



OMARIANA

Bulletin of the Dutch Omar Khayyám Society

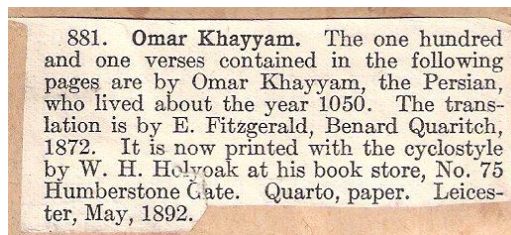
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The 'Cyclostyle edition' of William Henry Holyoak

Foreword

This issue of *Omariana* aims to shed a little more light on one of the most peculiar editions of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* that we have ever seen. John Drew managed to dig up some copies of this edition, titled 'An octogenerian's recreation in 1898 Being "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam"'. He also did some research into the remarkable history of the little pamphlet, that looked even more obscure and unpretentious than its famous predecessor of 1859. The edition that we here deal with is the 'Cyclostyle edition' by William Henry Holyoak, produced between 1885 and 1898. John Drew's article draws mainly on the piracy aspects and the troubles caused to its maker.



I have lived not in vain, if I have lived to be Pirated". So wrote Edward FitzGerald to his publisher Quaritch after hearing (somewhat belatedly in 1872) that his *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* had been published in an Indian pirate edition a full decade previously, just three years after its first edition had famously fallen dead from the press in London.

In the dodgy world of literature where nothing is what it seems – did the scientist Omar Khayyám ever compose a single *rubái*? Was Edward FitzGerald an original poet or a mere translator? – pirate editions have an honoured place. The publishing piracy referred to by FitzGerald was specifically designed to compensate the poem for the wretched fate of its authorized edition.

George Jacob Holyoake, the notable radical and secularist, the last man to be imprisoned for blasphemy in England, the last to be prosecuted for refusing to pay stamp duty on a publication, was certain FitzGerald would have approved of the most notable of the English pirate editions of his poem, the Leicester pirate. He makes this point in a pamphlet he wrote in 1898 in defence of his namesake, William Henry Holyoak, who had been threatened by Macmillan's for infringement of their copyright on the *Rubáiyát*.

G.J.'s defence is as trenchant as one might expect for a man prepared to go to

prison for his convictions. As G.J. tells it, W.H. had received a peremptory, even predatory, note from lawyers acting for Macmillan's warning him that an injunction would be taken out against him unless by return he undertook not to issue any further copies of his pirate edition of the *Rubáiyát* that had been drawn to their attention and provided an account of all copies sold, together with the amount of money received therefrom.

G.J. waxes indignant. "This unceremonious and imputative missive was directed by the opulent House of Macmillan against a small octogenarian Bookseller of Leicester, whose shop is hardly large enough to make a cup of French Coffee in, and could not contain an edition, if one existed, sufficient to injure any firm". W.H. has not even received the courtesy of an acknowledgement for the 52 outstanding copies he sent to Macmillan's, even though these copies had not been taken from the Macmillan's issue, "being

different in 33 stanzas”.

The “terrible piracy” is actually 15 years old. During all that time only 200



William Henry Holyoak

copies of the poem have been produced. So Macmillan’s are claiming that their interests are seriously affected by 148 copies “flooding the markets of the World” over all this time. Are they mad?

Many years previously, Major Evans Bell [a dissident Indian Army officer with secularist views] had sent his radical colleague and correspondent, G.J., a copy of the Madras pirate reprint, for which he had been responsible (see Omariana, 2009, Nos. 1-2). This had been sent from India immediately after publication but it was only in 1885, when G.J. found that the Omar poems were being treated as a “discovery”, that he in turn sent his copy of the Madras pirate on to his friend, W.H., knowing he would appreciate the sentiments of the Persian poet.

G.J. tells us W.H. copied the poem out by hand and produced 100 copies of this by cyclostyle, giving away many, selling some at two pence each. When this stock was eventually exhausted, he produced 100 more copies, charging a shilling for any sold, giving many away. This not only increased the popularity of the poem but also profited Macmillan’s since many readers then looked to purchase a better edition.

G.J. reviews the history of the poem from the time when FitzGerald originally sent a selection of his translated quatrains to Parker, the Oxford publisher, warning him that “it might bring him trouble from the divines who frequented his shop”. Parker was left in a state of “reluctant terror” and Fraser, to whom FitzGerald next sent the quatrains, had even more “timidity in his bones”.

When FitzGerald eventually published his poem on his own account he could neither sell it nor could his bookseller Quaritch give it away because it was “the most comprehensive and polished denial of the cardinal tenets of Christianity which had appeared”. In those days “Macmillan, with his divine connections, had been ruined had he dared touch Omar”. Now “Duchesses buy and prelates – Established & Nonconformist – read Omar and the Macmillans make

thousands a year by selling what Carlyle called the ‘envenomed blasphemies of the Persian blackguard’”.

The liberalisation of opinion that this change of attitude reflects has been brought about by unknown men such as W.H. who “at their own peril spread tolerant thought until great thinkers found an honest atmosphere in which they could speak”.

G.J. records that he was so indignant upon hearing that W.H. had been robbed – “for there is robbery within the law” – of his little hard-earned property, that he took the matter up with Macmillan’s. From them he got short shrift. They had “had trouble with American pirates”. Mr Frederick Macmillan, when approached, made quite clear he did not propose to compensate W.H.

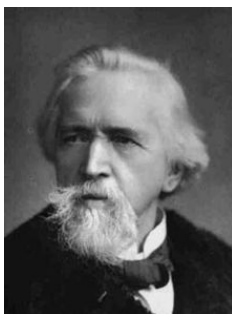
G.J. then took it upon himself to write out the story so that W.H. could produce cyclostyled copies of it as he had of the poem and sell them at sixpence or a shilling until he had made up the loss Macmillan’s had inflicted on him. G.J. proposes additionally to raise a subscription in favour of W.H. for his work in making Omar’s genius known. Sydney Gimson, a stalwart of the Leicester Secular Society, was once subject of a riddle when it was asked why at one meeting he looked like an ancient Druid, the answer being that he was sitting between “two Holy Oaks”. G.J. was a frequent visitor to Leicester, had stood as a Parliamentary candidate for the city and had been instrumental in W.H.’s conversion to secularism. Leicester, where W.H. ran his Free Thought Bookstore for 20 years, was a leading centre of secularist thought and the diffusion of W.H.’s pirate edition there reminds us that the *Rubáiyát* was quite as radical in its way as its coeval publication, *On the Origin of Species*. Alfred Wallace, Darwin’s collaborator, had also spent time in Leicester.

W.H. duly copied up G.J.’s document cocking a snook at Macmillan’s and sold cyclostyles of it for a shilling (though whether he recovered his 52 shillings is not known). He certainly didn’t bother to correct G.J.’s assertion that the Leicester pirate was based on the Madras pirate. It is very likely that G.J.’s gift of the Madras pirate – what, if anything, had he been doing with it for 20 years? – did inspire the Leicester pirate but there is no evidence to suggest that any of the “editions” of the Leicester pirate was based on it.

Whereas the Madras pirate, among its

selection of writings on Omar, reprints the 75 quatrains of the 1859 first edition (plus the 4 in the introduction and notes), the Leicester pirate is based on the authorized third 1872 edition. Potter (139) suggests that the Leicester pirate began life in the Book Store Monthly for April 1885 and that further varying copies (which he had apparently seen) followed the 1872 edition, with its 110 quatrains, though not “strictly”. How many copies of the monthly were printed is uncertain (as are, Omarians please note, the whereabouts of any surviving copies).

The two cyclostyled “editions” referred to by G.J. don’t appear to have dated from 1885 any more than to have been based on the Madras edition’s piracy of the 1859 edition. There was a May 1892 “edition” followed by the January 1898 “edition” that provoked the wrath of Macmillan’s. Both proclaim their debt to the 1872 edition on the title page. What exactly G.J. means when he says that the Leicester cyclostyle differs in 33 stanzas from the Macmillan issue is not clear. He wasn’t writing a scholarly article and perhaps he simply assumed that W.H. had been following the Madras edition he had sent him, shorter by 35 quatrains? Did he also suppose that if the Leicester pirate had been following the Madras pirate, late-comers Macmillan’s had a weaker claim for breach of copyright?

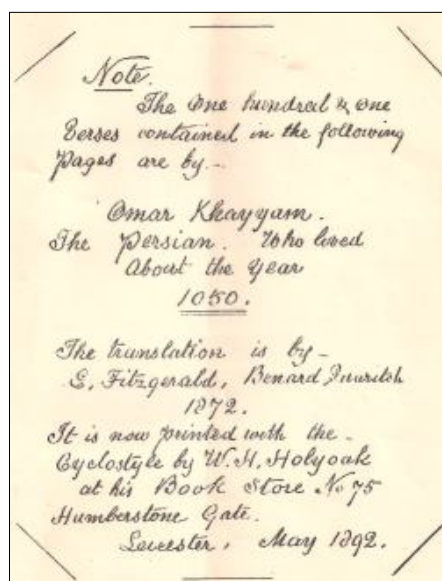


George Jacob Holyoake

If pirate editions are an underground life-line for literature, annotated copies and appended enclosures are as helpful for scholarship. In his defence of W.H., G.J. tells us that, when Macmillan’s threatened W.H. with an injunction, people starting asking for copies of the Leicester pirate to keep with their Variorum editions of the *Rubáiyát*. Inside the copy of the second 1898 edition of the Leicester pirate belonging to the Bishopsgate Institute – like the Leicester Secular Society, a prominent centre of secular and dissident thought – there is a 40-line verse enclosure (together with what is evidently a copy of p.8 of G.J.’s letter of protest to Frederick Macmillan). The twenty rhyming couplets are clearly written by W.H., being a history of his piracy in verse that complements G.J.’s prose account – and was probably written shortly after.

W.H.’s verses are printed here (presumably for the first time; see next pages) since they provide a valuable insight into the sensibility of the artisan and working classes of the late 19th century.

It is not fine poetry like the poem it celebrates but it is honest journeyman verse. It makes clear that FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát* was appreciated not only for its beauty but also for its radical social appeal by the sort of people who got their education at the Mechanics Institutes and could not afford the pricey editions bought by the duchesses and prelates.



First page of the ‘proof before publication’ copy

BIBLIOGRAPHY

George Jacob Holyoake, *Omar Khayyam. Strange Story of the Macmillans and a Leicester Bookseller* (Leicester, 1898). A copy of this worthy but apparently erroneous pamphlet, together with letters sending money in response to the appeal, notably one by Lord Hobhouse, can be found in Holyoake House, Manchester. *An Octogenarian’s Recreation* (Leicester, January, 1898), the specific title of the second edition of Holyoak’s cyclostyles, is to be found in England in the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and (together with its invaluable enclosure of Holyoak’s verses) in the Bishopsgate Institute, London. The only copy of the first (possibly untitled) edition of May, 1892, I know of is in private hands. It would be good to hear if some Omarian comes across copies of the *Book Store Monthly* issues mentioned by Potter.

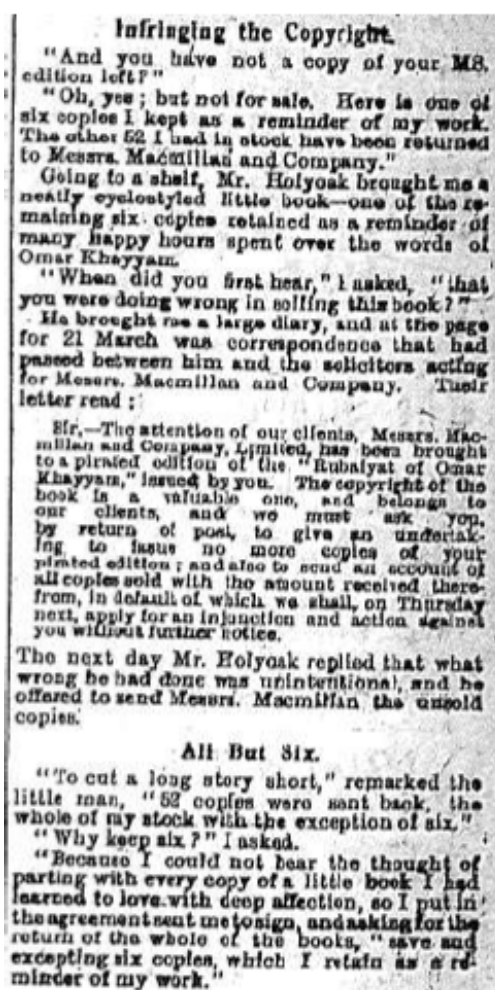
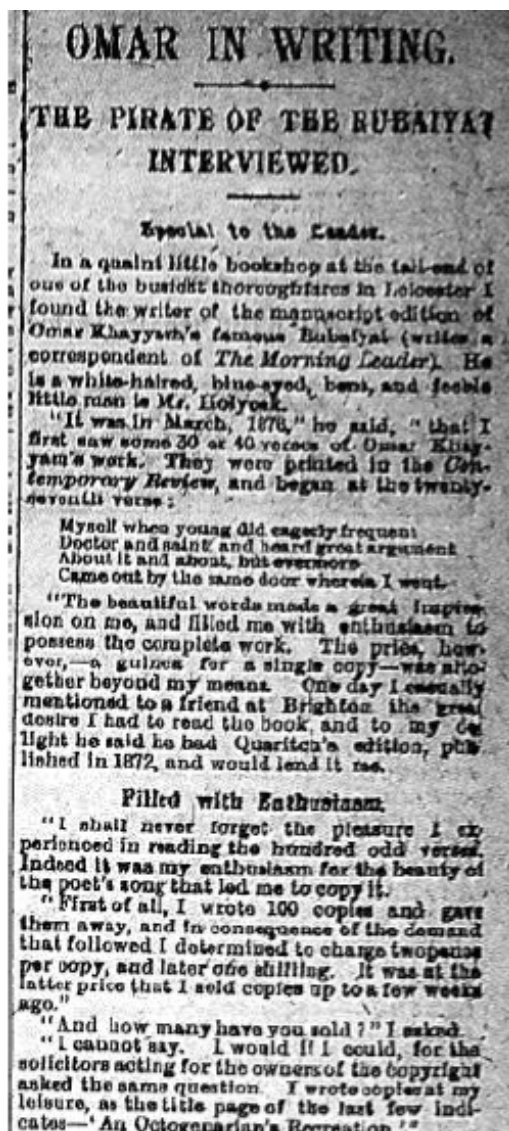
John Drew
February 2011

William Henry Holyoak's Poem

Wake for the Sun who scatter'd into flight
Macmillans threat & his high boasting right
Are cast in shadow now and so
Let me prepare my march & onward go.
For twenty years it is & more I know
Since first my humble efforts were put forth to show
To those of slender means what beauties might be
found
Within the pages of Omars Rubaiyat renowned.
But then the Book was costly & sadly out of reach
Of those who ill could spare a Sovereign to anyone to
teach
Them how to live or how to die & then Ah well
To fear no more the Bigots paradise of Heaven or
Hell
And so the fancy struck me that I would see
If writing out the verses would not be
A Remedy against outrageous gain
And far more easy for the needy to obtain
And so I set to work with heart and soul
To copy out & write with my own hand the whole
Of the one hundred & one verses of the Rubaiyat &
then
To cyclostyle what I had written one hundred times
again
And those I mostly gave away & some for two pence
sold
When they were gone the call for more was great and
many told

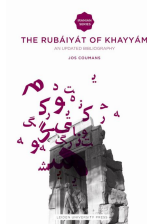
How much they long'd to get a copy of Omars
Rubaiyat
So these were told that I was willing to do some
more

for which the
price would
be One Shilling
The patience time & cost of paper each one took to
do
Could be no adequate remuneration for a Workman
true
Whose great endeavour was that others should
impart
The joyous feelings that impressed his heart
And now that I am stopp'd by Mac from selling any
more
Of Omars famous Rubaiyat at my store
I tell him this with all his power & might
He cannot hinder me from doing what to me seems
right
He cannot rob me of the Joy my work has brought
No nor of the many friends – whose anxious thought
Led them to enquire where they could get
A Copy of the famous Rubaiyat.
And as a flash of light the knowledge went
From one unto another & yet it is not spent
For friendly letters come from far & near
Containing wishes for my welfare & good cheer.



From the Morning Leader, April 29, 1898.

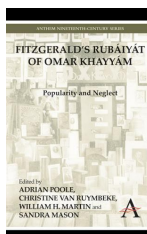
New editions and publications



The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. An updated bibliography. Jos Coumans. Leiden, Leiden University Press, 2010. 249 p.

ISBN: 9789087280963

This bibliography lists a new selection and description of more than 1.000 editions of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. It is the first bibliography since the Rubáiyát bibliography by A.G. Potter, published in 1929.

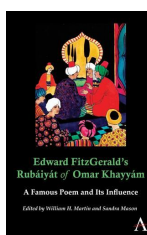


FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. Popularity and Neglect

Edited by Adrian Poole, Christine van Ruymbeke, William H. Martin and Sandra Mason. London [etc.], Anthem Press, 2011. 240 p.

ISBN 9780857287816.

This volume of essays is based on a conference held in July 2009 at Trinity College, Cambridge to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Edward FitzGerald (1809) and the 150th anniversary of the first publication of his 'Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám'.



Edward FitzGerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. A Famous Poem and Its Influence. Edited by William H. Martin and Sandra Mason.

London [etc.], Anthem Press, 2011. 170 p.

ISBN 9780857287700.

Martin and Mason present the text of Edward FitzGerald's three main versions of the Rubáiyát in an easily accessible form, together with a non-technical commentary on the origins, role and influence of the poem.

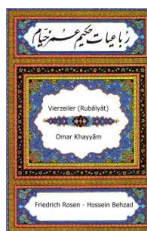


Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Taraneh-Haye Khayyam. A Persian edition of the Rubaiyat by Sadeqh Hedayat.

Published by H&S Media, 2011. 100 p.

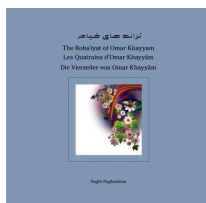
ISBN: 9781780830124

Available at Amazon.com



Omar Khayyám. Vierzeiler (Rubá'iyát). Übersetzt von Friedrich Rosen. Mit Miniaturen von Hossein Behzad. Herausgegeben von Wolfgang von Keitz. Berlin, epubli, 2011. 78 p. ISBN: 9783869316222.

Another edition of Rosen's translation, with 46 illustrations by Behzad. The illustrations were published earlier in a three language edition of the Rubáiyát by Esfandiary, in 1970.



The Roba'iyat of Omar Khayyam = Les Quatrains d'Omar Khayyâm = Die Vierzeiler von Omar Khayyâm. Berlin, epubli, 2011.

ISBN: 9783844214598

The selections are taken from translations by Avery and Heath-Stubbs and FitzGerald, from the German translation by Alavi and Remané, and the French translation by Mahdi Fouladvind. The Persian verses are selected from the edition by Sadeqh Hedayat. Illustrated by Naghi Naghasian.

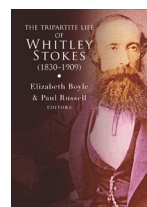


The Great 'Umar Khayyam. A Global Reception of the Rubáiyát.

[Edited by] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab. Leiden, Leiden University Press, ca. 2012. ca. 246 p.

ISBN: 978908721571.

Papers from the Omar Khayyám Conference, held in July 2009 at Leiden University. Not yet published.



The tripartite life of Whitley Stokes (1830-1909). Edited by Elizabeth Boyle & Paul Russell. Four Courts Press, 2011. 268 p.

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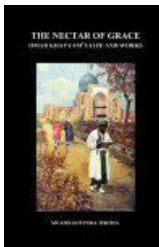
With a chapter on Whitley Stokes and the Rubáiyát of 'Omar Khayyám by John Drew.



Persische Weisheiten. Omar der Zeltmacher. Friedrich Rosen. Köln, Anaconda Verlag, 2012. 80 p.

ISBN: 978-3-86647-750-6

Die vorliegende Ausgabe präsentiert die Dichtungen Omars in der Übertragung des deutschen Orientalisten Friedrich Rosen, dem es wie keinem Zweiten gelang, die Schönheit und gelassene Heiterkeit dieser Gedichte einzufangen.



The Nectar of Grace. Omar Khayyam's Life and Works. By Swami Govinda Tirtha.

[S.I.], Oxford City Press, 2010. vii, cc, 402 pp.

ISBN 978-1-84902-671-0

Reissue of the rare but important study into the sources of Omar Khayyám's Rubáiyát, originally published in Allahabad, 1941. Includes the Persian text of the Rubáiyát with an English translation.

I often wonder ...

The first photo below was taken circa 1998 in Nicollet Island, Minneapolis, MN, US., by Packmatt, and posted on Flickr, where the exact location is given where the photo was taken.

Friends were willing to find out whether the building and the painting are still there. Well, they are, but as you can see on the second photo, the image suffered a lot of wear, and parts of the quatrain have become hard to read. Also Omar Khayyám's name has disappeared. This second photo was taken by Dan, February 2012.

