and of decadence that surrounded the ancient Persian legend of this garden. Iram which was once an enchanting garden planted by King Schedad is now sunk somewhere in the sands of Arabia. Again Heron-Allen, after carefully examining the different quatrains that are attributed to Omar, came to the conclusion that the Garden of Iram has no existence in any of the quatrains that he saw. In almost every quatrain there is also a touch of voluptuousness that cannot be escaped. Fitzgerald obviously wanted to create his own vision of Khayyam, and in order to accomplish that he sometimes imposed sensuousness on some of the quatrains, sometimes reversed their meaning, and sometimes eliminated complete quatrains that he found to be in contrast to what he wanted to imply. Thus Fitzgerald said in quatrain twenty-three:

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new
bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch
of Earth
Descend--ourselves to make a Couch--
for whom? (EF, 426)

According to Heron-Allen, this quatrain is a translation of quatrain 388 of the Calcutta Manuscript which runs:

Arise, and do not sorrow for this
fleeting world,
Be at peace, and pass through the
world with happiness,
If the nature of the world were constant
The turn of others would not have
descended to you yourself. (SOOK, 60)
By comparing the two versions, it becomes obvious that Fitzgerald reversed the implication of the original quatrain; while the original expresses optimism and reflects hope, Fitzgerald's version expresses pessimism and stresses dissatisfaction. In a similar way, Fitzgerald altered quatrain twenty-four by reversing faith into despair:

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer,
and--sans End! (EF, 426)

In the original quatrain Khayyam seems to admire nature and to carry great affection for its beauty:

Do not allow sorrow to embrace thee,
Nor an idle grief to occupy thy days,
Forsake not the book and the lover's lips and the green bank of the field,
Ere that the earth enfold thee in its bosom. (SQOK, 61)

Many other examples can be drawn to demonstrate how Fitzgerald manipulated the original quatrains to serve his own purpose. But Fitzgerald even did something more than that. It took him long and tedious hours before he decided on a final arrangement of the quatrains that he wrote. He tried to link some quatrains together and thus constructed groups or fragments which could be treated as units to give shape and continuity to his version of the Rubaiyyat, and to justify his own interpretation of Khayyam's philosophy. The procedure is very similar to that of The Canterbury Tales in which scribes
interpreted some of the links differently, or altered them, or even composed their own links. 3

However, Fitzgerald's success in binding together the Rubaiyyat in a framework cannot be denied. He divided all the quatrains into three main divisions: the first eighty-one quatrains dramatize man's existence on earth and constitute a complete rejection of any doctrine that restrains the freedom of man by suppressing his desires, the next nine quatrains evidently reflect Khayyam's feelings of helplessness and senility, and the last ten quatrains emphasize the need for the merely sensuous. In the last quatrain Khayyam utters his final words in complete surrender remembering and lamenting the loss of those moments of voluptuousness and debauchery:

And when like her moon, O Saki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One-turn down an empty Glass! (EF, 431, CI)

Obviously, Fitzgerald was very close in his disclosure of at least one side of Khayyam's philosophy, yet he did fail to understand his Eastern temperament. Fitzgerald transformed Khayyam's Eastern hedonism into Western agnosticism and Epicurcanism. Whether Fitzgerald did that on purpose or not is still a matter of debate, but it is obvious enough that he

took from the East what his Western soul and Victorian mind unconsciously aspired to. In a way, the repressed Fitzgerald created a new image of Khayyam to project his own anti-devotional feelings in an age which was sympathetic toward sensuousness and materialism.

Fitzgerald's knowledge of the East was pedantic. Therefore Omar's philosophy as presented by Fitzgerald seems often vague and confused. It is based mainly on Khayyam's indolence and love of the good things of life rather than on his love of man and nature. Fitzgerald's Rubaiyyat are filled with impiety and wine devotion rather than with bitter satires of the sensuality and hypocrisy of the pretenders to sanctity. All of this stresses the fact that Fitzgerald's version of the Rubaiyyat is absolutely not a translation but a creation of a different scope. However, it might be argued that Fitzgerald failed to understand the images which were in Khayyam's mind. If this is true then Fitzgerald might be excused for having all sorts of trouble in trying to understand the correct meaning of the Rubaiyyat for the simple reason that Persian poetry, like Arabic poetry, is fixed by conventions, meters, ordering of rhymes, and similies that carry the meaning of the poem and project the poet's mood. Nevertheless, one is more inclined to agree with Peter De Polnay's statement: "probably Fitzgerald thought that by misunderstanding Persian he
understood Omar better."

While Fitzgerald aimed to please the agnostic by presenting in the highest form of expression a voluptuous and dissipated Khayyam, Graves tried to present a different Khayyam who seems to repent of his infidelity and to wish to believe again. Graves made Khayyam echo the Sufi voice which is timeless. Whether this is true or not, according to Sufis Khayyam used a special teaching technique in which he followed up a line of thought "in order to imply its shallowness." It is also known that Dervishes, the nucleus of the Moslem Sufis, had no fear of hell, neither a desire for heaven. But this tendency is not strange for a Dervish who believes that "by divine illumination, man sees the world to be illusion (in the sense that there is a greater reality of which the world is a gross distortion), and hence he calls the world evil." Furthermore, a Sufi "must never shun temptation in the sense of fleeing from evil just to avoid it. He uses the externals of religion, and seeks to soak himself in its lore, as an insurance against losing his way. At the same time he knows


5Shah, p. 166.

6Ibid., p. 264.
that paradise, hell, all the dogmas of religion are allegories—the soul alone he knows."  

In the light of this concept of Sufism some of the mysteries begin to dissolve. And by accepting the Sufic lore which embodies a continuing process of teaching that leads to a final stage of "public manifestation" represented in wine, the reader perceives the possibility that Khayyam might have been a Sufi of the Dervish order. If this is true, then it becomes essential to see in the imagery of the Rubaiyyat spiritual and symbolic values such as those traditionally assigned to the Song of Solomon. However, Graves did not make explicit this sort of reasoning in his introduction to his version of the Rubaiyyat, a thing that might have helped to remove all doubts and to eliminate any vagueness that might hinder a just evaluation of his translation.

Having seen a possible defensible argument that supports Graves's vision of Khayyam, a more persistent question begins to emerge. Graves seems to arrange his quatrains in such a way as to follow very closely the same sequence used by Fitzgerald in his Rubaiyyat; a very strange thing to come from a person who claimed to have translated from an earlier and more authentic version than the number of versions used by Fitzgerald. Why did Graves follow Fitzgerald's arrangement of

7 Shah, p. 214.
the Rubaiyyat when he totally disagreed with him in his vision of Khayyam and when he knew that Fitzgerald's translation is a combination of quatrains taken from different sources? By comparing the two versions of Graves and Fitzgerald, it becomes obvious that Graves even tried to match Fitzgerald's quatrains in number (quatrains 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, and 26 are identical). However, when this was not possible for Graves to do since he had ten more quatrains to distribute in the body of the Rubaiyyat, he simply restricted himself to the same progression of theme adopted by Fitzgerald without recognizing any sort of division in the body of the Rubaiyyat. Unlike Fitzgerald, Graves ended his Rubaiyyat with a quatrain in which he stressed the good nature of Khayyam when he made him utter his final words in confirmation of the need for God and in acceptance of His decorum:

The palace with huge walls soaring
to Heaven,  
Where prostrate Kings did reverence  
at the gate--  
A ring-dove perches on its battlements;  
'Where, where?' it coos, 'where, where?'

(OROK, 76, CXI)

Finally, after having examined three different ways to approach the Rubaiyyat and having emphasized the merits and demerits of such approaches, there remains one more remark to make. Perhaps it might be too hazardous to conclude this study with a generalization and to be specific might arouse
accusations of prejudice. However, it should be mentioned here that both Fitzgerald and Graves found in Khayyam the expedient projector of their substantial need to please the appetite of their readers rather than to satisfy an accurate and honest appreciation of a poet who was so much troubled and concerned about the destiny of man and his misfortunes that he said: "Love is the title of the world of meanings. Love is the invocation to the song of youth. You who are ignorant of what love is, learn that--life is love" (Saraf, 178, XLIII). Khayyam survived through many centuries despite the fact that sometimes people failed to understand him and sometimes pretended not to understand him. Ironically speaking, if Khayyam were brought to life today, he most probably would be shocked and thrilled by the vast contrasting views that have been brought upon his Rubaiyyat--first an active Epicurian, then a mystic believer, and now a frustrated rebel.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


