



# OMARIANA

Bulletin of the Dutch Omar Khayyám Society

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Issued once or twice a year  
info@omarkhayyamnederland.com

## The Omarian meditations of C.F. Volney

*They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep:  
And Bahrám, that great Hunter -- the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.*

In 1791, writing in the thick of the French Revolution, Volney, in his book *Les Ruines: ou Méditation sur les Révolutions des Empires*, translated into English as *The Ruins: or Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires* (1), wrote of contemplating, albeit at second-hand (2), the derelict state of the once great city of Palmyra (the Biblical Tadmor-in-the-Wilderness):



C.F. Volney

“And now behold what remains of this powerful city: a miserable skeleton! What of its vast domination: a doubtful and obscure remembrance! To the noisy concourse which thronged under these porticoes, succeeds the solitude of death. The silence of the grave is substituted for the busy hum of public places; the affluence of a commercial city is changed into wretched poverty; the palaces of kings have become a den of wild beasts; flocks repose in the area of temples, and savage reptiles inhabit the sanctuary of the gods. Ah! How has so much glory been eclipsed? How have so many labours been annihilated? Do thus perish then the works of men – thus vanish empires and nations?”  
(Chapter 2)



Fig. 1. Doré, *The New Zealander*

**Volney's thoughts** are strikingly echoed in FitzGerald's verse 16 (3), with its transient procession of “Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp”, and again in his verse 17, with its ruins inhabited by the Lion and the Lizard. I do not know if FitzGerald ever read or was aware of Volney's book, but I assume not, as Volney is not mentioned in any of his extant letters. But the implication of such transience was simple: what had happened to the ancient city of Palmyra yesterday could happen to London or Paris tomorrow. Towards the end of his chapter 2 Volney wrote:

“Who knows if, on the banks of the Seine, the Thames, the Zuyder-Zee, where now, in the tumult of so many enjoyments, the heart and the eye suffice not for the multitude of sensations — who knows if some traveller, like myself, shall not one day sit on their silent ruins, and weep in solitude over the ashes of their inhabitants, and the memory of their former greatness.” (4)

**Such thoughts** were all the more real in Volney's time, in view of the French Revolution – not just in France, but in England too, which feared a repeat of the events in France, and where the recent loss of the American colonies added to uncertainties about the future. But to return to Volney, at the end of his chapter 2 he wrote:

“Ah! Hapless man... a blind fatality sports with thy destiny! A fatal necessity rules with the hand of chance the lot of mortals! But no: it is the justice of heaven fulfilling its decrees! – a God of mystery exercising his incomprehensible judgments. Doubtless he has pronounced a secret anathema against this land: blasting with maledictions the present, for the sins of past generations. Oh! Who shall dare to fathom the depths of the Omnipotent ?”

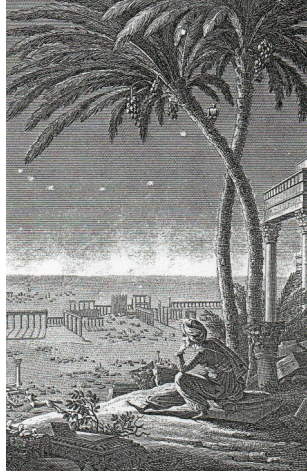


Fig. 2. Volney. *Ruins*, frontispiece

**Such thoughts** are very reminiscent of the sentiments contained in FitzGerald’s verses 49 (“Where destiny with Men for Pieces plays”) and 50 (“He knows about it all – He knows – He knows”), and yet Volney himself did not actually share Khayyam’s and FitzGerald’s fatalism – he believed that Empires failed because of the failures within their peoples, and that it was wrong to accuse either Fate or God for the calamities that beset Mankind. It was all a matter of deducible Natural Law that Science could unravel using Reason; then, by harnessing that Natural Law, one could produce the Ideal Society. Back in 1791 that must have seemed much more reasonable than it does now, two centuries later, and with so little progress in that direction! But that is another matter.

**There are** some striking parallels between Volney and FitzGerald, not least of which is Volney’s imagined elevation to “the aerial heights” from which he could view the Earth as “a globe like that of the Moon” (Chapter 4), and which parallels Khayyam’s viewing of the Earth from the Seventh Sphere (“the Throne of Saturn”) in FitzGerald’s verse 31. Again, Volney specifically mentions, in his Chapter 20, the seventy two feuding sects of Islam, which feature in FitzGerald’s verse 43. Yet again, Volney’s view on Original Sin, expressed in his Chapter 21 (“What!...because a man and a woman ate an apple six thousand years ago, all the human race are damned?”), likewise finds a parallel in FitzGerald’s verse 58, where God effectively damns the human race by the creation of the Snake that induced Eve to eat that apple. Indeed, FitzGerald’s own comment, made in a letter to Thackeray, written on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1831, about “a just God who damned us all because a woman ate an apple” (5), might almost be quoted from Volney! (Note, though, that Voltaire said much the same about that fateful apple in his entries “Bien, tout est Bien” and “Péché Original” in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*.) Yet again, Volney’s representation of the “great controversy respecting God and his Nature” between the theologians of different faiths, to be found at the end of his Chapter 21, finds a ready parallel in FitzGerald’s verse 27, where, after all the controversy, Khayyam comes out none the wiser (“Came out by the same Door as in I went”).

**Note, though,** that Omar Khayyam’s “Drink!” philosophy does not find a parallel in Volney, for in his sequel to *Les Ruines*, which was published, in 1793, under the title *La Loi Naturelle* (translated into English under the title *The Law of Nature*, and included in the volume cited in note 1) Volney referred to drunkenness as “a most vile and pernicious vice” (Chapter 6.) It is not so much that the “Natural Law” under which (according to Volney) Man should live to maximise his happiness *forbids* the drinking of wine, it merely forbids the *abuse* of it, but since use can so easily lead to abuse, it is best left alone. It would have been interesting to have Omar’s response to this!

## Notes.

1. The translation used here is taken from the (New York) Truth Seeker Company edition of 1950, one of a series of Freethinking Books “that all reformers should read”. The Publisher’s Preface tells us that “the translation here given closely follows that published in Paris by Levrault, Quai Malaquais, in 1802, which was under the direction and careful supervision of the talented author.” The same translation is now available on the internet at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1397/1397-h/1397-h.htm>.
2. Though Volney, in the opening chapter of *The Ruins*, talks of visiting Palmyra, it seems he never actually did so. There was probably no deception intended in this, for

*The Ruins* was a philosophical work, and, thus, in a sense, a work of fiction. He had certainly been to Syria, and had published an account of his travels in *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte pendant les Années 1783, 1784 et 1785*, first published in 1787, but the section of his book dealing with the ruins of Palmyra was, as he made clear, based on Robert Wood's book, *The Ruins of Palmyra*, which had been published in 1753. In fact, it would appear that the ruins on which Volney meditated in his famous philosophical work were those depicted in Wood's plate 1!

3. Verse numbers cited here are to the First Edition of FitzGerald.
4. This image of a traveller in the future looking down on the ruins of London or Paris as we today look down on the ruins of Palmyra, was a popular one in the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some years before Volney, in November 1774, Horace Walpole had written in a letter to Sir Horace Mann of how "some curious traveller from Lima will visit England and give a description of the ruins of St. Paul's." Walpole also compared the ruins of London to those of Palmyra. Again, in 1819 Shelley had written, in the Dedication of his poem "Peter Bell the Third", of a time in the future, when "some transatlantic commentator" would see London as the "habitation of bitterns" and when "St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey shall stand, shapeless and nameless ruins." The most famous image of this type, though, was Gustave Doré's engraving *The New Zealander*, first published in *London: a Pilgrimage* by Doré and his collaborator Blanchard Jerrold in 1872 (Fig.1). This, in its turn, drew on an image created by the historian Macaulay, writing in, of all places, a book review in the October 1840 issue of *The Edinburgh Review*. Here the traveller from the future is from New Zealand and he will, "in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St Paul's." (p.228) Doré's engraving bears interesting comparison with the frontispiece of the 1950 edition of Volney's *Ruins* cited in note 1 (Fig.2), this being one of several different, but basically similar, engravings which have been used to illustrate the work in the two centuries since its first publication.
5. A.M.Terhune and A.B. Terhune, *Letters of Edward FitzGerald* (1980), vol.1, p.103.

**June 2012**

**Bob Forrest**

retired college lecturer in mathematics with an amateur interest in FitzGerald and The Rubaiyat.



A new weblog was launched in April this year, for all fans of the Rubáiyát, Edward FitzGerald and Omar Khayyám, and for those who don't know anything about the poem, it's authors and translations. This blog will keep you up to date with new happenings relating to the Rubaiyat – books, art works, exhibitions, lectures, research, and much more.



The blog was created by Bill Martin and Sandra Mason, independent scholars of the Rubáiyát and authors of "Edward FitzGerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" (2011) and "The Art of Omar Khayyam" (2007).

If you have news or thoughts that you would like to share, you can file comments on the blog, or contact the creators of the blog: [sandrabill@omarkhayyamrubaiyat.com](mailto:sandrabill@omarkhayyamrubaiyat.com).

**The blog deserves more followers, and more than that: more bloggers!**

See: <http://omarkhayyamrubaiyat.wordpress.com>



## New books



### **Infinite transformation: The modern craze over the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in England and America, c. 1900-1930.**

Michelle Kaiserlian. Proquest Dissertations and Theses, 2009.

Illustrated. 374 p.

ISBN: 9781109586534

*"In the first critical study of the Rubáiyát craze as a whole and as a creative and historical phenomenon, I examine visual and literary responses to the poem in the form of illustrations, parodies, advertisements, and religio- philosophical debates to determine the Rubáiyát's overwhelming and enduring resonance in the culture. I argue that people's engagement with and their myriad responses to the poem performed a kind of cultural work during a period of great social, economic, technological, scientific, and*

*religious upheaval. I demonstrate how the Rubáiyát became a vehicle through which people processed the rapid changes of modern life and how poem and craze alike provided a tool to define and order an increasingly uncertain and fragmented world."* (From author's abstract)

The thesis can be ordered (print on demand or as pdf-file) at: <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/products/dissertations/orderingres.shtml>

\* Ruba'iyat ~of~ Khayyam \*



Translation and Introduction  
Paul Smith

NEW HUMANITY BOOKS  
BOOK HEAVEN  
Bookellers & Publishers

**Ruba'iyat of Khayyam.** Translation and Introduction Paul Smith. Introduction to Edward FitzGerald's Ruba'iyat by R.A. Nicholson. New Humanity Books, 2012.

Contents:

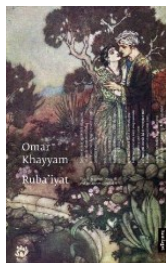
*From the Introduction to Edward FitzGerald's Ruba'iyat by R.A. Nicholson. Khayyam the Scientist and Philosopher. The Form, Function & History of the Ruba'i. A Comparison of the Major Translations into English of Khayyam's Ruba'iyat. Translations into Other Languages. Selected Bibliography.*

*New Humanity Books. Kindle Edition.*



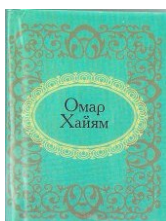
**Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam.** By translation by Edward Fitzgerald. Design, calligraphy, and illustration by Dave Wood.

Pomoma, Australia: D. J. Harwood & Associates, 2011. Edition of 20. 6 x 8.375 x 1"; 84 pages. *Calligraphy on Moab museum quality coated rag paper. Giclée printing with archival pigment inks. Bound in dark blue leather with gilt embossed titles and illustration. Slipcased.* For more information, see: <http://www.vampandtramp.com/finepress/w/dave-wood.html>



**Omar Khayyam. Ruba'iyat.** Utval, gjendikting og føreord ved Johannes Gjerdåker. Oslo, Samlaget, 2012. 74 p. Second edition. ISBN: 9788252180633.

*This edition also 1997. Originally published 1912.*



**Omar Chajam. Rubai.** Charkov, Folio, 2011. 126 p. 5,5 x 4,5 cm. ISBN: 9789660351646

*Miniature edition. Hardboard covers. Printed on decorated, pink paper, one quatrain on each page.*

## New books and other material

### **FitzGerald or Fitz-Omar: Ideological Reconsideration of the English Translation of Khayyam's Rubaiyat.** Shilan Shafiei

*English Language and Literature Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1; March 2012, pp. 128-140

DOI: 10.5539/ells.v2n1p128

Shafiei examines whether FitzGerald's translation of Khayyam's Rubaiyat does justice to the true philosophical/ideological image of Khayyam and his poems.

Online available at: <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ells/article/view/15238>

### **Translating Metaphor and Simile from Persian to English: A Case Study of Khayyam's Quatrains.** Morteza Zohdi, Ali Asghar Rostami Abou Saeedi

*Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol 1, No 9 (2011), 1122-1138, Sep 2011

doi:10.4304/tpls.1.9.1122-1138

Metaphor and simile are two figures of speech which make comparison between two things. These two figures of speech are widely used by writers and poets in their literary works and Persian poets are no exception. This study investigates two translations of Rubaiyat (i.e. FitzGerald and Arberry) with regard to similes and metaphors.

Online available at: <http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/010911221138/3636>

### **The Magic Lantern of Omar Khayyám.** Stephen R. Wilk

*Optics and Photonics News*, No. 1, (Jan.), (2012), p. 16-17.

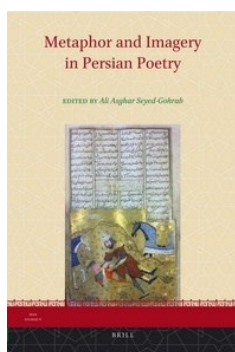
Optical projection techniques are mentioned in several translations of a quatrain from the poem "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám." What is the true meaning of Khayyám's metaphor of reality as a shadow show?

Abstract from: [http://www.osa-opn.org/home/articles/volume\\_23/issue\\_1/departments/light\\_touch/light\\_touch/](http://www.osa-opn.org/home/articles/volume_23/issue_1/departments/light_touch/light_touch/)

The 'magic lantern' of Omar Khayyám was already subject of an article about the illustration that Edwin Edwards made for the third edition of FitzGerald's translation.

**An Omar Khayyam Curiosity.** G.S. Layard. *The Bookman*, (April 1902), pp 13-15.

Online: <http://www.unz.org/Pub/BookmanUK-1902apr-00013>



**Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry.** Edited by Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab. Leiden [etc.] : Brill, 2012. (Iran studies; vol. 6). VIII, 281 p.

ISBN: 978-90-04-21125-4

*This volume is a collection of essays on classical Persian literature, focusing on Persian rhetorical devices, especially imagery and metaphors. The various contributions discuss the origin and the development of debate poetry, the transmission of Persian and Arabic tales to the works of Europeans medieval authors such as Boccaccio and Chaucer, but also the development of Aristotelian poetics and epistemology in Persian philosophical tradition. Furthermore, the baroque style of the Shi'ite author Ḥusayn Vā'iz*

*Kāshifī, the use of wine metaphors by mystics such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ's original use of candle metaphors, the translation of Khayyām's metaphors into English, and the importance of a single metaphor in the epic Barzū-nāma are discussed.*

To order: <http://www.brill.nl/metaphor-and-imagery-persian-poetry>



### **The Great 'Umar Khayyám. A Global Reception of the**

**Rubáiyát** . A.A. Seyed-Gohrab (ed.). - Leiden, Leiden University Press, 2012. 288 pp.

ISBN: 978-90-872-8157-1

*This volume collects eighteen essays on the history of the reception of 'Umar Khayyám in various literary traditions, exploring how his philosophy of doubt, carpe diem, hedonism, and in vino veritas has inspired generations of poets, novelists, painters, musicians, calligraphers and film-makers.*

To order this volume: [http://www.lup.nl/do.php?a=show\\_visitor\\_book&isbn=9789087281571](http://www.lup.nl/do.php?a=show_visitor_book&isbn=9789087281571)

### Nederlands Omar Khayyám Genootschap

#### Yearbook 2012

The Dutch Omar Khayyam Society published her new Yearbook, vol. 6, 2012. This edition is a **Liber Amicorum for Jos Biegstraaten**, president of the Society since 1990. Printed by Avalon Press, Woubrugge (NL).

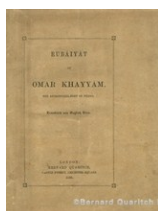
From the Foreword: "Sinds de oprichting van het Genootschap meer dan twintig jaar geleden, is hij een inspiratiebron geweest voor alle leden. Niet alleen inspireert hij de leden om bij de halfjaarlijkse vergaderingen bijdragen te leveren over ieder mogelijk aspect van Omar Khayyam, maar hij is ok altijd bezig om een manier te vinden hoe wij, de leden van het Genootschap, de wijsheid, verborgen in de kwatrijnen, naar een breder publiek kunnen vertalen."

For more information see: <http://www.omarkhayyamnederland.com/whats-new/index.html>

#### In Memoriam

Also on this website is an *In Memoriam* by Jos Biegstraaten, for three members of the Society who passed away not long ago. The IM, "Afscheid van drie leden", in Dutch only, is available in the chapter Omariana » Omar Khayyám Clubs » The Netherlands.

### Quaritch Rubaiyats



**Bernard Quaritch Ltd.** offers for sale a set of all Quaritch Rubaiyats, at £32.000,00.

See: [bernardquaritch.com](http://bernardquaritch.com), and search with the advance search form.



The following readings of versions of the Rubaiyat have recently been added to the **Librivox catalogue**:

**Whinfield - The quatrains of Omar Khayyám (1883)** Bilingual edition.

[http://archive.org/details/rubaiyat\\_bilingual\\_1207\\_librivox](http://archive.org/details/rubaiyat_bilingual_1207_librivox)

**Blanden—Omar resung (1901)** Verse rendering of the prose translation by Justin Huntly McCarthy.

[http://archive.org/details/omar\\_resung\\_1205\\_librivox](http://archive.org/details/omar_resung_1205_librivox)

**Le Gallienne - Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám (1902)** With fifty added quatrains.

[http://archive.org/details/rubaiyat\\_1206\\_librivox](http://archive.org/details/rubaiyat_1206_librivox)



#### Online manuscripts from LUNA

**Bodleian Library** offers access to her digital collections through LUNA: a tool for working with digital media. Unique to LUNA is the ability to easily search across multiple collections simultaneously. Users can select default collections to save in their user settings, or select from the list of collections from their institution or those from the LUNA Commons.

Here you can browse and study FitzGerald's first translation of Omar, as well in printed form as in his handwriting. The Ouseley Ms. 140 is also available for online reading.

<http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet>

## Various

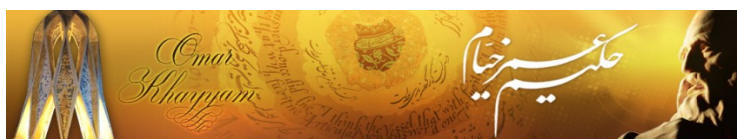


### Martin & Mason databases on the Rubaiyat now accessible online

Over the past ten years Bill Martin and Sandra Mason have created a number of digital databases relating to the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* and its publication. These databases, which provide information that is searchable on a variety of fields, are now available for researchers to access, via the DSpace service of the University Library

in Cambridge. The databases can be viewed via the following link <http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/242254>.

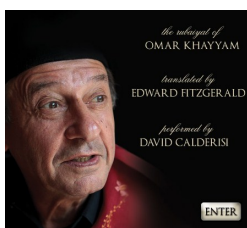
The material covers five areas: published versions of the *Rubáiyát* (all languages); illustrated editions; reference works dealing with the *Rubáiyát*; musical works relating to the *Rubáiyát*; manuscripts of the *Rubáiyát*. More information is available via the link and/or directly from [sandrabill@omarkhayyamrubaiyat.com](mailto:sandrabill@omarkhayyamrubaiyat.com).



**RUBAIYAT GALLERY** has a number of extremely beautiful illustrations and handwritings that accompany a presentation of (a selection of) Omar Khayyam quatrains in 10 most widely-spoken languages.

The gallery is part of a larger project by Interdisciplinary Arts Center (IDACK) that intends to minimize the gap among cultures, literatures and arts of all the countries in the world through available capacities.

Visit the website at: <http://idack.com/en/>



Canadian actor **David Calderisi** has produced a CD of his Rubaiyat performance, with music by Kousha Nakhaei on the kamancheh, a traditional Persian stringed instrument. The presentation tells the story of how the poem came to be written; and what it went on to become — the most widely-published poem in the English language. Then follows a performance of the poem in the character of the old Persian sage, speaking to his young lover, in a secluded place, on the first day of Spring, almost a thousand

years ago.

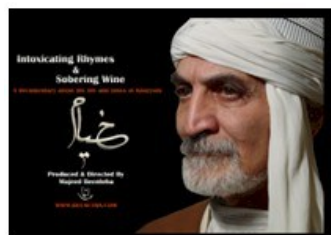
Together with the CD comes a handsome booklet containing the text. It can be ordered from Calderisi's website: <http://www.okdac.net/>. Price: \$ 15.00 CD.

## THE CHEQUER-BOARD OF NIGHTS AND DAYS

The eternal and the ephemeral, the ridiculous and the sublime

This is a weblog by *turmarion*, that has a "Rubá'í of the Day" series with Fitzgerald's translation and the version of E. H. Whinfield. There many blogs of course that give the Rubáiyat, but we seldom see other versions than FitzGerald's. What is very attractive in this blog is the selection of images that accompany each quatrain.

See: <http://turmarion.wordpress.com/2012/08/12/rub-of-the-day-index-in-progress/>



### Intoxicating Rhymes and Sobering Wine

This is the title of the documentary film on 'The life and times of Khayyam', originally released by Majeed Beenteha in 2008. The film re-examines Khayyam's life, work and poetry, and attempts to identify the reasons behind our intellectual pre-occupation with his poetry and message. It includes interviews with various academic and other experts on Khayyam and his work. Ex-

tracts from the film and its music can be found via the web site <http://www.beenteha.com/> and copies of the film on DVD and the sound track on CD are available for purchase. (from: <http://omarkhayyamrubaiyat.wordpress.com>)



## Omar - The interview



By Len Green

Q  
Do tell me Mr.  
Khayyám, is it true

That odd Fitzgerald chap did misconstrue  
Your whole philosophy and mode of life  
Resulting in an unsound point of view?

A  
His knowledge of my tongue was insecure,  
He dubbed me an agnostic epicure  
Then took unwarrantable liberties  
With one seminal bard from Naishápúr

Q  
Well, how about that French mec, Nicolas,  
Was he a simple la-di-da bourgeois  
Or was he more attuned, cognisant of  
Your quaint, bizarre, patois et repertoire?

A  
Admittedly he was more qualified  
With some persuasive Persian at his side,  
But quatrains set into his Frankish prose  
Have been, I would suggest transmogrified.

Q  
According to contemporary reports,  
‘Twas not the Sultan’s turrets for your rorts,  
a gourd of wine beneath the bough enow  
To comport with your coactive consorts.

A  
According to our ancient folklore,  
Wine was an accepted metaphor  
For spirit and humanity, the soul,  
That I would vehemently underscore.

Q  
We know some items of your trials and strife  
But precious little of your private life,  
For instance, did you have a family?  
Did you support an ever-loving wife?

A  
I doubt me that a personal revue  
Should be of much concern to such as you.  
Poetic reputation should suffice  
To justify my meagre revenue.

Q  
Astronomy we know was your forte  
And came with your CV and resume,  
But how did you find time then to indulge  
Your erudite twelfth century wordplay?

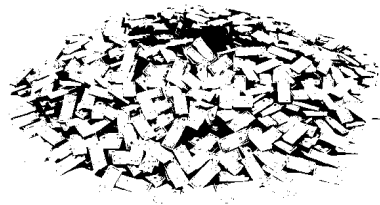
A  
Have you not had a glance at my memoirs  
Of rubái written under moon and stars  
In idyllic, romantic episodes,  
The envy of the potentates and Shars?

Q  
We’d welcome your advice how to appraise  
Verse mongers who proceed to paraphrase  
Reincarnated, reinvented lines  
They claim to have discovered nowadays.

A  
You Westerners, believe so what you will,  
Those mobile, motile fingers writing still  
Are guided by the hands of authors who  
Are blessed or hampered by varying skill.

Q  
A multitude of languages these days  
Cash in on this quaint, current, Khayyám craze,  
With more than just a tendency I fear  
To reassign your meanings and rephrase.

A  
I’d let them babble on as well they please,  
I’m grateful for their steadfast loyalties.  
Long may their twitching fingers write, move on  
And pay me retrospective royalties.



### ROSE BAY RUBÁIYÁT

- **Moving Fingers.** An abstract on The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám of Naishápúr with quatrains from various authors and quotations from selected sources.
- **The Rhubarb Art of Old Mark Chyam of Rose Bay.** 378 original Quatrains.



By Len Green, 2012.

Len Green is a retired medical practitioner and a recognised poet. Len writes: "It isn't easy getting poetry published commercially in Australia and my 16 titles were self published, all in support of charities. I would prefer my Omar (also earmarked for charity, probably of international interest) to have a wider distribution and a larger readership." Advice and suggestions regarding publication of these works are welcome at: [lbzgreen@iprimus.com.au](mailto:lbzgreen@iprimus.com.au).