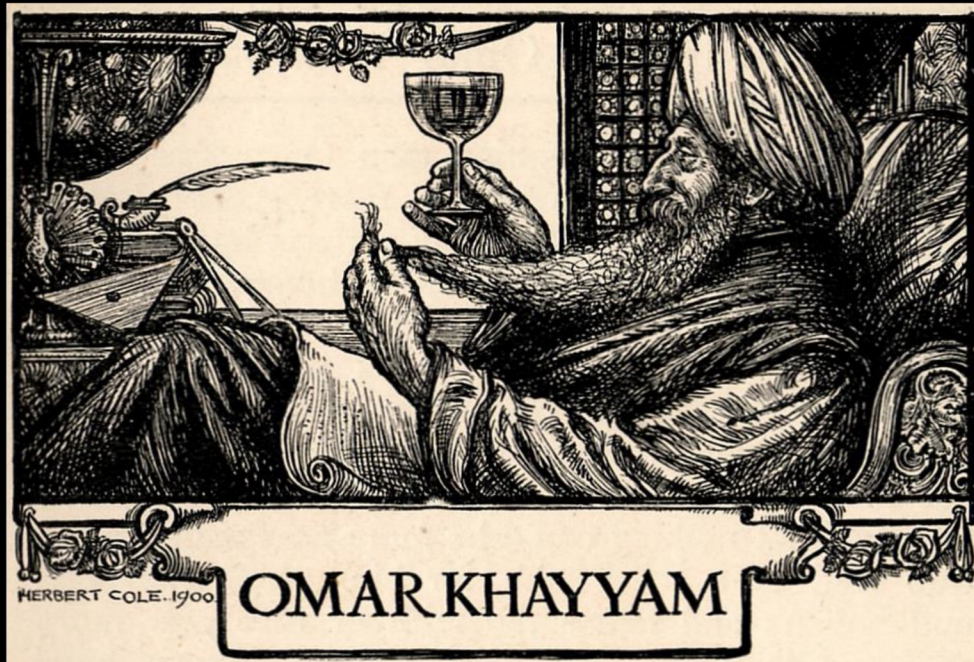


March 23 2023
Conference

**‘In the Fire of Spring’: Omar Khayyam
on Love, Heresy, and Resurrection**



*And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour--Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell*

Date

March 23 2023, 13.00 – 17.00

Location

Utrecht University, Drift 21, Sweelinckzaal (0.05)

Please register

d.farhosh-vanloon@uu.nl

March 23 2023

Conference
‘In the Fire of Spring’: Omar Khayyam
On Love, Heresy, and Resurrection

- 13.00 **Asghar Seyed-Gohrab**
Opening and Welcome
- 13.10 **Christine van Ruymbeke**
The Paratext to FitzGerald’s 1859 Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
- 14.10 **Amir Theilhaber**
*Omar Khayyam in German Reformulations:
Translation between Politics, Scholarship and Belief*
- 14.45 coffee break
- 15.00 **Arash Ghajarjazi**
*The Movement of Khayyāmic Heresy in the Persian Language,
1200-1465*
- 15.30 **Jos Coumans**
Omar Khayyām in the Netherlands: 1870’s – 1920
- 16.00 **Rokus de Groot**
Omar Khayyam in Dutch Music
- 16.30 **Asghar Seyed-Gohrab**
Paradoxical Piety: Muḥammad Ghazzālī and ‘Umar Khayyām

‘In the Fire of Spring’: Omar Khayyam on Love, Heresy, and Resurrection

The Persian poet Omar Khayyām (c. 1048-1131) is perhaps the sage from the medieval Islamic world most translated into European languages. He became famous in Persia during his lifetime for his scientific achievements, especially his calendar reform, and also for his aberrant ideas about topics such as Resurrection, belief and unbelief, *carpe diem*, wine and hedonism. The quatrains attributed to him became increasingly popular from the thirteenth century onwards in a wide geographical area. Khayyām achieved worldwide fame when his quatrains were adapted by the Victorian poet, Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883), who published his *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, The Astronomer-Poet of Persia* in 1859. The *Rubáiyát* became a vogue, entering various domains of material culture. Soldiers during World War I kept copies of the *Rubáiyát* in their pockets in the trenches. It is amazing how these quatrains have achieved such sensational popularity around the world. In medieval Persia Khayyām was seen as a follower of Avicenna’s philosophy, which critically ponders on predestination and resurrection, questioning the eternity of existence. This conference is devoted to Khayyām’s philosophy, his ideas on heresy and resurrection, while also paying ample attention to his textual history and his modern appreciation.

The Paratext to FitzGerald's 1859 *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

By Christine van Ruymbeke

This presentation is based on a chapter of the 2022 edited *Routledge Handbook of Persian Literary Translations*, "The Crowded Borderlands of an Iconic 'Translation.' Material and Immaterial Paratext of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (ROK)." Research on the Victorian poem is huge and this presentation relates to the strand which consists in the study of ROK as a literary text. The immaterial paratext looks at the background which informs the author and the target audience of the poem and the way these two actors relate to the different parts of the ROK. The material paratext examines four written elements: title, mention of the author, preface, and notes. The findings show how prose paratext and verse ROK function as one unit with the reading and appreciation of ROK being dependent, informed, and formed by the contents of its paratext. I also argue for a revised appreciation of FitzGerald's work within his literary context and especially in view of his expressed design for ROK.

Christine van Ruymbeke (Universite Libre de Bruxelles, Ph.D) is Ali Reza and Muhamed Soudavar Professor of Persian Literature and Culture, as well as co-Chair of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge (UK) and Head of its Middle Eastern Department. She is also Graduate Tutor and the College Praelector at Darwin College, Cambridge. (<http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/directory/vanRuymbeke>). She was elected as Secretary to the Board of the Societas Iranologica Europaea in 2019 (<http://www.societasiranologicaeu.org/content/board.html>). In 2009, her book *Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia. The Botany of Nizami's Khamsa*, received the World-prize of the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Christine is a literary critic working on classical (medieval and pre-modern) Persian literature, with a special focus on its medieval non-mystical narrative production. How can we engage today with these classical Persian texts in a meaningful way? She researches on medieval authorial rewriting techniques and anxiety of influence; narrative structures and embedding techniques; intratextuality, poetics and cognitive effects, bringing together medieval and present-day literary and poetic theory. She also looks at calligraphy and illustrations in medieval and pre-modern Persian manuscripts and explores Persian poetry's irrigation of literary movements such as early modern French or Victorian English poetry.

Omar Khayyam in German Reformulations: Translation between Politics, Scholarship and Belief

Amir Theilhaber

The Ruba'iyat attributed to Omar Khayyam were canonised in the German speaking world as *Die Sinnsprüche Omars des Zeltmachers* in a translation by the German diplomat and scholar of Oriental studies, Friedrich Rosen (1856-1935). These German engagements with Khayyam are an expression of transnational reformulations of bodies of knowledge under imperialism and nationalism. First exposed to the Rubaiyat at the court of the British viceroy in India in 1886, Rosen translated single quatrains along his later diplomatic stations in Tehran, Baghdad and Tangier, as a respite from his diplomatic chores. In Tehran, he was initiated into the Ni'matollahi order of Safi 'Ali Shah and Zahir ed-Dowleh, and translated other bodies of Persian poetry. After presenting his translations and interpretations of the Ruba'iyat at the International Orientalist Congress in Copenhagen in 1908, in the first edition of the *Sinnsprüche* in 1909 Rosen described the thought of Khayyam as characterised by free will and free thinking in opposition to religious orthodoxy. Despite Ignaz Goldziher challenging this dualism in Copenhagen, Rosen saw in Khayyam the Aryan-Indo-Germanic spirit that seeks cognisance, in a cultural war against the dogma of Semitic "Arabianness". Following a virulent antisemitic campaign that targeted Rosen when he became German foreign minister in 1921, a revised edition of the *Sinnsprüche* in 1929 lost the Aryan-Semitic dichotomy. At the time Rosen collaborated with Taqi Erani in Berlin on two Persian and one English Khayyam publications that emphasised the cultural-intellectual potential that Khayyam's intellectual heritage provided for the development of Iran.

Amir Theilhaber is a post doc researcher affiliated with the Department of History at the Bielefeld University. He is also the lead investigator of a research project on the provenances of the ethnological collections of the Lippisches Landesmuseum in nearby Detmold. His Habilitation project is titled "The Ethnological Collection of the Lippisches Landesmuseum in Peripheral Detmold. A Glocal History of Conglomeration, Fragmentation, Indifference and Contestation from 1835 to the Present." Theilhaber completed his BA in International Affairs at Vesalius College – Vrije Universiteit Brussel (2006), his MA in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University Jerusalem (2009), and his PhD in History at the Technical University Berlin (2018). Subsequently, he taught a course on the Aryan myth in global contexts at the Centre for Antisemitism Studies at the TU Berlin and took up a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington DC (2019/2020). He is

the author of a book on the German Orientalist scholar and foreign minister Friedrich Rosen (De Gruyter, 2020) and the connections of Orientalist scholarship and international politics during the age of empire.

The Movement of Khayyāmic Heresy in the Persian Language, 1200-1465

By Arash Ghajarjazi

In this paper presentation, I investigate the movement of Khayyāmic quatrains in the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods in the Persian language. Khayyām as a historical persona lived in late-12th-century Neyshābūr during the Seljuks, before the Mongolian invasion of Khurāsān. Although he was better known for his work in astronomy, mathematics and philosophy in his own time, in the later centuries, he became more closely associated with poetry, more specifically with what can be termed antinomian philosophical poetry. By the time Yār Aḥmad Ibn Ḥusaynī Rashīdī Tabrīzī compiled the first systemically organised quatrains (more than five hundred) attributed to Khayyām in his collection titled *Ṭarabkhāna*, in 1462, a complex intellectual history of antinomianism had already unfolded over three centuries. Scholars of Iranian Studies and literary historians have by and large been preoccupied with one leading question: Which of the quatrains are authentic? Or put differently, which quatrains were written by Khayyām himself? In this paper presentation, I wish to provide a framework to go beyond this question. I propose to ask in what ways did it become possible for the mid-15th century Persian imagination to accept a certain trend of heretical thinking that came to be widely associated with the name Khayyām? What happened between the first quatrain by Khayyām in the early 14th century and the accumulation of more than five hundred quatrains by the mid-15th century? In a historical analysis that cuts through the classical disciplines in Islamic and Iranian Studies, I move towards a cultural history of heretical thinking in the Persian language.

Arash Ghajarjazi received his PhD from the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University. His work deals with the relations between Islam, sciences, and media technologies in the Middle East from the 19th century onwards. More broadly, trained both as a cultural analyst and a historian, he explores how Islamic traditions have evolved in and as media. He approaches histories of Muslim material cultures and ideas together. His work seeks a balance between historical contextualisation and philosophical conceptualisation. He is currently working as a postdoc researcher in the ERC-Advanced Grant entitled *Beyond*

Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam (www.beyondsharia.nl), where he studies the intellectual 12 genealogies and the shifting popularity of ‘Umar Khayyām’s quatrains from the thirteenth to the twentieth century.



Edmund J Sullivan Illustrations to The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
First Version Quatrain-056

Omar Khayyám in the Netherlands: 1870's – 1920

By Jos Coumans

As FitzGerald's translation of the *rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám (1859) started to draw attention in the West in the 1870's, it took three decades for Omar Khayyám to be covered in a prominent Dutch literary magazine as *The Gids* in 1891. In an extensive article Oege Meynsma depicted Omar's position on the Persian literary parnassus and compared FitzGerald's translation with the German version by F. Bodenstedt. After this study, it took another two decades when Van Balen's translation was published. His *Omar Khayyám's rubáiyát* (1910), has always been regarded as the first translation of Omar Khayyám into Dutch. It was followed in 1911 by a translation by J.H. Leopold and another one in 1913 by P.C. Boutens. Then it remained silent again until 1931 when W. de Mérode published his

version of Omar Khayyám's quatrains, and gradually the number of Dutch translations increased. To this day more than thirty translators have been identified, whereas some of them published more than one version.

Today's sophisticated information retrieval systems and technologies help us to create a more subtle approach to the early decades of Omar's rise to name and fame in Dutch literature and in socio-cultural circles. "Delpher" is a searchable database project by the Dutch National Library, containing millions of historical newspaper articles, books and periodicals from the collections of libraries, archives and scientific institutions, from the 17th century on. Together with the "DBNL" (Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren), a digital collection of texts from Dutch literature, linguistic and cultural history, from the earliest times to the present day, it allows access to numerous documents to argue that from the 1870's until 1920 it was not all silence and ignorance concerning Omar Khayyám in the Netherlands.

Jos Coumans is independent scholar and secretary of the *Nederlands Omar Khayyám Genootschap* (The Dutch Omar Khayyám Society). He has published a monograph on Omar Khayyam, entitled *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: An updated bibliography* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010) and many articles, among which "Bois du vin ... English, French and German translations in Persian polyglot editions of The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám," in *Persica*, No. XXVI (2017-2018), pp. 103-163; *The erring finger writes. The Leicester pirate cyclostyles of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, Jos Coumans, John Drew. Cambridge: Cambridge Poetry Workshop, 2015; *A book in the wilderness. FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám 150 years in print and image*, Jos Biegstraaten en Jos Coumans. Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2009; "Inleiding en verantwoording bij de bibliografie. – Bibliografie," in *Boekenwereld*, jrg. 13 (1997), nr. 3 (mrt.), pp. 130-144. He is also webmaster of the following sites related to Khayyam:

- Omar Khayyam in Nederland - <https://omarkhayyam.nl>
- Omariana - <https://omariana.nl>
- Concordances of the Rubáiyát - <https://rubaiyatconcordance.org>
- Omar Khayyám - <https://omarkhayyamnederland.com>

Omar Khayyam in Dutch Music

By Rokus de Groot

The quatrains of Omar Khayyam enjoyed some popularity among Dutch composers. In this presentation I will discuss the ways his texts were set to music, with special attention to key notions like *carpe diem*, the drinking of wine, the fleetingness of life. What are the musical means on the levels of rhythm and meter, melody and harmony, timbre and polyphony, to convey such content? To what extent orientalisms are explored? Also I will present my own contribution to composing Omar Khayyam texts, in counterpoint to texts by Rumi.

Rokus de Groot, musicologist and composer, conducts research on music of the 20th and 21st centuries, especially about aesthetics and systems of composition, about the interaction between different cultural and religious traditions, and about musical concepts as a metaphor (polyphony, counterpoint). He had a personal chair “Music in the Netherlands since 1600” at the University of Utrecht, and is Professor Emeritus of Musicology at the University of Amsterdam. In 2009 he was invited to deliver the Edward Said Memorial Lecture at the American University in Cairo. Among his publications are: “Rumi and the Abyss of Longing,” in *The Mawlana Rumi Review* Vol. 2, 2011, pp. 60-93; “Music, Religion and Power: Qawwali as Empowering Disempowerment,” in M.B. ter Borg and J.W. van Henten, *Powers, Religion as a Social and Spiritual Force*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, pp. 243-264. He composes music theatre for singers, musicians and dancers from different traditions, such as *Song of songs: The Love of Mirabai* (New Delhi 2005), *Layla and Majnun: A Composition about the Night* (Amsterdam 2006), *ShivaShakti* (Chennai, 2009) and *Hosgeldin* (Ankara and Burdur, 2014, 2015). These are examples of mutual learning and intercultural polyphony.

Paradoxical Piety: Muḥammad Ghazzālī and ‘Umar Khayyām

By Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

This paper examines the notions of ‘doubt’ and ‘certitude’ by focusing on specific quatrains of Khayyām (ca. 439-517/1048-1123) and the prose works of Muḥammad Ghazzālī. Khayyām was Ghazzālī’s contemporary, living in Khurasan, in the north east of Persia. These Persian sages struggled with several theological principles, such as the purpose of God’s creation,

resurrection and denial of the Hereafter. This paper elaborates upon a few central religious concepts and views which created an undesirable bridge between a religious scholar and freethinking intellectual. I shall investigate whether Khayyām can be regarded as a freethinker whom Ghazzālī relentlessly criticised. I shall hypothesise why and how certain of Khayyām’s quatrains emerged in a turbulent period of Persian history in which the nature of belief and unbelief were questioned.

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab is Professor of Persian and Iranian Studies at Utrecht University in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. He has published extensively on Persian literature, mysticism and religion. His publications range from Persian poetry to Sufism and the role of religious and mystical motifs and metaphors in Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and how peaceful religious injunctions are used to justify violence. He authored *Soefisme: een levende traditie*, (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2015 third print); *The True Dream: Indictment of the Shiite Clerics of Isfahan*, (London: Routledge, 2017, with S. McGlinn), *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizami’s Epic Romance*, (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2003), *Mirror of Dew: The Poetry of Ālam-Tāj Zhāle Qā’em-Maqāmi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Ilex Foundation Series 14, 2015), *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, (Leiden: LUP, 2008, 2010). His recent publication is *Martyrdom, Mysticism and Dissent: The Poetry of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021). He has edited twelve books, most recent publications are *Pearls of Meanings: Studies on Persian Art, Poetry, Sufism and History of Iranian Studies in Europe by J.T.P. de Bruijn* (Leiden: Leiden UP, 2020) and *The Layered Heart: Essays on Persian Poetry, A Celebration in Honor of Dick Davis* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2019). At the moment he is the 8 Principal Investigator (PI) of an ERC-Advanced Grant entitled *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam* (www.beyondsharia.nl), examining Islamic nonconformist movements.