Quatrains of Omar Khayyam, Astronomer-Poet of Persia

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Metamorphosis of Nothingness

By

Mitra Ara

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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از منزل کفر تا به دین یک نفس است
وز عالم شک تا به یقین یک نفس است
این یک نفس عزیز را خوش می‌دار
کز حاصل عمر ما همین یک نفس است

عمر خیام

From the state of nonbelief to belief is one breath,
From the world of doubt to certainty is one breath,
Value this one precious breath
That the yield of our life is only this one breath.

Omar Khayyam

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FOREWORD

It is well known that Edward FitzGerald, the 19th-century British poet and writer who first published an English translation of Omar Khayyam's Quatrains was instrumental in introducing Khayyam, the 11th-century astronomer/poet of Persia, to the English-speaking Western world. "Khayyam's Rubaiyats" became widely popular yet FitzGerald took tremendous liberties in his translation practice—in effect paraphrasing the quatrains creatively in rhyming English verse based on his own understanding of or projections on the Persian poet's thoughts and reflections.

The essence of Khayyam's philosophical predicament dealt with the most basic existential mystery of all times—life itself. He ponders over and remains mystified by the unrequited enigma he perceives as the human condition, the transitory nature of our being, fatalism, and the inanity of existence.

FitzGerald's attraction to these centuries-old existential Persian meditates and his ornate poetic rendition of his vision of Khayyam's philosophies well fitted the 19th-century British poetic style, while aptly reflecting and appealing to an underlying prevalent European Orientalist outlook.

While FitzGerald preferred a loose paraphrasing in English of what he came to understand from each quatrain over literal faithfulness, in this volume, Dr. Mitra Ara, a native speaker of Persian, presents the reader with a fresh literal and direct translation, truer to the original Persian and more contributive of meaning. Ara chooses 100 quatrains generally attributed to Khayyam and, with no attempt at delivering a poetic, rhymed, or rhythmic rendition in the English language, she allows for the original voice and expressions of the scientist/poet Khayyam to be heard unedited. In these pages, we effectively hear the scientist/philosopher's anguish and frustration over the unattainable secrets of creation, the cruelty of time, fate vs free will, and his agony in attempting to enjoy the present in the face of tyrannous uncertainties.

Dr. Ara's literal translations bring the English reader closer to the original Persian texts for the first time and effectively introduce the poems without assumptions of meaning, reading into the text, or preconceptions of context. The quatrains are fluid, blunt, and defiant, yet simple, to the point,

and poignant as they raise fundamental and eternal questions about our very core of existence. They come with no expiration date.

In this collection, Dr. Ara removes the restrictively defining lens through which the English-speaking student/reader has come to understand the quatrains, and she contributes to a fresh reading for those searching to better comprehend the complex mind of the astronomer/poet of Persia.

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INTRODUCTION

Omar Khayyam

Omar Khayyam's full name is recorded as Omar, son of Ibrahim the Khayyam from the city of Nishapur (Ghiyas al-Din Abul Fath Omar ibn Ibrahim Khayyam Nishapuri). It is generally believed the name "Khayyām," meaning "tent-maker," is of Zoroastrian descent and belonged to the profession of his ancestors or his father. He was actually born in the city of Nishapur, sometimes written as Nishabur, the largest metropolitan city on the Silk Road, in the northeastern province of Khorasan in today's Iran, connecting China to the Mediterranean. While his exact birth date is unknown, it is generally believed that Khayyam lived sometime between the 11th and 12th centuries Common Era (ca. 1048 to 1131).

Born in a prominent family, he studied from a young age with the great scholar mathematician, Bahmanyar, son of Marzuban, a Zoroastrian who was a student of the eminent scholar Avicenna (10th-11th centuries CE), known in Persian as Ibn-e Sina, an eminent polymath, physician, astronomer, philosopher, and poet. This explains Khayyam's reference to himself as a student of Avicenna, signifying his studies with Bahmanyar who had attained his knowledge from Avicenna.

In 1074, the astronomer Khayyam was summoned by the ruler of the Saljuq Dynasty of Iran, Sultan Jalaluddin Malikshah, and his famous minister, Nizam-ul-mulk, to build an observatory at Isfahan, Iran, and reform the Persian lunar calendar. Khayyam modified the calendar to solar, which was more precise than the current Gregorian calendar invented five centuries later.

Khayyam's calendar establishes the first day of the year at the very start of the vernal equinox in March, thus marking the New Year (NoRooz) celebrated by various nations in Central, South, and West Asia, especially in the major Persian-speaking countries of Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. The calendar was, and still is, called "Jalali," after Sultan Jalaluddin. After the death of his sponsors, the king and his minister, Khayyam moved to Bukhara and then to Samarqand (in today's Uzbekistan), where he produced the majority of his scientific works. Later, he returned to his home in Nishapur, where he died.

Numerous monuments have been erected all over the world to honor

Khayyam as a notable mathematician and astronomer, and many important achievements have been named after him, including the Omar Khayyam lunar crater and the planet Omarkhayyam, discovered by Soviet astronomer Lyudmila V. Zhuravleva. Celebrated worldwide as a great polymath, his scientific achievements are preserved in his corpus of mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, history, and philosophy.

An extraordinary mathematician, his known surviving works, recorded in the Persian and Arabic languages, are about the parallel postulate theory and real number concept proportion, geometric algebra, arithmetic, and the solution of cubic equations, the binomial theorem and the extraction of roots, and other related writings. Khayyam's treatises in mathematics improved on Euclid's work on the theories of parallels and proportion, which in turn influenced the works of the renowned English mathematician John Wallis (17^{th}-18^{th} centuries CE). Mastering numerous subjects, Khayyam taught mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, jurisprudence, and history.

In addition to his mathematical and philosophical contributions, he was recognized as a poet several centuries after his death. No one knew he composed poems, not even his colleagues. The oldest books that refer to Khayyam, the authors of which were his contemporaries, Bayhaghi and Nezami Aruzi, mention Khayyam among astronomers and mathematicians, and mention his works on the sciences but contain no mention of him as a poet or discuss his composing any quatrains.

The quatrain is a style chosen by poets to express their idea fully as a stand-alone independent opinion, and do so in a brief, simple, and natural flow. Contrary to what many scholars have suggested, Khayyam was not the first to use it. Versions of the verses and forms in the Rubaiyat are found in Persian literature prior to Khayyam, including the known quatrains composed by Avicenna, who died before Khayyam was born. Many early poets in other countries used the quatrain, and they are found in the poetic traditions of ancient Greece, Rome, and China, where quatrains are traceable to much earlier roots than the Tang Dynasty (7^{th}-10^{th} centuries CE).

Edward FitzGerald

Khayyam was introduced as a poet and the author of the Rubaiyat (quatrains) in the West by Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883), who translated and published an anthology in 1859, The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. This was followed by a few editions. Until then, Khayyam had not been recognized as a poet in the East either, and certainly not of the stature of other Persian poets such as Rumi and Sa'di (13th century CE) or Hafez (14th century CE). Modern-day scholars have questioned whether Khayyam even wrote the poems that make up FitzGerald's famous Rubaiyat because the collection characterizes a widely disunified worldview, and perhaps was not derived from a single person.

FitzGerald, an English writer and poet born into a prosperous Anglo-Irish family, is mostly known for his introduction and publication of the poems of the well-recognized Persian scientist, Omar Khayyam. Just as Voltaire was charmed by the 13th-century Persian poet Sa'di, and Goethe by the 14th-century Persian poet Hafez, so was FitzGerald drawn to Khayyam.

In 1844, the thirty-five-year-old FitzGerald met the eighteen-year-old Edward Byles Cowell (1826–1903), a young linguist who later became his Spanish and Persian language teacher. Cowell went on to become a noted scholar and professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge University, known for his knowledge of several Indian languages as well as Persian. He translated several Persian poetry collections into English, as demonstrated by his translation of the known works of the Persian poet, Hafez.

Before departing for his academic post in India (1856), Cowell provided FitzGerald with a copy of the quatrains allegedly belonging to Khayyam, which he had copied from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. In his early years in India, he discovered another manuscript in Calcutta's Asiatic Society library, which he also sent to FitzGerald. As a result, with the help of Cowell, FitzGerald began the translation of the quatrains of Khayyam, whom he called "the Astronomer-Poet of Persia." FitzGerald's text was published in five editions, from 1859 to 1889, and the first two were printed anonymously, with 75 and 110 quatrains, respectively, and the final edition with 101 quatrains was published posthumously.

The success of the English translations of the Persian poetry is due to Cowell and FitzGerald, as is the enormous increase in interest in Persian literary studies and the influence of this work in the development of late Victorian and Edwardian British poetry. Interestingly, Khayyam's fame as a poet even among Iranians is also the result of Cowell's discovery of the quatrains and FitzGerald's depiction of Khayyam.

Concerned with making Khayyam's writings attractive to Victorian readers and to meet their expectations, FitzGerald needed to reshape the poems by providing a more readable version while maintaining the original tone. He organized the poems into a continuous narration that had a certain consistency from his perspective. He began with the tavern scenery at dawn and moved through poems that questioned and debated existence and the meaning of life, injustice, evil, pleasure, and death, and, at the end, he closed the interchange with the dark of night.

The fictional generalizations of FitzGerald's portrayal of Khayyam resulted from insufficient materials. As a romantic, nonconformist perhaps would be more of a description of his Victorian era and the Romantics than Khayyam's. Maintaining no direct connection with Khayyam, he introduces the poet with an array of characters, from a gnostic transcendentalist scientist to an astronomer, and a philosopher to a carefree hedonist. Accordingly, Iranians and non-Iranians who evaluate and scrutinize Khayyam base their deliberations solely on the uncertain legend-like figure fashioned by Fitzgerald, consistent with his own life dilemmas and societal and erudite challenges. From this point forward, Khayyam was simply referred to as "Omar" in the western world; yet, elsewhere, including Persian- language countries, he continued to be referred to as "Hakim (The All-Wise) Khayyam," the highest possible title bestowed upon an individual – in his case, the all-encompassing scientist.

FitzGerald's introduction and recognition of Khayyam as an idealistic and pensive poet overshadowed Khayyam's prodigious scientific achievements and contributions, for which he merits popular recognition and acknowledgment. Multitudes of illustrations for every edition have been produced over the last century. Some bear no relation to the actual poems; others are inspired by a certain intended interpretation of a fable or a metaphor mentioned in a verse. Ultimately, the beautifully-produced art works, featuring exquisite bindings and illustrations, have helped maintain the interest of publishers and readers.

Poetic Philosophy

Based on academic research, and not on the sentiment and subjectivity of Khayyam's countrymen, scholars have doubted that Khayyam ever composed poetry. Not even his colleagues recognized him as a poet. Perhaps, years after his death, some unidentified quatrains appeared, ostensibly resembling some of Khayyam's philosophies, and were attributed to him because of his standing.

Quatrains that he supposedly composed in private are short and poignant—similar in style to predecessor poet-scientists, with attributed poems in two-verse, four-line stanzas. In Persian, this quatrain is called "dubayti" and "tarāneh." In Arabic, it is called "rubā'i" in the singular form and "rubā'iyāt" in the plural form, derived from the word al-Rabi', the number four in Arabic. In a Persian quatrain rhyme scheme (aaba), the first, second, and last of the four lines in the stanza rhyme but not the third.

In his scant few philosophical writings, we learn that, at one point in his life, Khayyam might have philosophized about the meaning of the Creator, theodicy, existence, good and evil, duty, free will, the afterlife, and the meaning of eternal life. Such metaphysical, theoretical, and moral views are the chief doctrines of the Iranian belief systems, identified in the ancient Iranian Zoroastrian religious creed that was the dominant state religion in Persia before the invasion of Arab Muslims (7th century CE). Because many writers have identified Khayyam's father as a Zoroastrian who had newly converted to Islam, it is plausible that Khayyam was engaged with similar philosophical concepts in his scientific thinking.

In Khayyam's time, hypocrisy, lack of freedom of expression, imposed prohibitions, and coercion by rulers and religious jurists permeated the Persian territories as far as Central Asia. The quatrain, in its simplicity and bluntness, represented a departure from the long panegyric courtly poems popular at the time and was a form many welcomed to express feeling and defiance. Scientists and philosophers such as Khayyam were recognized and esteemed for their scientific and philosophical works, but not their poetry. Today, we are grateful that some of these quatrains have survived, irrespective of their creators, and we can take pleasure in the everlasting beauty of Persian poetry.

The collaged philosophies and views expressed in the collection of quatrains can also be traced back to the millennia-old ancient philosophies, metaphysics, mythologies, astrology, and Iranian religious and gnostic concepts. In addition to occasional Stoic, epicurean, Aristotelian, Platonian, existentialist, and humanist sentiments and expressions, we cannot help

but see the multiplicity and contradictory characters and voices behind the quatrains.

In a series of contradictory scenarios and explanations, Khayyam further adds to the dilemma of the Creator, existence, birth, death, and the beyond without providing a solitary belief. He argues that if there is one all-good creator God, then he is responsible for evil, and everything that happens is part of the divine plan. He also reasons that evil could be simply the absence of good and insight. Elsewhere, on the notion of free will and one's responsibility in the performance of good and bad actions, he reasons that one's birth and past still guide and direct one's exercise of free will in a given moment:

Because the upholder put in order the natural dispositions,
For what reason he cast it into diminution and decay;
If it came out good, for what reason break it?
If this form did not come out good, whose fault is it?

As long as one has no control over one's birth, or its time, place, region, and circumstance, and everything is predestined, then there is no free will to be practiced. He also put forth the concept that humanity cannot achieve happiness or self-improve or reach its highest potential unless the rudimentary life provisions are met.

In my listening heart universe said secretly,
"Do you know the verdict of destiny from me?
If I had a hand in my own revolving,
I would free myself from this circling."

Khayyam's literary works do not provide any guidance on his personal feelings and views on life. However, if the speaker of the poems is one person, and not multiple authors as suggested by some experts, we can assume that the poet could be the scientist-philosopher Khayyam who argues against and discredits everything he has ever known.

Foe wrongly said that I am philosophical,
Divinity knows that whatever he said I am not,
However, as I have come to this nest of sorrow,
At the end, it is short of what I know of who I am.

In the quatrains, Khayyam the scientist and the mathematician-astronomer expresses his deepest dilemmas, frustrations, and struggles to reconcile scientific and rational thought with the philosophical and metaphysical.

I know the outer form of nonbeing and being;
I know the inner form of every high and low;
Despite all this, I should be ashamed of my own knowledge
If I know a level beyond inebriety.

Some explain the apparent contradiction in the worldview Khayyam expressed in his poetry simply as his way of expressing his personal feelings about life without framing them as a particular philosophical discourse. The quatrains portray a perplexed man who questions the realities and the nature of existence, creation and the Creator, the uncertainties, impermanence, and brevity of life, human fragility, and ignorance, and disparages the religious certainties of it all. Accepting his life at face value, he joyfully appreciates and indulges in the beauty that life offers and accepts its ephemerality and its end time.

Because from whatever that exists there is nothing in hand, except the wind,
Because in whatever that exists there is deficiency and fracture,
It is as if whatever exists in the universe does not exist,
Imagine whatever does not exist in the universe exists.

Some intellectuals have claimed that Khayyam's allegoric and metamorphic terminologies, such as the use of wine, inebriety, enjoyment of the present moment, and the lover, are all in keeping with the Sufi traditions as expressed by other Persian poets such as Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafez. In his philosophical and scientific writings, Khayyam shows no affinity with any religion or spirituality, and based on his treatises and discourses he was marked as an atheist in his time. In his philosophical discussions, Khayyam deliberates on the scientific standpoint of creation, existence, the nature of life, death, and other metaphysical themes hardly in agreement with religious philosophy.

To drink and to be happy is my rite,
To be free from blasphemy and religion is my rite,
I said to the bride of time, what is your dowry?
Said "Your merry heart is my dowry."

Khayyam's philosophical views, based on his poems, are often expressed in specific concepts, and include the partiality and preconception of truth and value; the ephemerality of existence and the human condition; the inevitability of death; the infinity of time and space; the accidental nature of life; the unattainable secrets of creation; the relinquishment of both past and future in order to grasp the present before it passes; the importance of self-effacement; and the struggle to free oneself from the bondage of life's orthodoxies.

This one-two-three-day-period of life passed,
Like water in a brook and like wind in the field;
Never the grief of two days engrossed me,
A day that has not come and a day that passed.

It is a chalice that wisdom praises,
From affection, bestows a hundred kisses on its face;
Such a delicate chalice this potter of time
Creates, and anew, smashes it to the ground.

Repeatedly, Khayyam scrutinizes the senselessness of existence, the cruelty of time, and the powerlessness of humanity in the orderly turning wheel of the cosmos.

This wheel of the universe in which we are perplexed,
Of which the lantern of imagination, we know as its example,
Sun is the lantern and cosmos the pharos,
We are like forms that are whirling in it.

The good and bad that is in human nature,
Joy and sorrow that is in fate and destiny,
Do not impute to the wheel of universe, that in the way of logic,
The wheel of universe is a thousand times more helpless than you.

In their literal forms, his quatrains illustrate his views on creation and existence, and are a mixture of agnostic, esoteric, fatalistic, Epicurean, and existential thought. Consequently, he has been misunderstood, with many thinking of him as an infidel, a hedonist, and a drunken mad scientist. As a man of science, he observed that the mystifying contradiction between an apparently senseless existence and a complex and orderly world brought about bewilderment, which he expresses in his writings.

Never was my heart deprived of science;
Little remained from the mysteries that did not become known,
Seventy-two years I pondered night and day,
It became known to me that nothing became known.

Khayyam sees his own coming into this world and departing from it as similar to a fly's—inconsequential. No one knows where we came from, where we go, or why.

It was one drop of water and merged with the sea;
One fleck of dust became one with the earth;
What is your coming and going in this world?
A fly appeared, and disappeared.

Khayyam argues that because nobody knows the secrets of eternity, nobody should believe those who claim to know just to fool themselves and others.

Oh, many a time that we shall not be and the world will be,
Not a name from us and not a sign will be,
Before this we were not and there was not any disorder,
From now on, when we are not that very same will be.

A nation ponders the path of religion;
A nation thinks that it is on the path of certitude;
I fear the day when a declaration will come,
That, you ignorant, the path is neither that, nor this!

The past is an accumulation of events, and the future is unknown and non-existent. There is only now, the present moment, this very breath; hence, do not waste the precious present moment by questioning birth, life, death, the afterlife, rewards, and punishments. Instead, spend it joyously.

Neither you nor I know the secrets of eternity,
And this riddle neither you nor I grasp;
Behind the veil is a conversation between me and you,
Once the veil falls, neither you remain nor I.

Khayyam, if you are intoxicated from drink, be joyous;
If you are sitting with a beautiful moonlike face, be joyous;

Because the destiny of the world's existence is nonexistence,
As if you are not, but because you are, be joyous.

How long shall I grieve that I have or not,
And shall I pass this life in delight or not,
Fill the goblet of drink that is not known to me,
If this breath that I inhale, I exhale or not.

Those who became the circle of intellect and decorum,
In the company of the accomplished became the light of their peers,
They did not find a way out of this dark night,
They told a fable and went to sleep.

Hey heart, you will not reach an understanding of enigma;
You will not reach the keen point of the wise;
Right here, build a heaven from the ruby-drink
That over where there is heaven, you will reach it or not.

Khayyam also exhorts: do not sacrifice cash in hand for promised credit, but enjoy the present life and not the unknown afterlife.

They say that paradise is joyful with an angel,
I say that grape juice (wine) is joyful,
Take this cash and do not touch that promissory note,
That hearing the sound of a kettledrum is pleasant from afar.

It is said there will be heaven and angels alike,
And there will be drink, milk, and honey;
If we chose the drink and a beloved, what's the fear
Because futurity will be like this.

Notes on this Translation

So far, the research gathered about Khayyam reveals that he was a great learned man of letters, an unrivalled genius who made great scientific contributions to humanity. He detested and contested the hypocrisy, ignorance, and cunning of the religious clerics of the time who sowed the seeds of ignorance and delusion.

Drinking and gathering around the benevolent ones,
Is better than exercising the hypocrisy of an ascetic;
If there is a hell for the lover and the drunk,
Then no one will see the face of heaven.

He honored and propagated the study of the sciences, inquiries into knowledge and wisdom, and the rejection of superstitious beliefs and promises of life after death. He accepted birth and death as natural cycles of life.

As the wheel of existence didn't turn to the will of a wise one,
It does not matter if you count the heavens as seven or as eight;
As we must die and all desires vanish,
No matter if the ant feeds (on us) in the grave or the wolf in the field.

No one has gained mastery over the wheel of the universe,
And earth has not been satiated from feeding on humans;
You are proud that it has not eaten you,
Do not haste, it eats you too; it is not belated.

The dust that is under the foot of every ignorant one
Is the foot of a lover and the face of a sweetheart;
Every brick that is on the crenellation of every castle
Is the finger of a minister or the head of a king.

In this volume, my translation from Persian to English is as close to literal as possible and is designed to provide verbatim translations without sacrificing the directness of Khayyam's voice and his articulacy while delivering clarity and fluidity in English. It is not my intention to assume meaning or project my thinking into the poet's choice of words. For instance, in some parts, I have chosen the word "drink" in place of "wine," which is used by the majority of translators, because, unless specified by the poet,

we do not know what he drank, what he meant, or whether he used this term symbolically or literally.

Further, it is unfortunate that "drinking wine" has become synonymous with the Khayyam because there are few mentions of actual "wine." He sporadically and symbolically uses the terms "drink" and "wine" to suggest that we must enjoy life and value the present moment while we are alive because inescapable death is near. It is not surprising that confusion exists when translating the Persian word for wine.

The history of beer and winemaking in Persia goes back a few millennia, with documents from the early Common Era (6th-7th centuries CE) referencing different types of wines, both red and white, and different processes, either clarified or crystal, depending on what the historians meant. After the 7th century and the invasion of Persia by the Arabs, Persian literature of the Middle Ages references "wine" using the Arabic word "sharāb," meaning "beverage," alcoholic and non.

In these quatrains, three different words are used to reference intoxicating drinks, perhaps alcoholic beverages, as mystical intoxication and the nectar of wisdom. In the New Persian language of Khayyam's time (11th- 12th centuries CE), the Persian words "bādeh" and "mey," as well as the Arabic word "sharāb," allude to alcoholic drinks, including wine, but FitzGerald uses all three words to mean "wine" alone. It is noteworthy that in today's Persian, the word "sharāb" refers only to "wine" and no other beverage.

FitzGerald himself has described his translations as "a paraphrase of a syllabus," not quite a translation of the original but rather a particular understanding of the poet's intentions or simply fantasizing from them. Later, he used the word "rendered" on the title page instead of "translation." Many believe that perhaps FitzGerald intended to compose his own poetry using the amusing notions of the exotic East to popularize his work in the West, which in turn popularized Khayyam worldwide. Whatever his true intention, it is FitzGerald's interpretation of Khayyam's poems that has been translated most often into all major languages, influencing literature, the arts, music, and cinema.

To date, over twelve hundred translated quatrains of conflicting beliefs and ideas have been randomly assigned to Khayyam. Discussing them is beyond the scope of this book. There is no general consensus on whether any of these quatrains belonged to Khayyam, especially because of the copious inconsistencies in his ideas and rhetoric. So far, scholars authenticating Khayyam's original poetry have identified as few as thirteen and as many as eight hundred quatrains that could be attributed to him.

In this volume, I have chosen quatrains that four known authorities

(Foroughi, Hedayat, Ghani, and Dashti), who possess a good command of Persian language and literature, have agreed upon as "perhaps," "could," or "possibly" be attributable to Khayyam. Their choices were based on style and thought. It is important to remember, however, that since their selections were not based on any documentation, their objectivities and dispositions, along with their particular understanding of Khayyam's life and philosophy, contributed to their choices and methods of selection. This resulted in 74 to178 verses with differing and opposing concepts and characters and with diverse voices, from melancholic to sanguine. From this collection, I chose 100 to translate.

Paradoxically, the emergent interest of Iranians in Omar Khayyam and quatrains is mostly because of the Orientalists' attention to his work and other Persian literary works. The commendable contributions made by the determined Orientalists such as Cowell, and not by Iranians themselves, to preserve and make known the linguistic, literary, scientific, and archeologic facets of Iran from the ancient and middle ages to current century must be recognized and credit given where credit is due.

It is hoped my translations will bring the reader closer to the Persian originals, allowing readers to connect and draw their own conclusions according to their time and place in life.

Translations Comparisons

As examples of the difference between my translations and FitzGerald's, I provide these comparisons.

Khayyam:

ابر آمد و باز بر سر سبزه گریست
بی باده گلرنگ نمی‌باید زیست
این سبزه که امروز تماشاگه ماست
تا سبزه خاک ما تماشاگه کیست

Mine:

The cloud came and afresh shed tears over the grass,
Without rose-colored drink one must not live;
This grass is our spectacle today,
But whose spectacle will be the grass springing from our dust?

FitzGerald:

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?

Khayyam:

این یک دو سه روز نوبت عمر گذشت
چون آب بجویبار و چون باد بدشت
هرگز غم دو روزه مرا یاد نگشت
روزی که نیامده است و روزی که گذشت

Mine:

This one-two-three-day-period of life passed,
Like water in a brook and like wind in the field;
Never the grief of two days engrossed me,
A day that has not come and a day that passed.

FitzGerald:

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.

Khayyam:

نیکی و بدی که در نهاد بشر است
شادی و غمی که در قضا و قدر است
با چرخ مکن حواله کاندر ره عقل
چرخ از تو هزار بار بیچاره‌تر است

Mine:

The good and bad that is in human nature,
Joy and sorrow that is in fate and destiny,
Do not impute to the wheel of universe, that in the way of logic,
The wheel of universe is a thousand times more helpless than you.

FitzGerald:

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to it for help for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

Khayyam:

افسوس که نامه جوانی طی شد
آن تازه بهار زندگانی دی شد
آن مرغ طرب که نام او بود شباب
فریاد ندانم که کی آمد کی شد

Mine:

Alas that the chronicle of youth is passed,
And that fresh spring of life is passed;
That bird of delight whose name was youth
Cry out! I do not know when it came and when it went.

FitzGerald:

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

Khayyam:

این قافله عمر عجب می‌گذرد
دریاب دمی که با طرب می‌گذرد
ساقی غم فردای حریفان چه خوری
پیش آر پیاله را که شب می‌گذرد

Mine:

How hassled this caravan of life is passing,
Seize a moment that with delight is passing,
Cupbearer, why grieve over tomorrow's antagonists?
Bring forth the cup that night is passing.

FitzGerald:

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

Khayyam:

روزی است خوش و هوا نه گرم است و نه سرد
ابر از رخ گلزار همی شوید گرد
بلبل به زبان حال خود با گل زرد
فریاد همی کند که می باید خورد

Mine:

It is a beautiful day and weather is not warm and is not cold,
Cloud washes the dust from the face of the flower field,
Nightingale, in a language of her own feeling, to the yellow flower,
Shouts endlessly that one must drink.

FitzGerald:

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

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