THE RUBAIYAT AND THE ANCIENT SAGE

A COMPARISON

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Having been impressed on the first reading of The Ancient Sage by a vague but sustained similarity to some familiar poem, a likeness which became more pronounced and positive with each re-reading, I set me about to find its counterpart. I believe that I found it in the Rubaiyat. Since no material comparing the poems was available, I compiled my own to see if my conclusions were justifiable. Having completed the comparison I felt that Tennyson cast The Ancient Sage in its dual form so that he might present Omarian agnosticism and with mystic Pantheism refute it, argument by argument. It appears to me that in The Ancient Sage, more than any other philosophical poem, Tennyson shows the direct influence of two sources: FitzGerald’s Rubaiyat and Lao Tsze’s Tao Teh King.
# The Rubaiyat and The Ancient Sage

A Comparison

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CHAPTER I

PLAGIARISM IN TENNYSON.

Discussion of two points is necessary before beginning this essay: To what extent, if at all, may we apply the term "plagiarist" to Tennyson? How close was the friendship of Tennyson and FitzGerald, and when did Tennyson become familiar with FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*? Answering these questions first will evade later digressions, and a clear understanding of the position taken by the writer on these two points will avoid confusion.

To what extent, if at all, may we apply the term "plagiarist" to Tennyson? The volume of discursive material on the subject makes a definite answer difficult. The presence of this quantity of discussion shows the impossibility of making an immediate negative answer. What is meant by the term plagiarism? Strictly speaking a plagiarist is one who "appropriates and gives out as his own the literary or artistic work of another."¹ It is well to notice that this definition does not limit literary borrowing to words or phrases, but to "literary or artistic work," which is understood here to include phraseology, subject matter, and structure. Does Tennyson plagiarize? During his lifetime

¹Comprehensive Standard Dictionary. Funk and Wagnalls.
the poet did not escape the accusation, nor has it ceased since his death. Below are quoted two of his defenses. "Tennyson, always unduly sensitive," might have been too strongly impressed by the criticism made by Dawson of Montreal in a letter (November 21, 1882) concerning The Princess. His self-defense for parallelisms is eloquent. His repudiation of incorporating suggestions lent by other authors is convincing until he warms to his subject. Then, it would seem, he "protests too much." Since those who knew Tennyson well all allude to his quickness of temper, we cannot ascribe this fire to any justice in the accusation. On finding parallelisms Tennyson says,

They must always occur. A man (a Chinese scholar) some time ago wrote to me saying that in an unknown, untranslated Chinese poem there were two whole lines of mine almost word for word. Why not? Are not human eyes all over the world looking at the same objects, and must there not consequently be coincidences of thought and impressions and expressions? It is scarcely possible for anyone to say or write anything in this late time of the world to which, in the rest of the literature of the world, a parallel could not somewhere be found.

But Dawson evidently touched a more sensitive spot when he intimated that some of Tennyson's poetical interpretations


were dependent on other poets' ideas; for Tennyson replies,

When you say that this passage or that was suggested by Wordsworth or Shelley or another, I demur; and more, I wholly disagree. 4

There follows in the letter a list of six quotations, each explained by the suggestion in nature which prompted Tennyson to write it. With reference to nature delineation a review of Tennyson's works published in 1896, appearing in Fortnightly Review, says, "Never was a poet less of a plagiarist," showing clearly that what that writer believed to be true was not necessarily believed by everyone. As Tennyson continues his letter to Dawson, his ire rises:

I believe the resemblance which you note is just a chance one. Shelley's lines are not familiar to me, tho' of course, if they occur in the Prometheus, I must have read them. . . . Far indeed am I from asserting that books as well as nature are not, and ought not to be, suggestive to the poet. I am sure that I myself, and many others, find a peculiar charm in those passages of such great masters as Virgil or Milton where they adopt the creation of a bygone poet, and re-clothe it, more or less, according to their own fancy. But there is, I fear, a prosaic set growing up among us, editors of booklets, book-worms, index hunters, or men of great memories and no imagination, who impute themselves to the poet, and so believe that he, too, has no imagination, but is forever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume in order to see what he can appropriate. They will not allow one to say 'Ring the bell' without finding that we have taken it from Sir P. Sidney, or even to use such simple expressions as the ocean "roars", without finding out the precise verse in Homer or Horace from which we have

4Ibid., p. 257.
In this passage may lie the explanation we seek. Tennyson's excessive sensitiveness was apparent not only in his contacts with men, but with books. He was so wide a reader that his classical learning was full. With other things he had read Prometheus, and with his usual sensitiveness had absorbed Shelley's idea and expressed it in his own way. Is this not the answer? In the above two quotations Tennyson says that books or poets do not suggest this or that passage to him, but that books as well as nature are and ought to be suggestive to the poet. Tennyson was a poet. From a careful study of the Memoir the writer has come to the conclusion that Tennyson believed the first part of that statement and acted upon the last. Elton, discussing Shelley, says, "He (Shelley) does not distil the older poets after the manner of Tennyson," indicating Elton's acceptance of the belief that Tennyson is directly indebted to many sources. This indebtedness is not termed plagiarism, but in a nicely turned phrase Elton leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader. "The Eve of St. Mark (Keats) is no collateral or remote, but a direct and near ancestor of Tennyson's St. Agnes' Eve." With the growing popularity of Tennyson in-

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creased the number of "men of great memories and no imagination," for in the 1892 edition of Tennyson's poems this prefatory note occurs:

My paraphrases of certain Latin and Greek lines seem too obvious to be mentioned. Many of the parallelisms here given are accidental. The same idea must often occur independently to two men looking on the same aspects of nature. There is a wholesome page in Echerman's "Conversations with Goethe," where one or the other (I have not the book by me) remarks that the prosaic mind finds plagiarism in passages that only prove "the common brotherhood of man."8

In the Dawson letter and in this note Tennyson admits parallelisms and paraphrases, ridiculing the "prosaic mind" which finds in either a hint of plagiarism. Note that Tennyson says many, not all, of the parallelisms are accidental. Another letter, written in 1868, to the Rev. Charles Cockin in answer to his question "May I be pardoned for my curiosity for wishing to know whether these lines suggested the two last stanzas in the song in the "Miller's Daughter"?" shows Tennyson's impatience with what he considers his persecutors.

I never saw the lines before; and the coincidence is strange enough, and until I saw the signature I fully believed them to be a hoax.9

But in the later letter, quoted above, Tennyson says he is not familiar with Shelley's lines, though if they are in

Prometheus he must have read them. Is it not possible for him to have read and forgotten other poems, retaining the central thought which he resets as his own jewel?

The question then arises, granting the possibility of many common sources, how far may an author absorb and re-iterate another's words, even if he does so accidentally, without rendering himself liable to the charge of plagiarism? Can Shakespearian, classical, and Biblical echoes in a great poet's work be called plagiarism? Alfred Lyall quotes Edward FitzGerald to answer the author of Tennysonia (1866) who took pains to point out the parallelisms and coincidences of thought between In Memoriam and Shakespeare's Sonnets.

I never speak of Plagiarism unless the Coincidence, or Adoption, be something quite superior to the general material of him in whom the 'parallel passage' is found. And Shakespeare may have read the other old boy (Tusser) and remembered unconsciously, or never have read, and never remembered.\textsuperscript{10}

I feel that an additional point should be added here. If the general tone, or ethos, or philosophy of a poem is unique in an author's work, and at the same time parallel with the writing of another author, cannot the reader speak of plagiarism? Plagiarism is not necessarily intentional.

To return to Lyall's discussion:

\textsuperscript{10}Sir Alfred Lyall, Tennyson, (New York: Macmillan, 1915), p. 73.
The comparison in Tennyson proves at most, and apparently aims at no more than proving, an inference that Tennyson's memory had assimilated the sonnets. And it is only of real interest when it shows occasionally how the property of all ages as the natural phenomena and human sensitiveness that produce them, are set in new frames by the chief artists of each succeeding time; how, to quote Tennyson, the thoughts of man are widened by the circling of the suns.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the \textit{Memoir} Hallam Tennyson records his father's constant study of the Greek and Roman classics.

I need not dwell on my father's love of the perfection of classical literary art, on his sympathy with the temper of the old world, on his love of the old metres, and on his views as to how the classical subject ought to be treated in English poetry.

He purposely chose those classical subjects from mythology and legend, which had been before but imperfectly treated, or of which the stories were slight, so that he might have free scope for his imagination. \ldots A modern feeling was to some extent introduced into the themes, but they were dealt with according to the canons of Antique Art. The blank verse was often intentionally restrained.\footnote{Ibid.}

Wilfred Mustard and Clarence Stedman discuss the classical structures, subjects, and allusions which appear in Tennyson, Mustard attributing some to direct borrowing, some to coincidence, and some to classical heritage. Not only did Tennyson read and study the classics, he also translated favorite portions of Homer. That the \textit{English Idyls} are ap-\footnote{\textit{Memoir}, Vol. II, pp. 13-14.}
parently Theocritean in form is shown by Stedman, Chap. VI, "Tennyson and Theocritus," in Victorian Poets, and Mustard, Chapter III, with the same title, in Classical Echoes in Tennyson. Mustard believes the Horte d'Arthur to be "consciously and purposely Homeric," in spite of Tennyson's modest assertion that the poem contains "faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth."

And throughout the volume (English Idyls) one often lights upon classical allusions and quotations, upon more or less conscious imitations, upon passages where a subtle or unconscious memory of some ancient poet seems to have determined the choice of a word or the turn of a phrase. "Having the sound of those ancient poetes still ringing in his eares he mought needes, in singing, hit out some of theyr tunes."13

Stedman finds Greek influence visible in many portions of the 1832 volume of Tennyson,14 and comments on the originality and perfection of Tennyson's blank verse partly "derived from the study of Homer."15 Stedman also speaks of "the immense obligations of Tennyson to Theocritus, not only for the method, sentiment, and purpose, but for the very form and language, which renders beautiful much of his most widely celebrated verse."16 Mustard finds allusions

15 Ibid., p. 161.
and parallels in Tennyson to Homer, the Greek lyric poets, dramatists, and philosophers, to Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and other Latin authors. Lyall, Mustard, and Stedman are all of the opinion that Tennyson's "love for the perfection of classical literary art" and "sympathy with the temper of the old world" caused him to absorb much from that art and world. Katharine Allen, in an article comparing Tennyson's *Lucretius* with the original, summarizes Tennyson's indebtedness not only to *Lucretius*, but to the other classics he assimilated.

Tennyson has chosen the most important portions of the *de Rerum Natura* to typify the whole. Personal, philosophic, religious, scientific, these fragments are mingled in confusion as the nature of a mad-man's visions demanded. The poem is chaotic, yet complete. It is as if Tennyson had long held in solution in his mind the main elements of Lucretius's work, and had allowed them there to re-crystallize in new combinations unlike the old.17

Recrystallization of subject matter must have taken place in this same way before the writing of many of Tennyson's poems. The original picture ceased to be, and a new one strangely resembling the former, yet different, took its place.

The lover's song, "It is the Miller's Daughter," is an exquisite mutation of the sixteenth ode of Anacreon. Often, however, the Laureate enriches his romantic and epic poems with effects borrowed from the Gothic, Mediaeval sources.18

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It is evident then that Tennyson's "habit of solitude" coupled with his love of the ancients caused him to assimilate large portions of their material which he, both innocently and intentionally, incorporated in his own poetry. In the words of Saintsbury

The poet Tennyson may take things that had previously existed - The Keatsian and Shelleyian lyric, the Wordsworthian attitude to nature, the Miltonic blank verse, but inevitably, invariably, each under his hands becomes different, becomes individual and original. The result cannot be accounted for by mannerisms, from which at no time was Tennyson free, and after the thousands and ten thousands of imitations which have been seen since, it stands out untouched, unrivalled.19

The Biblical references appearing in Tennyson are less transformed than any of his borrowings. Henry VanDyke says

At least one cause of his popularity is that there is much of the Bible in Tennyson. How much, few even of his most ardent lovers begin to understand. . . . I have found nearly three hundred direct references to the Bible in the poems of Tennyson.20

But since the Biblical ideas and phraseology are a part of our daily speech, it would be wrong to suggest plagiarism with reference to them. However, the presence of so much Biblical language in the exact wording of the original tends to confirm the statement made above: Tennyson absorbs and reiterates all he reads.


Critics have found echoes in Tennyson not only of Shakespeare, the Greek and Roman Classics, and the Bible, but also of Spenser, Pope, and others. The parallelism with Pope is purely a matter of structure, but Pope's skill in epigrammatical and proverbial phrases can hardly lie unrecognized in Tennyson. Stedman says:

The physical traits of the two men being so utterly at variance, no doubt many will scout my suggestion that the verse of the former might closely resemble that of the latter. Pope excelled in qualities which are noticeable in Tennyson: finish and minuteness of detail, and the elevation of common things to fanciful beauty. Here compare "The Rape of the Lock" with "The Sleeping Beauty", and especially with "The Talking Oak". Since the period of the "Essay on Man", from what writer can you cull so many wise and fine proverbial phrases, from whom else so many of these proverbs, which are not isolated, but, as in Pope's works, recur by tens and scores? Curious felicities of verse, lines which record the most exquisite thrills of life, and unforgotten similies, such beauties as these occur in multitudes, and literally make up the body of the Laureate's song.

Here is only a suggestion of the parallelisms in structure to be found, not an intimation that Tennyson copied Pope. This point is useful because it shows the existence of parallelism where no suggestion of plagiarism is present. But William Sloane Kennedy, in his "Tennyson and Other Debtors to Spenser's 'Faerie Queen'" does not hesitate to call Tennyson's appropriations "thefts." Nor does he limit his com-

ments to the "stealing" from the *Faerie Queen*. He surveys the whole literary field from which Tennyson drew. After having proved his point, however, he assures the reader that such usage of prior works is acceptable when it is done skillfully.

But, however shy the general reader has fought of Spenser, the poets have not failed to visit his fairyland, and all have come forth laden with branches of his blossoms and fruit. Among these is Tennyson. Yet in the whole mass of literature on Tennyson, I can find only a few vague references that indicate a knowledge of Tennyson's debt to Spenser. Some twenty years ago [1878], lovers of Tennyson may remember being rather startled by an article in the Cornhill Magazine on 'Tennyson's Creditors' in which "J.C.C." showed, by a surprisingly exhaustive survey of the field of ancient and modern poetry, how the Laureate had unravelled and woven into his works the beautiful threads of his predecessors. But neither that writer, nor Mr. E. C. Stedman, nor Dean Kitchin, in his excellent edition of the 'Faerie Queen', further, no edition of Tennyson, has touched upon that poet's indebtedness to Spenser which is tolerably marked. Most of the coincidences are undoubtedly but unconscious memories of the poet's reading. . . . Spenser's line "On top of Greene Selinis all alone" clearly gave form to that in 'Oenone', "Came up from reedy Simois all alone."

Kennedy lists many 'thefts' from Spenser, including titles, phraseology, subject matter, and form. Examples of the type of borrowings are Spenser's pathetic story of the murdered Claribell as the source of the title and melody of Tennyson's "Claribel," and Spenser's description of the knight

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22 *Poet Lore*, (1898), pp. 494-495.

But of all parallels noted by other writers the most interesting in view of our subject is Benson's statement concerning *The Bird Parliament*, by Attar, published in 1857 by Garcin de Tassy. FitzGerald had become interested in this poem in 1856 and by 1862 had completed his verse translation of it. In 1869 Tennyson published *The Holy Grail*. Tennyson and FitzGerald were corresponding in February of that year, for one letter appears in the Memoir, written in January, 1870, criticising the poem. Benson says of *The Bird Parliament*, "The plot is somewhat analogous to that of *The Holy Grail.*"24 Mrs. Tennyson's diary records that *The Holy Grail* was begun in September, 1868. And Tennyson's diary shows that it was completed in November of the same year. "He had the subject on his mind for years, ever

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since he began to write about Arthur and his Knights. Yet in the brief space of two months it materialized in plot comparable to the previously published Bird Parliament. That Tennyson believed The Holy Grail to be completely original is recorded in his letter to Palgrave, 1868, who had shown Tennyson's poem to Max Müller.

I can't conceive how the Grail M. M. mentions can well be treated by a poet of the thirteenth century from a similar point of view to mine, who write in the nineteenth century, but if so, I am rather sorry for it, as I rather piqued myself on my originality of treatment.

It is interesting to note that the waxing and waning of Tennyson's popularity has not materially affected the mass of criticism discussing what is variously called anything from 'echoes' to 'plagiarism'. At least from 1866, if not before, till the present time, students have concerned themselves about Tennyson's borrowings. In addition to the books and articles mentioned above, several articles not available to the writer indicate that they would further illustrate what has been said: "Tennyson as a Plagiarist," Joseph Hooper; Literary World, Oct. and Sept., 1883; "A Tennyson Plagiarism," Literary Review, April, 1901; Illustrations of Tennyson, J. Churton Collins, (probably the "J.C.C." of Kennedy); and Echoes in Tennyson, George Green Loane,

1928. It has been shown above that Tennyson resented the attitude of his critics toward his use of his literary background. Several references to this sensitiveness are made by Hallam Tennyson in the Memoir. Mustard shows that though the critics changed terminology and attitude, the subject is still open for discussion. Although he refers only to the classics, it is well to keep in mind all borrowings.

Tennyson himself often complained—and with good reason—of the tone in which some of his critics spoke of his debt to his Greek and Roman models... And in many cases where some classical influence was detected, or imagined, they did not hesitate to use the ugly word 'plagiariasm.' Now (1904) the fashion has changed, and the essayist who mentions the subject at all is apt to content himself with an easy sneer at the "hunters after remote resemblances and far-fetched analogies." The earlier critic overdid the matter, and sometimes made the judicious grieve; the essayist of today is inclined to understate the great poet's debt to the great classical poets whom he studied all his life long.

It is evident from this brief and incomplete survey of the subject that Tennyson often thought and expressed himself in terms and subjects of his literary predecessors and contemporaries. He was influenced deeply by what he read, and retained as much from his reading as he gained through his senses and imagination. Exactly how much he was aware of this is impossible to say. Perhaps the best answer to the question "To what extent, if at all, may we apply the

term plagiarist to Tennyson?" is found in Emerson's essay

Quotation and Originality.

We expect a great man to be a good reader; or in proportion to the spontaneous power should be the assimilating power. The originals are not original. There is imitation, model, and suggestion, to the very archangels, if we knew their history. The borrowing is often honest enough, and comes of magnanimity and stoutness. A great man quotes bravely. Original power is usually accompanied with assimilating power. There are great ways of borrowing. Genius borrows nobly. When Shakespeare is charged with debts to his authors, Landor replies: "Yet he was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life." Whoever expresses to us a just thought makes ridiculous the pains of the critic who should tell him where such a word had been said before. Goethe frankly said. "Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand different things. My work is an aggregation of beings taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe". Only an inventor knows how to borrow. Vast memory is only raw material. The divine gift is ever the instant life, which receives and uses and creates.28

In this way Tennyson borrows, and only in this light may we call that borrowing plagiarism.

With this in mind we will investigate Tennyson's friendship with 'Old Fitz' and his knowledge of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam to discover if it may have been responsible in any way for the writing of The Ancient Sage.

CHAPTER II. Tennyson and FitzGerald's Rubaiyat.

1 FitzGerald's Friendship with Tennyson.
2 FitzGerald's Friendship with Cowell.
3 Dating Tennyson's Introduction to the Rubaiyat.
4 Tennyson's Estimate of the Rubaiyat.
CHAPTER XI

TENNYSON AND FITZGERALD'S RUBAIYAT.

How close was the friendship of Tennyson and FitzGerald, and when did Tennyson become familiar with FitzGerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam? To answer this first requires a resume of FitzGerald's life, especially during the ten years in which he was most interested in Persian poetry. FitzGerald's relations with Tennyson during and after this time throw light on the subject. FitzGerald was a man of simple tastes who led an uneventful existence. This gives little about him for the biographer to record beyond his education at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was a friend to Thackeray and James Spedding, through whom he later met Tennyson; and his quaint and almost solitary life; and his unfortunate marriage.

The whole Cambridge life was a delightful one, and exactly suited to FitzGerald's temperament. He contrived to take a degree in 1830; and then began a vague, drifting, leisurely existence which ended only with his death. He had enough money for his wants; and there was no need for him to adopt a profession, and it appears that no pressure was put upon him to induce him to do so. . . He often lamented it himself, but he was too irresolute to embrace a discipline which might have, so to speak, pulled him together. . . . It is practically certain that one in whom the instinct for literary work was so definite as it was in FitzGerald, would somehow or other have contrived to write. But on the other hand, definite occupation would have affected the quality of FitzGerald's writing. . . . If his life had been thus ordered. . . we should hardly have
Earlier authors refer to the friendship of Tennyson and FitzGerald at Cambridge. After the publication of the Memoir in 1899 students of Tennyson knew that though the two saw each other in Trinity they were not friends. "I can tell you nothing of his College days," writes Edward FitzGerald to a friend, "for I did not know him until they were over, tho' I had seen him two or three times before: I remember him well, a sort of Hyperion." Five years later they met at the home of a mutual friend. This was the beginning of a life-long friendship. FitzGerald's capacity for continuing friendships through letters was unusual. Tennyson being a poor correspondent, FitzGerald kept in touch with him and his doings through his wife and his brother Frederick.

"When Tennyson came to see FitzGerald (after twenty years) it was as if time had not been." Tennyson wrote of him, "I had no truer friend; he was one of the kindliest of men, and I have never known one of so fine and delicate a wit." The actual time FitzGerald and Tennyson spent together was brief, "and yet the personal regard remained undimmed and unabated." When Tennyson was asked at the end of his life

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1Benson, pp. 8-9.
which of his friends he had loved best, he replied without
hesitation, "Why, old Fitz, to be sure." Such was the endur-
ing friendship which began in 1835 when the two met at Sped-
dings\(^1\) in the Lake country.\(^5\) FitzGerald had an overwhelm-
ing admiration for Tennyson, and is credited with having said
that in Tennyson's presence he had a feeling of being over-
shadowed by Tennyson's immense intellect. "He worshipped.
. . Tennyson's power; he thought it was wasted on inade-
quate objects\(^6\) in the poet's later life. FitzGerald loved
what he called the vigor and "champagne flavor" of Tenny-
son as a young poet. His feeling of inferiority, added
to FitzGerald's naturally shy disposition, probably accounts
for the lack of personal acquaintance between two such good
friends.

In 1846 FitzGerald formed another friendship, one which
was destined to make him famous. He met E. B. Cowell, then
a man of twenty, who afterwards became Professor of Sanskrit
at Cambridge. "Cowell said humorously of himself that his
chief function was to encourage other people to work."\(^7\)

His enthusiasm for Greek, Persian, and Spanish, as well as

\(^4\) Benson, p. 72.


\(^7\) Benson, pp. 29-30.
Sanskrit, was catching, for in 1853 Fitzgerald began studying Persian. That year Cowell published his own translation of the Odes of Hafiz, and Fitzgerald began the translation of Jami's Saleman and Absal, which he published in 1856.\(^8\) The year after Fitzgerald became interested in Persian poetry, he spent a fortnight with Tennyson and his family at Farringford. This was the end of March or first of April, 1854. Hallam Tennyson says of this visit:

He sketched and my father carved in wood. One day Fitzgerald brought home bunches of horned poppies and yellow irises over which like a boy he was ecstatic. In the evenings he played Mozart, or translated Persian Odes for my father, who . . . had hurt his eyes by poring over a small-printed Persian Grammar; until this with Hafiz and other Persian books had to be hidden away, for he had "seen the Persian letters stalking-like giants around the walls of his room."\(^9\)

At this time Fitzgerald had not met Omar. In 1856 his friend Cowell married and accepted a professorship of History at Calcutta. Before Cowell left England he found, in the Ouseley collection in the Bodleian Library, a rare manuscript of Omar, containing one hundred and fifty-eight stanzas, which he copied and sent to Fitzgerald.

In 1857 Cowell sent Fitzgerald a further instalment of Omar literature, namely, a copy of a Calcutta manuscript,

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 36.

and a rare volume, which had been edited from that manuscript, and printed in 1836.\textsuperscript{10} FitzGerald's adaptation of the Rubaiyat was begun in 1857. His letters to Cowell during that year show how desultory his methods were. FitzGerald often had difficulty in finding the meaning, and asked his teacher numerous and technical questions.\textsuperscript{11} Since FitzGerald had a habit of writing about the person or occupation he was most interested in at the moment, if his letters to Tennyson written at this time were available, they would probably tell us when Tennyson first saw Omar in Persian or in FitzGerald's English. In fact, it is difficult to believe that in 1857-8 FitzGerald did not correspond with Tennyson concerning Omar, knowing his friend's love of Persian poetry, and being himself so full of his subject that he carried the manuscript in his pocket wherever he went so that he might have it immediately at hand to study if he chose. The only reference to Omar in the Memoir is made in a single letter to Mrs. Tennyson written in 1874. Hallam Tennyson prefaces the letter with

\begin{quote}
The following was in answer to a letter about two fine lines (in E.F.G.'s "Omar Khayyam") which my father greatly admired; FitzGerald had taken it into his head that my father had said they had been "copied from some lines in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10}Benson, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 98.
"The Gardener's Daughter." The lines were:

'The stars are setting, and the caravan
Starts for the dawn of nothing; O make haste!'  

It is a pity the original letter of FitzGerald was not preserved. If Hallam Tennyson had published the Memoir five years later, when the Rubaiyat of FitzGerald was gaining international fame, perhaps all of FitzGerald's letters would have been included. This letter tells us nothing, except that correspondence concerning Omar did pass between the two as early as 1874.

I had really meant to write again to Alfred this evening; to say that I had repented of having bothered him about "Omar!" His (Alfred's) letter is come today however; and I am glad that he is not bothered at all and for the best of reasons: having no alternative to be bothered with.

I had meant to say, besides, that which I asked him about "Omar" had reminded me of what I had often thought and meant to say about a very different thing indeed; namely two of that "paltry poet's" own wretched effusions; "The Gardener's and Miller's Daughters," of which I have always thought he should reprint the first drafts.  

Without the complete correspondence of Tennyson and FitzGerald, and perhaps even if it were available, it is impossible to ascertain the exact year in which Tennyson first met Omar. There are two other methods of approach, however, which may tell approximately when Tennyson became familiar.


13Ibid.
with FitzGerald's Rubaiyat, and how he was affected by it. First, checking the English Catalogue for the years 1859 to 1900 shows by the number of publications the popularity of the poem. Although Tennyson was somewhat of a recluse, little happened in the literary world with which he was not familiar. Presuming that FitzGerald had not introduced Omar to his friend before 1873 or 74, and that Tennyson had not discovered the Rubaiyat in the Persian for himself, is it not probable that Tennyson would secure a FitzGerald translation? Though it is difficult to believe that FitzGerald in his Omarian enthusiasm would not include his friend, it is not entirely improbable. FitzGerald's actions were usually unaccountable. His slow, gentle, uneventful existence did not tend to make him exacting or careful in his habits. Three letters from FitzGerald in the Memoir illustrate this. In 1857 Tennyson read and enjoyed Euphranor. FitzGerald fifteen years later promised him a copy, and in 1882, ten years after promising the gift, FitzGerald sent his book. The transaction covered twenty-five years. No, FitzGerald was neither a prompt nor an exacting friend. But to return to the question. Is it not probable that Tennyson would secure a FitzGerald translation? The English Catalogue for 1835-1862, published 1864, five years after the first anonymous edition of Omar Khayyam published by Quaritch appeared and two years after the private reprint in India
for which Cowell was no doubt responsible, makes no mention of
the Rubaiyat. Although three further editions appeared in the
next fifteen years, 1868, 1872, and 1879, and although Fitz-
Gerald's name appears in the Catalogue, with other books and
translations, published before Omar, no record of Omar is
made until the 1881-1889 edition of the Catalogue. There a
notation peculiar to the Catalogue is found:

FitzGerald, Edward, (translator of Omar Khayyam)
Works, 2 Vols. 1887.

An annotation, such as that appearing in parenthesis, is rare
in the Catalogue and plainly shows the source of FitzGerald's
fame. It indicates that the leap to fame was sudden, and
Omar entirely responsible. From that date to 1900 as many
as fourteen different editions of Omar are recorded in one
Catalogue; this, of course, refers to English publications,
which kept only a small lead on those editions published in
France, Germany, and the United States. In 1896 N. Haskins
Dole published a comparative English-French-German trans-
lation of Omar. In 1898 Dole expanded this comparative edi-
tion to include an Italian and Danish Omar, and in the same
year he published another comparative edition in which Eng-
lish, Latin and Greek versions of Omar appeared. In each
case FitzGerald's translation, third or fourth edition, is
used as the basis of comparison. What caused this sudden
burst of popularity? Since it has not noticeably diminished
to the present day, we must assume that the Rubaiyat in it-
self is meritorius. Perhaps Edmund Gosse is correct in his surmise that Tennyson's notice of the poem brought it to the public eye.

In January 1859 a little anonymous pamphlet was published as 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam'. The poem seems at first to have attracted no attention, until in 1860 Rossetti discovered it, and Swinburne and Lord Houghton quickly followed. Tennyson's dedication [sic] of his 'Tiresias' to FitzGerald's memory, in some touching reminiscent verses to 'Old Fitz' (1885) was the signal for the universal appreciation of Omar Khayyam in his English dress. The exquisite melody of FitzGerald's verse has made the poem probably better known than any single poem of its class published since 1860.14

Tennyson may not have been alone responsible for revealing FitzGerald's Omar to the world. However, Gosse's impression that he was does nothing to detract from the contention that Tennyson had more than a passing interest in the Rubaiyat of FitzGerald. Hallam Tennyson's note says that his father greatly admired Omar in 1874. It is true that FitzGerald's first anonymous quarto of seventy-five rubai published in January, 1859, "had fallen apparently stillborn from the press."15 In fact, the book attracted so little attention that before the year was out it had sunk "to the penny box on the book stalls."16 But it was in 1860,

14 Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed. Article "Edward FitzGerald."


the next year, that Rossetti, Swinburne and Lord Houghton,
through the discovery of two of Rossetti's friends, Mr. Whit
ley Stokes and Mr. Ormsby, found Omar in St. Martin's Lane,
where Quaritch was selling the pamphlet for a penny. What
Swinburne says indicates that in literary circles the
Rubaiyat did not wait until 1885 for its fame.

Having read it, Rossetti and I invested
upwards of sixpence apiece — or possibly three-
pence. I would not wish to exaggerate our ex-
travagance — in copies at that not exorbitant
price. Next day we thought we might get some
more for presents among our friends, but the
man at the stall asked twopence! Rossetti
exploated with him in terms of such humor-
ously indignant remonstrance as none but he
could ever have commanded. We took a few and
left him. In a week or two, if I am not mis-
taken, the remaining copies were sold at a
guinea; I have since — as I dare say you
have — seen copies offered for still more ab-
surd prices. I kept my pennyworth (the tidiest
copy of the lot), and have it still. 17

It is probable that Tennyson saw one of these copies. Lord
Houghton was "my old college comrade of more than forty
years standing," 18 with whom Tennyson was on such familiar
terms that, when he was unable to go to Florence for the
Dante Festival in 1865, Tennyson sent his lines, written for
the occasion, to be spoken by Lord Houghton. 19 At best we
know through the correspondence that Tennyson was cognizant

17 Benson, p. 108.
19 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Poetical Works, Cambridge
of Omar's existence by 1874, and that by 1883, when he wrote the introductory lines for Tiresias, he was thoroughly familiar with Omar Khayyam, so familiar that Edmund Gosse feels Tennyson responsible for FitzGerald's fame.

But the most light is shed on the question of when Tennyson met Omar and what he thought of the poem by a study of the above mentioned poem, "To E. FitzGerald" written in 1883. In these lines Tennyson approximately dates for us his meeting with Omar, and leaves no doubt in our minds of his appreciation of the Rubaiyat. Tennyson shows knowledge and consideration of the "old vegetarian's" quatrains when he writes

but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well;

for which Hallam Tennyson inserts the note, "Golden. [FitzGerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.-Ed.]

Tennyson's interest in Omar was evidently not superficial. "Than which I know no version" indicates a critical study, or at least a comparison of FitzGerald's quatrains with other English translations. Of greatest significance in dating Tennyson's knowledge of Omar are the lines

---

And your Omar drew
Full handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters, and from two
Old friends out-valuing all the rest,
Two voices heard on earth no more.

Careful checking of records of the friendships of both men, with the limitation set "best in modern letters," indicates that these two must have been Carlyle and Thackeray or Speeding. Carlyle and Speeding both died in 1881. Speeding was not famous in a literary way even among his closest friends, although he did write. His fame today is reflected from his association with famous literary men. If, however, we assume that Tennyson refers to Carlyle and Thackeray, who were "the best in modern letters," it is possible to come near the correct date of Tennyson's meeting with FitzGerald's Omar. The writer has no foundation for this statement other than interpretation of Tennyson's lines and study of the friendships of the two poets. The two friends mentioned "outvalued all the rest" of the best in modern letters. Carlyle died in 1881. Thackeray died in 1863. If we accept the above assumption, the latter date is very significant. It shows that Tennyson read the Rubaiyat before 1863. As has been pointed out above, Tennyson's friend, Lord Houghton, was enthusiastic about Omar in 1860, with Rossetti and Swinburne. It is not unreasonable to suppose that he relayed his discovery to the poet. The deep friendships of Carlyle, Thackeray, Tennyson, and FitzGerald are recorded in the Memoir and most biographies of Tennyson and FitzGerald. Alfred Lyall tells an inci-
dent which shows that he conceived the possibility of Omar's presence in the discussions of these friends. Carlyle, Tennyson and Fitzgerald were discussing the immorality of the soul. Carlyle said, "Eh, old Jewish rags, you must clear your mind of all that," and likened man's sojourn on earth to a traveller's rest at an inn, whereupon Tennyson rejoined that the traveller knew whither he was bound and where he should sleep on the night following. Fitzgerald who was present might have quoted them his own stanza from Omar Khayyam, which gives the true inner meaning of the famous parable of the dervish who insisted on taking up his quarters in the king's palace, which he declared to be nothing more than a caravanserai.

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.21

That Tennyson records "full-handed plaudits" given to Fitzgerald's quatrains before the English Catalogue is aware of their existence indicates, as Tennyson suggests, that the appreciation is limited to literary circles. In any case these lines show three things: that by 1863 literary men were familiar enough with the Rubaiyat to offer critical approval of it; that the approval was in the presence or at least in the knowledge of Tennyson; that Tennyson was in accord with their approval. This approval must have been expressed some time between 1860, when Rossetti "discovered" the Rubaiyat, and 1863, when Thackeray died. In this light we can feel that for twenty years, from 1863 to 1883, when the Poem "To E. Fitzgerald" was written, Tennyson had read and re-read Fitzgerald's Omar. Nor could it be far amiss to say that Ten-

nyson was as deeply fond of 'Old Fitz's' Omar as he was of Fitz himself. It is difficult to assume, because records of correspondence or conversation between Tennyson and FitzGerald concerning Omar are not now in existence, that no such intercourse passed. It is more difficult to believe that, knowing his friend's interest not only in Persian poetry, but also in FitzGerald's other writings, FitzGerald could refrain from showing his translation to Tennyson before or after the first publication, especially since we know that Omar was completed and sent to Frazier's Magazine in 1858. The two men were at the time of the first publication in 1859 on most friendly terms and actively corresponding. Their difference of opinion came later. We may surmise that the answer to the question "When did Tennyson become familiar with FitzGerald's Rubaiyat?" is this: Tennyson's familiarity with the Rubaiyat began in 1859 if not before that; that Tennyson had intimate knowledge of it between 1860 and 1863 we may assume through his friendship with Lord Houghton and the interpretation of his lines "To E. FitzGerald" written in 1883; that by 1874 Tennyson had read and discussed the quatrains with their author we can be sure through the letter in the Memoir. The Ancient Sage was written in 1883.

With the answers to these two questions clearly in mind, the comparison of The Rubaiyat and The Ancient Sage will be made, with the aim of presenting the parallelisms in structure and philosophy.
CHAPTER III. Structural Comparison of the Poems.

1 Versification.
2 Figures of Speech.
3 Phraseology.
4 Ethos.
CHAPTER III

STRUCTURAL COMPARISON OF THE POEMS.

The close communion of Fitzgerald and Tennyson during the years between the publication of the Rubaiyat and The Ancient Sage having been noted, it is interesting to observe the parallelisms which appear in the two poems. They reveal similarities of 1) versification, 2) figures of speech, 3) phraseology regardless of ideas, 4) ideas or ethos, 5) philosophy of life. The existence of a few similarities is of little significance. The cumulative effect of many likenesses might remove the supposition of spontaneous birth of ideas and phraseology. Showing these parallelisms necessitates quotation and repetition. Some discussion of contrasts so marked in The Ancient Sage that they have the appearance of intentional refutation of materials in the Rubaiyat will be necessary.

Mixed quotations show the similarity of tone, meaning the likeness of melody in the wording of the poems. The tones are so nearly one that, were it not for the difference in the length of the lines, the following stanzas might all belong to one poem, instead of being alternate quotations from the Rubaiyat and The Ancient Sage.

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?

FitzGerald

"For all that laugh, and all that weep
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

Tennyson

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
Tomorrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.  FitzGerald

Yet wine and laughter, friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall.  Tennyson

The passages are not consecutive in either poem. Both stanzas from The Ancient Sage are from the verse of the young man, whose scroll the Sage is discussing. They are consecutive in the scroll, but in The Ancient Sage they are separated by comment by the Sage. To show that the Sage himself speaks in a tone comparable to Omar's requires further quotation. Again the similarity is striking, and again the poetry appears to be from one source, were it not for the lack of end rime in the Sage's lines. The following passages are not consecutive in either poem.

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

FitzGerald

For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven, Wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt, 
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith! 
Tennyson.

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

Look higher, then - perchance - thou mayest - beyond 
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines, 
And past the range of Night and Shadow - see 
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day. 
Tennyson.

The tones of the complete poems are strikingly similar, though the meanings stand in strong contrast, as if the Sage were intentionally repudiating the materialistic philosophy of the Rubaiyat.

There is one structural likeness in the two poems that is of special significance. Edward FitzGerald had the peculiar habit of capitalizing all words which he thought important enough to be stressed. His system had neither rime nor reason, nor did he consistently capitalize words. Tennyson was not an habitual user of capitals. In the "Vision of Sin" (1842) such words as "Furies," "Graces," "Death," "Fortune," and "Friendship," are printed thus; in "De Profundus" (1852), "Spirit" and "Time"; in "Wages" and "Higher Pantheism" (1868), "Virtue," "Spirit," and "Vision." References to the Deity, mythological groups, or personified attributes, Tennyson capitalized. In addition to these usages in The Ancient Sage we find "some death-song for the Ghouls to make their
banquet relish," "cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith," (the second capital here appears most FitzGeraldian), "break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now," "senses break away to mix with ancient Night," "the doors of Night may be the gates of Light," "the mortal limit of the Self." The length of The Ancient Sage gives more opportunities for capitalization than the other poems cited, but the point shown here is the difference in the type of words capitalized. If these words are capitalized to attract special attention to the words, we see the influence of FitzGerald's Rubaiyat.

The chief likeness in the versification is that both poems are written mainly in iambic pentameter. The four hundred and four lines of the Rubaiyat are in quatrains of iambic pentameter with a rime scheme aaba peculiar in English verse and to that poem. There is no variation from this form, which follows the Persian meter and rime of Omar Khayyam. But The Ancient Sage, though written for the most part in blank verse, contains interpolations of iambic tetrameter and trimeter in quatrains rimating abab. The Sage speaks in unrimed iambic pentameter; the young man's verse, which the Sage is discussing, is written in quatrains. One hundred and eighty-one of the two hundred and eighty-five lines are spoken by the Sage. The stanzas which summarize the young man's belief in the futility of life other than material, the ethos of Omar's poem, occupy only one hundred and four lines. But, as has been shown above, the tone of The Ancient Sage
even where the philosophy is opposed, is the same as the
tone of the *Rubaiyat*, in spite of the difference in length
of the verse and line rime.

Both poems are allegorical. Both poems are metaphorical
and filled with like figures of speech. Discussion of the
allegorical likenesses appears in chapter four, in which the
philosophies of the poems are compared. Some figures of
speech common to both poems are metaphor, simile, metonomy,
and personification. These are so generally used in English
poetry that from their presence inference could be drawn,
were it not for the appearance of like words and words in
like construction. Examples of metaphors cited are those in
which such likenesses are found. Metaphors in which both ob-
jects compared are named appear in both poems in the form
of nouns modified by of prepositional phrases. In the *Ruba-
aiyat*: "bird of time," "wine of life," "leaves of life,"
"seed of wisdom," "fire of anguish," "robe of honor," "knot
of human fate." In *The Ancient Sage*: "shaft of scorn,"
"rose of love," "lily of truth and trust," "shade of doubt,"
"swamp of voluptuousness," "Mount of Blessing," "Mount of
Vision." FitzGerald says that wisdom is a seed sown on the
soil of thought; Tennyson says that knowledge is a swallow
reflected on the lake of intelligence. Words and phrases
are used metaphorically. In the *Rubaiyat* the world is "a
room," "a field," and "a checkerboard"; in *The Ancient Sage*,
"a shell," "a mirage," and "an illusion." Life is referred
to by FitzGerald as a "road," "a moment's halt," "a taste of being"; by Tennyson as a "yolk forming in the shell," "a slight ripple on the deep." Han's body to Omar is "a vessel," "a tent"; and to Tennyson, "a house," "a beauty with defect," "a vase," and in old age, "a kernel of the shrivell'd fruit." In the *Rubaiyat* man himself is "a shadow" and "a chess-piece;" in *The Ancient Sage*, "a shadow," "a bird," "a worm," and a bee ("lose thy life by usage of thy sting"). Other metaphorical comparisons occur in both poems. In the *Rubaiyat* fate, the moving finger and the recorder, points to death which is the "rumble of a distant Drum," "the angel of the darker Drink," the veil, the "Door of Darkness," which wine, "the Sovereign Alchemist," can quell. Omar refers to heaven as a vision, hell as a shadow, and "Youth's sweet-scented manuscript:" The Sage alludes to age as the "gleam of sunset after storm," and charges the youth "to make gold thy vassal, not thy king."

Each column lists objects personified in the poem.

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<th>The Rubaiyat</th>
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<td>Sun</td>
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<td>Years</td>
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Metaphors and personifications are more common than the other figures of speech.

Metonymy is used sparingly by both poets. FitzGerald refers to wine as the grape, and Tennyson refers to earth and heaven as the "green and blue." There are other examples in which, likewise, no parallelism appears. Beyond the fact that similes appear often and that the comparisons drawn in both poems are, for the most part, from nature, there is no likeness in the similes used. In the Rubaiyat appear: "flung [wealth] to the winds like rain," "hope...like snow...is gone," "I came like water, and like Wind I go," as the tulip looks heavenward man devoutly does, heaven inverts man to earth like an empty cup, the world heeds our coming and going "as the sea's self should heed a pebble cast," secret presence "running quicksilver-like" through man's veins, "that inverted Bowl they call the sky," man springs to revelation "as springs the trampled herbage of the field." In The Ancient Sage appear: "earth as fair as summer-bright skies,"
"words like the babblings in a dream," "all is dark as night," the gain of a large life matched with ours is "as sun to spark," "rageful like a handled bee."

But the similarity of the poems is more than similarity in versification and figurative speech. Words are used in like constructions, or with like meaning, and often the same words appear. The familiar "book of Verses" is FitzGerald's, a "scroll of Verse" is Tennyson's; the "vessel," and the "shapes of clay" which the potter thumped might be compared to Tennyson's "vase of clay." FitzGerald uses "magic shadow shapes that come and go," Tennyson, "shadows of a shadow world"; "nor all your tears" and "is neither here nor there" appear in FitzGerald; "but vain the tears" and "is neither thine nor mine," appear in Tennyson. "Their mouths are stopt with Dust" and "When crumbled into Dust" come from the Rubaiyat," and changed her into dust" from The Ancient Sage. FitzGerald says, "I sent my soul through the Invisible," but Tennyson says, "And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven," We who live and die "crawling coop'd" are FitzGerald's men; Tennyson's are "worms and maggots of today." FitzGerald's "phantom caravan" reaches "the nothing it set out from"; Tennyson's poem has "no phantoms watching from a phantom shore" to await the fading of these phantom walls." Man "abode his destined hour and went his way" for Omar, but for the youth in The Ancient Sage man "moves and all is gone." The temple-tavern contrast is used twice by Fitz-
Gerald; Tennyson's Sage charges the youth to delve into the "temple-cave/ of thine own self." "You are today what yesterday you were," says Omar; the Sage says "Today? but what of yesterday?" "Magic shadow-shapes that come and go" is Fitzgerald's; "idle gleams will come and go," the youth's; "this sorry scheme of things" is Fitzgerald's; "fatal sequence of this world," Tennyson's. "Be jocund with the Grape" is Omar's admonition; "laughter over wine" is the youth's joy.

There is an interesting similarity of style brought about by the recurrence of parallelisms or contrasts in the use of paired substantives and adjectives.

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<th>The Rubaiyat</th>
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Certain words appear repeatedly in both poems used in the same way. Day and Night, Shadow, Darkness, Light, Today, Yesterday, Hours, Wine, Key, Rose and Nightingale are most common. Day and Night are used symbolically and in conjunction in the Rubaiyat, "this batter'd Caravanserai whose Portals are alternate Night and Day"; and in The Ancient.
Sage, "and Day and Night are children of the Sun." The words Night and Day, personified or used symbolically, appear twenty-one times in Tennyson and seven times in FitzGerald. Shadow thus appears ten times in Tennyson and twice in FitzGerald; but FitzGerald's "visions," "conscious something," "voice," "White Hand of Moses," "Thee in me who behind the veil," "phantom caravan," "angel shape," "Moving Finger," "Shapes of Clay," "spot where I made one," all suggest the hovering shadow referred to in Tennyson. Both poets reiterate the Platonic idea. The Sage says,

But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

Omar says,

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the sun-illumined Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

Darkness is used symbolically as a noun or proper adjective eight times by Tennyson and five times by FitzGerald. In FitzGerald appears: "A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries," "to find a lamp amid the Darkness," "the Fold immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd," "the myriads who before us pass'd the door of Darkness through," a soul "cast on the Darkness." In Tennyson appear: "an affluent fountain pour'd from darkness into daylight," "who knows but that the darkness is in man?" "Forget the darkness and the pall," "if utter darkness closed the day." Darkness appears in both
poems representing ignorance, the unknown beyond death, and oblivion, - all three poetic usages of the word; and it does not occur in either poem in its prosaic meaning. The word light is used to represent divinity or knowledge: in Fitz-Gerald, "the one True Light," the Sun personified "strikes the Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light"; in Tennyson, "the gates of Light," "idle gleams to thee are Light to me," "Light was father of the Night" and "Night was father of the Light." The evanescence of life is mentioned in both poems, and time, represented by the hours, is the only power which Omar and the youth recognize. Omar says, "World, Hope . . . \ Light­ ing a little hour or two - is gone," and "Sultan after Sul­t tan with his Pomp abode his destined Hour, and went his way"; Tennyson says, "what rulers but the Days and Hours that can­ cel weal with woe," and "The days and hours are ever/ glanc­ ing by." Wine offers the solution for earth's trials to both Omar and the youth, but not to the Sage. Reference to the word wine as the touchstone for all happiness appears in the Rubaiyat ten times, and many times more using other words - cup, vine, grape, vessel. Our interest here is in the recurrence and usage of the word wine. Examples of this usage in FitzGerald are: "Wine! Wine! Wine! Red Wine! - the Nightingale cries to the Rose that sallow cheek of hers t' incarnadine," "A jug of wine . . . and Thou . . . Oh, wilderness were Paradise enow," "And lose your fingers in the tresses of the Cypress-slender Minister of Wine," "Of
all that one should care to fathom, I was never deep in anything but—
Wine." The best summary is

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
Ends in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are Today what Yesterday
You were—Tomorrow you shall not be less.

Tennyson's youth calls for "Wine and Laughter" to efface the "darkness of life's end," but the Sage admonishes him not to "drown thyself with flies in honeyed Wine," which is comparable to a most Omarian phrase, "This forbidden Wine must drown the memory," of Fitzgerald.

The Key, which is the answer to the riddle of the universe appears in both poems. In the Rubaiyat Omar at first "found no key" to open the door of the secret of afterlife, but later he surmises that since "the Vine has struck a fiber," "of my Base Metal may be filed a Key." The word Key is used with the same interpretation by the Sage: "The key to that weird casket, which for thee holds but a skull." Life ends in nothing but death for the youth; therefore future life is a weird casket.

Flowers, the Nightingale, and the Sun, are used symbolically in both poems. Fitzgerald's Roses appear in seven stanzas, sometimes personified, always symbolical: "Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose," "The Nightingale cries to the Rose,"

Each morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away,
"look to the blowing Rose about us - 'Lo, laughing,' she says, 'into the world I blow!,'" "I sometimes think that never blows so red the Rose as where some buried Caesar bled," "Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!" The passage in which Tennyson makes references to flowers is quoted below. The garden where symbolic Roses, Hyacinths and Tulips grow in profusion with the vine, is personified by Omar, the nature lover. Neither Omar nor the Sage wishes city life; both insist on the delights of nature. Omar invites his listener to share "with me along the strip of Herbage strown that just divides the desert from the sown" the joys of rustic life. The Sage explains to the young wastrel, "I am wearied of our City, son, and go to spend my one last year among the hills." Both FitzGerald and Tennyson are on familiar terms with their gardens. The Sage retires to the country for meditation. Omar says, "The thoughtful soul to solitude retires," and describes the solitude where wilderness meets cultivation. In the following passage treating on Tennyson's allegorical and personified rose and lily, comparison is seen to FitzGerald's red rose "where some buried Caesar bled."

The years that when my youth began
Had set the lily and rose
By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes;
My rose of love forever gone,
My lily of truth and trust —
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rose-tree planted in my grief,  
And growing on her tomb,  
Her dust is greening in your leaf,  
Her blood is in your bloom.  
O slender lily waving there,  
And laughing back the light,  
In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'  
When all is dark as night.

Omar charges men to lean lightly on the tender green fledgling the river's lip, for it springs from some 'once lovely lip'. The rose, not the lily, is laughing in FitzGerald's poem. In both poems flowers speak to the persons looking at them, offering optimism. Nature is encouraging in both poems, but in Tennyson only the Sage, not the youth, is capable of appreciating her joy.

Near the beginning of each poem the Nightingale arrests the attention and turns the interest of Omar and the young man toward their respective philosophies, suggesting a solution.

And David's lips are loekt; but in divine High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine! "Red Wine!" - the Nightingale cries to the Rose That sallow cheek of her s 't incarnadine.

This first mention of the Nightingale is coupled with wine, Omar's solution to life's trials. Oblivion will come, but for both agnostics wine can fill the days of life with pleasure. In The Ancient Sage wine, though offered as one solution for life's illusion, is not potent enough to make the youth forget "the darkness of the pall." The young man's skepticism is suggested with the first mention of the Nightingale.
How far thru' all the bloom and brake
    That Nightingale is heard!
What power but the bird's could make
    This music in the bird?
How summer-bright are yonder skies,
    And earth as fair in hue!
And yet what sign of aught that lies
    Behind the green and blue?
But man today is fancy's fool
    As man has ever been,
The nameless Power, or powers, that rule
    Were never heard or seen.

In both poems the song of the Nightingale appears to induce
the thinker to elaborate his philosophy.

The Sun is personified by Fitzgerald as a god who scatters
the armies of Stars on the battle field of Night, preparing
for dawn; the Sun, by Tennyson, is personified as
the parent of Night and Day, and "the clouds themselves."

Fitzgerald uses as nouns words ordinarily employed as
conjunctive adverbs; so does Tennyson. The words are different
but the usage is the same.

Into this Universe, the Why not knowing
Nor Whence, like Water will-nilly flowing;
    And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, will-nilly blowing.  
    FitzGerald.

And

Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought
to thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now.
    Tennyson.

As was mentioned above, no one of these particular parallelisms
or similarities could in itself point to a conclusion. A few would be easily dismissed as spontaneous creation
by two authors. It is the appearance of many instances
and various types of likeness that leads to speculation.

The comparison of ideas where the wording is entirely different interests us next. Some of these similarities can be credited to a common source, some cannot. In both poems the human body is compared to the potter's creation, a time-honored metaphor. In the *Rubaiyat* the statement "I think the Vessel, that with fugitive articulation answer'd, once did live" is illustrative of an idea often repeated throughout the poem. Sometimes the cup which has been made of clay, sometimes dust which once was man, speaks. Sometimes man is spoken of as the clay vessel. In *The Ancient Sage* the youth asks, "What Power but the Years that make and break the vase of clay?" The vessel does not speak in Tennyson.

Both Omar and the youth believe that we are incapable of passing judgments or arriving at conclusions. FitzGerald states that "One Flash of It [True Light] within the Tavern caught" is "better than in the Temple lost outright," showing that man is incapable of grasping the unknowable, but that gleams may come unsought. Tennyson's Sage says "the doors of Night may be the gates of Light" and "idle gleams to thee are light to me," suggesting that understanding depends on the man, not on circumstances. The verses of both Omar and the youth say that to drink and forget is the only possible conclusion, since the mystery of existence cannot be solved. Omar says it in these words: "While you live, Drink! — for, once dead, you never shall return" and "Drink! for you know
not whence you came, nor why: Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where." The youth says,

Yet wine and laughter, friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall.

That it is impossible to arrive at the ultimate meaning of life is thus voiced again in the Rubaiyat:

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

And again in The Ancient Sage, "For nothing worthy proving can be proven, Nor yet disproven."

Both poems conceive man walking on the earth of which he soon becomes a part for others to tread upon. FitzGerald says,

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

And Tennyson says, "The plowman passes, bent with pain, to mix with what he plow'd."

The stress on the evanescence of this life is repeated often by both FitzGerald and Tennyson. The Sage and the youth dwell on the swift passage of man; the youth dwells, as does Omar, on the Nothingness beyond the grave. The futility of life is expressed by Omar,

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes - or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two - is gone.
It is expressed by the youth,

The years that made the stripling wise
    Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,

The griefs by which he once was wrung
    Were never worth the while.

The Sage refutes this by saying,

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life
    Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

An optimistic view which neither the youth nor Omar shares.
Both FitzGerald and Tennyson stress the transitory character of life by enumerating those who have vainly lived and died, leaving no impress on the life they loved.

Omar names those who have been strong, or brave, or famous, who have gone, leaving nothing behind—"Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose," "And David's lips are lock't," "And this first Summer month that brings the Rose shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away," "Well, let them take them! What have we to do with Kaibobad the Great, or Kaikhosru?" "Let Zal and Rustum bluster as they will," "And Bahram, that great Hunter — the Wild Ass Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep." Similarly the youth lists the many men who have lived intensely, and died, to become completely alienated from their deepest interests,

The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
    Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
    In ever-silent seas;
The warrior hath forgot his arms,
    The learned all his lore;
The changing market frets or charms
The merchant's hope no more;
The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud.

The admonition here appears to be the same as Omar's when he says,

Waste not your Hour in vain pursuit
Of this and that endeavor and dispute.

Omar and the Sage are mystics; they commune with themselves, their own souls, with comparable results. Both extend their souls into the universe, are absorbed by it, become a part of it, and it a part of them. The stanzas in Fitzgerald are:

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of the After-Life to spell:
    And by and by my soul return'd to me,
And answer'd I myself am Heav'n and Hell:

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
    Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

The lines spoken by the Sage are:

When I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange, not mine... unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

Both poets arrive at visions and shadows, although Tennyson's are less specific than Fitzgerald's. The Sage, on occasion, fuses his soul with the universe, unable to transfer into words the resulting thought. Omar sends his soul on a like
journey and finds that the answer has been in himself, as a representative part of the universe. The Sage also finds the answer in himself; he cannot express it.

Neither Omar nor the youth is satisfied with a God who apparently neglects his world; nor does either believe in a personal paradise after this life. FitzGerald says, "The Revelations... are all but Stories," and

Omar's cry against his God is that He makes sin to tempt people and then punishes those who fall into the temptations. The youth's dissatisfaction lies in his never having seen or heard God, and in God's apparent blindness to things done on earth. He says, "The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule were never heard or seen," "The Nameless never came among us, never spoke with man," and

The agnosticism of the youth and Omar extends beyond an unknowable deity; both reject immortality.

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise! One thing at least is certain - This Life flies; One thing is certain and the rest is Lies; The Flower that once has blown forever dies.
Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road.

This is the same skepticism as expressed by the youth in

And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?

which is refuted by the Sage's "Faith beyond the forms of
Faith" which "spies the summer tho' the winter bud,"
"tastes the fruit before the blossom falls," and "hears the
lark within the songless egg." Having arrived at these con­
cclusions both Omar and the youth decide the only solution, as we have said, is to drink and forget. Both are convinced
that man reverts to the oblivion from which he first emerged. Omar says of mankind, "The phantom Caravan has reach'd the
Nothing it set out from," and the youth says that at the end of life "The senses break away to mix with ancient Night." To
believe other than this, both say, is but another exhibition of man's folly. FitzGerald words it

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

What! from his Helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross—allay'd -
Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer - Oh, the sorry trade!

and the young man exclaims,

But man today is fancy's fool
As man hath ever been,

to attempt belief in Powers unknown and animated by man-made attributes. Strangely, the Sage offers the youth the same
advice which Omar finds true for himself. Both say that man must not trust the eternal, but must turn into his own heart. Above it was noted that answers to this problem of life, if existing, are to be found by man in himself. FitzGerald says:

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
   Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was - and then no more of Thee and He.
Then of Thee in He who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
   A lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from without - "The Me within Thee blind!"

In man's own heart can be found the answer to life's riddle if man were capable of reading it there: but man is not, so he remains blind, though he carries about with him the whole secret of existence. The Sage reprimands the young man's skepticism by saying,

If thou wouldst hear the Nameless and wilt dive
Into the temple-cave of thine own self,
There . . . thou
   Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
   As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know.

The Sage goes a step farther than Omar. He suggests that though man is all but deaf to the voice of his heart, he must act as nearly as possible according to its dictates, as if he heard clearly and understood.

FitzGerald and the Sage alike comment on the dual appearance of this world; FitzGerald mentions "All the Saints and Sages who discuss'd of the Two Worlds so wisely [the worlds of Past and Future, Yesterday and Tomorrow]" and who, as Omar
himself, "evermore came out by the same door where in I went"-that is, arrived at nothing but confusion. The Sage, in explaining the meaning of the universe to the youth, refers to "this double-seeming of the single world," the double-seeming being the attempt of all men to break life into its "Thens and Whens"—that is, its Past and Future. FitzGerald and Tennyson agree that man does not succeed in this effort. The Sage's attempt to explain it ends:

My words are like the babblings in a dream
Of nightmare, where the babblings break the dream.

Thus both FitzGerald and Tennyson attempt and fail to explain the apparent duality of the world. The Sage attributes his inability to explain the dual world to the fact that the world and man being only a part of the universe, man can see and comprehend only in part. FitzGerald stops short of this conclusion.

The tone, versification, figurative speech, phraseology, and ethos of the Rubaiyat and The Ancient Sage have been compared above, the likenesses in both divisions of the Tennyson poem being carefully noted. The aim of this chapter has not been to discuss the poets' philosophies, but only to present similarities existing in the two poems. Conclusions based on the number and variety of these parallelisms will be presented later, following a comparison of the philosophies presented. The next chapter, therefore, discusses the philosophies of Lao Tsze, to whom Tennyson credits in part his
inspiration, Omar Khayyam, as interpreted by FitzGerald, and Tennyson, as revealed by the words of the Sage.

1 Lao Tsze and Tennyson's Sage.

2 Omar, FitzGerald, and Tennyson's Youth
CHAPTER IV

Having shown in the past chapters that Tennyson and FitzGerald were intimate friends, that Tennyson in one light may be considered a plagiarist, and that in The Ancient Sage and the Rubaiyat amazing parallels appear in the tone, structure, and phraseology of the poems, the writer will next show that a parallelism exists not only in the ethos of the two poems, but also in the philosophies of FitzGerald and Khayyam as expressed in the Rubaiyat, and Tennyson and Lao Tsze, the Chinese philosopher whom Tennyson had been studying, as expressed in The Ancient Sage and Tao Teh King. If we accept the statement of Hallam Tennyson that The Ancient Sage was his father's favorite among his later poems, and that it expresses most lucidly Tennyson's views on God, Will, and Immortality, it will not be necessary to search other philosophical poems to understand what Tennyson thinks. The incident and comment told by Grace A. Weld illustrate Tennyson's attitude:

When his picture of old age, in The Ancient Sage, was said to be like that of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, 'I only wish it were,' he replied, 'I never could equal that description.' Yet surely that sublime poem is well worthy to have been written by the author of Ecclesiastes and it must be studied attentively by all who desire to enter into the mind of Tennyson, for from what he used to tell me when thinking it into being, I can testify that The Ancient Sage sets forth his own views more fully than any of his
other poems.\textsuperscript{1}

I have indicated in Chapter II FitzGerald's reason for writing *Omar.* What prompted *The Ancient Sage?* Tennyson says,

The whole poem is very personal. The passages about 'Faith' and the 'Passion of the past' were more especially my own personal feelings. This 'Passion of the past' I used to feel when a boy.\textsuperscript{2}

and

What the Ancient Sage says is not the philosophy of the Chinese philosopher Laot-ze, but it was written after reading his life and maxims.\textsuperscript{3}

Beyond these statements and the quotation on page seventy-two of this chapter no further reference of the kind has been found.

Although this essay is a comparison of the *Rubaiyat* and *The Ancient Sage,* I feel it necessary to discover just where-in the philosophy of life and the story of Tennyson's poem follow that of the Chinese philosopher whom he had been reading. After making that analysis we may the better judge what influences play on the remainder of the poem.

Knowing that Tennyson absorbs what he reads, we will turn to the *Tao Teh King,* the only book of Lao Tsze's maxims in existence, therefore of necessity the one which Tennyson

\textsuperscript{1}"Talks with Tennyson," \textit{Contemporary Review} (1893), p. 394.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Memoir.}, Vol. II, p. 319.

had been reading. It is probable that Tennyson's interest in the Chinese mystic led him to the translations of Lao Tsze by James Legge, published in London in 1867-76. Legge is the "recognized leader of Chinese scholars in the West," to whom the majority of students of Chinese philosophical literature have turned since his almost word-perfect translation was made. Major General G. G. Alexander, C. B., who in 1917 edited his own translation-paraphrase of the Tao Teh King in Dr. Horne's Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, published Legge's translation with his own for comparison.

The Tao Teh King is the gospel of Taoism, the only surviving work of Lao Tsze, the founder of the faith. It has frequently been ranked among the very greatest books in the world, and whatever version the reader may accept of its central doctrine of the "Tao," the great "Way" of the universe, he will certainly be impressed by the depth of insight into life which Lao Tsze displays.

Hallam Tennyson tells us that "the philosophers of the East had a great fascination" for the poet. But not only Eastern philosophy interested him. The poet's son also informs us that "soon after his marriage he took to reading

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different systems of philosophy, among others those of Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Schlegel, Fitchte, Hegel, and Ferrier. As a member of the "Apostles" of Cambridge he studied "Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Butler, Hume, Bentham, Descartes, and Kant, and discussed such questions as the Origin of Evil, the Derivative of Moral Sentiments, Prayer, and the Personality of God." Most of the distinguished philosophical thinkers, prominent biblical and theological scholars, and renowned men of letters, were Tennyson's friends through membership in the Metaphysical Society of Great Britain, of which he was one of the founders. Dr. Sneath credits Tennyson's peculiar interest in the problems of philosophy to six causes: 1) his poetic temperament, 2) the severe struggle with his own doubts, 3) his living in an age of active questioning, 4) the materialistic pragmatism of his world, 5) the growth of the theory of organic evolution and natural selection, 6) the philosophical tendencies of his age: Sensationalism and Transcendentalism. Whatever the causes, his interest was intense, and though a conservative by nature, blind authority could never furnish a permanent

refuge for him. An unreasoned or an unreasonable faith could not satisfy him. What he wrote of Hallam, was true of himself:  
'He would not make his judgment blind
He faced the spectres of the mind.'¹¹

This excessive interest in all philosophy coupled with Tennyson's habit of absorbing and reiterating what he read explains the reflection of Lao Tsze in The Ancient Sage, notwithstanding Tennyson's statement to the contrary. Alexander accepts the Tao of Lao Tsze as God, with attributes comparable to Tennyson's "Nameless." Tao is a "primal, eternal thing," incomprehensible and perfect, invisible and inaudible.¹² Tennyson visualizes the "Nameless" in just such a way. Both conceptions of Deity can be likened to Boehme's 'abysmal nothing or primal element,' Spinoza's 'One Substance,' Kant's 'Unconditioned and Absolute,' or Spencer's 'Unknowable.'¹³ Dr. Horne says of Legge's translation:

By seeking to cling as exactly as possible to the vague Chinese symbols of the original, Professor Legge gives us a version the accuracy of which is undeniable. It is not, however, easy to understand, and really needs the further translation of General Alexander or another to make it intelligible.¹⁴

¹¹Ibid., pp. 26-27.
¹³Ibid., p. 81.
We must believe Tennyson, with his profound philosophical background, to be more capable than most to understand Lao Tsze's meaning. The depth and subtlety of the Tao Teh King calls for more than cursory perusal, even by a scholar such as Tennyson. Since he had been reading Lao Tsze, which translated means 'the Ancient Sage,' we may presume him steeped in his subject. His choice of title indicates that. Tennyson's thinking might easily be in harmony with the writing of the Chinese philosopher, for they were both mystics, the mysticism of Tennyson being less marked than that of Lao Tsze. Tennyson "was by temperament a mystic, and to that extent one can forgive his indifference to worldly things; but the pity of it was that he never allowed himself to be mystic enough."¹⁵ Yet the supernatural had much attraction for Tennyson.

The poem which is the fullest expression of occult inspiration among all that suggest that origin is The Ancient Sage.... Each injunction will be familiar to readers of theosophical books, and a fortiori to all students of the Higher Occultism.¹⁶

Of The Ancient Sage Lyall says:

[It] is perhaps the least indefinite exposition of his [Tennyson's] hopeful philosophy.


He touches here upon the conviction, so prevalent in Oriental mysticism, that the entire phantasmagoria of sense perception is essentially deceptive and unsubstantial, an illusion that will vanish with nearer and clearer apprehension of the Divine Presence which sustains the whole system of being. We are now in darkness, but larger knowledge may come.¹⁷

In *The Ancient Sage* then we are to find the clearest expression of Tennyson's doctrine of quietism and inner illumination which is one with that of Lao Tse. It is difficult for us to determine how far the poem is dramatic and how far it is self-delineative. Although Tennyson says he does not depict the character of Lao Tse, he does not say the whole poem is a direct reflection of his own experiences. The trance, the 'passion of the past,' is Tennyson's. In the following reference to the trances of Tennyson, Arthur Waugh expresses exactly what I feel true concerning the influence of the *Tao Teh King* and FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*:

This tendency to trance is the well spring of Tennyson's affection for mysticism; and his return [in his *Tiresias*] to the supernatural side of nature... proved that he was releasing himself from his fetters... The most individual author must be influenced by the literary atmosphere in which he finds himself.¹⁸

Let us then, since the poet had been reading both, examine the biography of Lao-Tsze as well as his *Tao Teh King* for


comparison with the body of Tennyson's poem.

Lao-Tsze, the elder contemporary of Confucius, was probably born 604 B.C., and was deified in 666 A.D. He spent his life watching, through his study of old manuscripts, the sweep of the centuries. This taught him the transitory character of earthly effort, the futility of wracking the human soul; and led him to perceive the "dispassionate continuity of eternity." His mysticism was comparable to that of Thomas à Kempis. The esoteric and mystic philosophy of Lao-Tsze is surprisingly close to the return-good-for-evil injunction of Christ. It is a short step from "Find your great in what is little. If you wish the lofty, choose the low" to similar injunctions in Christian teachings; and another short step to "Think well! Do-well will follow thought" of the Sage. Lao-Tsze is unlike the Ancient Sage in that he merely announces a theory and makes no effort to bring it into practice. He taught no one. His desire for obscurity was so great that when the society in which he lived became too corrupt for him to enjoy, he abandoned it to seek the solitude of the hills. In this the Sage is comparable; for it is in his flight from the city that Tennyson's youth confronts him with the scroll on which the agnostic, materialistic creed is written. The Sage pauses in his journey to retirement long enough to admonish the youth. Lao-Tsze's experience is similar,
Just as he was crossing the boundary of the state, he was recognized by an official, who suspected the old man's plans and begged him to write down his well known wisdom before he departed from the world of men. Lao-Tsze tarried long enough in the little border town to comply with this reasonable request, and the result was the Tao Teh King.\(^{19}\)

In another way the Sage is very like Lao-Tsze: He teaches that meditation is more important than knowledge. Still another point which the Sage and Lao Tsze have in common is their inability to name God. In the Tao Teh King the translation refers to God variously: Tao, Power, Nameless, Way, etc. In the Memoir Hallam Tennyson credits his father's reticence in naming God to his overpowering reverence for God, which grew more and more as the poet aged. But Ward has another explanation:

"Misuses of the word 'God' make me prefer another name," Tennyson said. "I prefer to say the Highest or the Supreme Being. In the 'Ancient Sage' I have called God 'the Nameless.'"\(^{20}\)

Notice that though Tennyson prefers other names for the Deity, he follows Lao-Tsze in calling God the "Nameless." Statements following the above quoted conversation show how closely allied with Lao-Tsze is the philosophy of the Sage. Tennyson is still speaking:


"I have sometimes demurred to the phrase 'personal' as applied to God for that same reason [misuses of the word]. It has been used as though personality were quite similar in God and in man. But I only mean that his personality is higher than ours. Lotze says the lack of personality is in us. God is unknowable as he is in himself, but he touches us at one point. That point is the conscience." 21

Here the comparison ceases, for Lao-Tsze’s doctrine is a "kind of mystic Pantheism," and his Tao is "Reason which governs the world and should inspire man," and his "morality is ascetic, almost Christian." 22 The Sage’s doctrine is self-knowledge based on the "gleams" of Plotinus, and knowledge of mortality based on the Kantian doctrine of practical reason. "Lao Tsze learned to possess the centuries, and before the synthesis of ages, he no longer attached great importance to the agonies of a single epoch, or a single being." 23 This impersonal attitude is lacking in Tennyson’s Sage. He is disturbed by the youth’s attitude toward life, and he does not passively inculcate the lessons of resignation and self-conquest. In this the Sage ceases to be the voice of Lao Tsze and becomes the voice of the poet.

21 Ibid.


Tennyson recognizes and reiterates the Christian doctrine of Lao-Tsze. He says the Sage's philosophy is

What I might have believed... about the deeper problems of life 'a thousand summers ere the birth of Christ.' In my old age, I think I have a stronger faith in God and human good than I had in youth.²⁴

Lao-Tsze did not believe that man generally was capable of knowledge beyond the "things we see"; therefore he sought to practice not preach his doctrine. Tennyson and his Sage draw "a distinction between knowledge, which deals with the phenomenal, and faith, which deals with the noumenal."²⁵

Tennyson believes man capable of climbing the "Mount of Blessing." "There is hesitation in the Sage's accents; and the poet can do little more than enjoin us to follow the gleams of light that pierce the clouds which envelop our mortal existence."²⁶ In Lao Tse's Tao Teh King the idea of combating agnosticism does not appear, nor is it present in FitzGerald's Rubaiyat. Here again we meet Tennyson.

Awareness of the materialism which pervades the universe is evident, however, in all three. Comprehension of this gross defect in mankind causes Lao-Tsze and the Sage to seek solitude. Omar also turns away from large society, but for a


different reason. His paradise is not contemplation, knowledge, or faith, but a bough, a jug, a loaf, and Thou, a temporal Elysium. Lao-Tsze, forced to write his philosophy, records what, in translation, is a series of maxims expounding the way to truth; the ideal life which will escape the common error of mankind; the only reality, which is passive living. The Sage admonishes the agnostic youth, teaching him that the really worthwhile lives beyond sight, sense, and reason, neither in the sensuous world nor in rational proof. In his attempt to explain the wisdom of faith and man's ability to encompass it, the Sage verges on Eastern philosophy and mysticism, "the feeling of the unity of all existence to the point of merging the personality into the universal consciousness." The youth's complaint is filled with ennui born "from wasteful living," the pleasurelessness of seeking pleasure in sensuous and rational things. The materialism of Omar is colored strongly by the evanescent joy of living and a fatalistic faith. The agnosticism of Omar is pleasant; it leads him to Epicureanism, neither to the youth's despair nor to reflection, but to a choice of life's ephemeral joys and a feeble attempt at mysticism — "I sent my soul into the Invisible." These are some of the comparable points in the philosophies of

Lao-Tsze and Tennyson's Sage, and also Omar and Tennyson's youth. Tennyson is not, however, one who believed Lao-Tsze's Tao was a magic formula; he understood Lao-Tsze's austere renunciation of the world as his Sage interpreted it. "Yet though this (philosophy of Lao-Tsze) is, as it were, grafted onto the poet's mind, still we may take it (The Ancient Sage) as being his genuine and deepest conviction."28

How, then, are we to understand the "skeptical, almost materialistic views"29 that the young man has embodied in his very graceful verse? An interpretation of Omar's agnostic materialism is comparable to the youth's; Omar's mysticism is in a small way comparable to that of the Sage. As shown in Chapter II their conclusions are similar.

Since it is impossible to ascertain the interpretation Tennyson put on the FitzGerald Omar, it is probably best to discuss all three views to find which lies nearest to Tennyson's philosophy.

Omar was the poet of agnosticism, though some in his poetry see nothing save the wine cup and roses, and others read into it that Sufi mysticism with which it was largely adulter-

28Ibid., p. 955.

ated long after Omar's death.  

In the hands of FitzGerald the *Rubaiyat* becomes "the most beautiful and stately presentation of Agnosticism ever made. . . . Omar does not go to the wine jar that he may forget, but that he may also remember."  

No one who has not in himself the seed of scepticism can properly interpret Omar. FitzGerald's acute though indolent mind and sensuous joy in the mysterious current of passing existence made him one who could "excite the languid thought" as Omar had done. He felt himself more capable of this insight than his friend Cowell,  

FitzGerald was able to do the very thing for Omar that he could not do for Calderon: to seize and represent and even add intensity to the very essence of the writer, because he was in sympathy with the Oriental spirit. FitzGerald found in the writings of Omar a vein of thought strangely familiar to his own temperament. Omar was a sentimentalist, and a lover of beauty, both human and natural; so was FitzGerald. Omar tended to linger over golden memories of the past, and was acutely alive to the pathos of sweet things that have an ending; and such was FitzGerald. Omar was penetrated with a certain dark philosophy, the philosophy of the human spirit at bay, when all refuge had failed, and this was the case with FitzGerald.

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31 Benson, p. 115.
32 Benson, p. 127.
The result was that out of the ore which was afforded him, FitzGerald, by this time a practiced craftsman without a subject, was enabled to chase and chisel his delicate stanzas, like little dainty vessels of pure gold.33

He felt that he had plumbed the mystery of transitory delight and vanity as deeply as Omar; and he clung resolutely to these joys because they were so brief and sweet. To Cowell FitzGerald wrote:

You see all his beauty, but you don't feel with him in some respects as I do... It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately, at the bottom of all thinking men's minds; but made Music of.34

Tennyson felt in FitzGerald's personality the same attraction which FitzGerald felt in Omar. I feel that Tennyson's sincere affection and understanding for his vacillating friend would color his interpretation of the Rubaiyat. Interpreting Omar as Benson does, and as Benson feels FitzGerald did, brings us to this conclusion: All is vanity. Man may be able to discover a poor armor for the battle of life, but for some men even this is impossible. It is best to resign to the hands of the Power who made us, whose presence is unknowable, the future that awaits us; and grasp from the fleeting flux of years "paradise enow," where the "jocund grape," "sovereign Alchemist," "life's leaden metal

33 Benson, p. 96.
34 Benson, p. 114.
into Gold transmutes." Benson feels that since "Omar must have drunk his fill of bodily delights" no other interpretation is reasonable.

Much has been written about the symbolism of Omar. Literary persons, more careful than himself of the old poet's delicacy, have tried to prove that the imagery of the poem, like that of the Song of Solomon, is of a spiritual and symbolic character. . . . In one sense, indeed, all art has a symbolic side . . . [but] it is impossible to believe that when Omar wrote of the joys of the cup and the scented tresses of the cypress-slim minister of wine, he was speaking in allegories of remote visions and spiritual ecstacies.36

However positive this sounds, there have always been those who adhere to the idea that Omar is a Sufi philosopher. Francis Grant says, without suggesting an alternative:

Of all the Sufi poets, it is Omar Khayyam who is best known and loved by the West through the beautiful but somewhat colored translation of the Rubaiyat of Sir Edward FitzGerald. But few Westerners have ever even glimmered that Omar's wine was not the wine of men, but the ecstatic inflow of a religious mystic experience.36

Nathan Haskins Dole, who had done more research than any other scholar in the Omarian field, wisely chooses a middle ground, in his introduction to the French Umar Khaiyam of J. B. Nicolas, who is an ardent advocate of Sufism in Omar. After calling attention to the fact that Nicolas has

35Benson., p. 112.

done for the *Rubaiyat* what the Christian Church has tried to
do for the Song of Solomon, Dole says;

Headers of Edward FitzGerald's remarkable paraphrase of a part of the quatrains attributed to
the Astronomer-Poet, have become so accustomed
to think of 'Old Omar' as a cosmopolitan, freed
from the dictates of Time and Place, that they
forget his real personality, which must have
been conditioned by his age and his environment.
He was an Oriental and it is sadly difficult for
a Westerner to interpret what an Oriental says.
... It is plain therefore that one is at liberty
to choose between the literal and the allegorical
reading of Umar's graceful and often epigrammatic
lines.37

In spite of Dole and Grant it is difficult for me to think:
Tennyson found Sufi mysticism in FitzGerald's Omar. It is
true that much that is credited to Omar does not appear in
FitzGerald, but Benson points out that FitzGerald left out
the "grossness" of Omar; and Dole laments the absence in
FitzGerald of Omar's humor. These omissions cannot account
for the absence of Sufi mysticism in FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*,
if it were in the original. Although the earlier Sufis
were quietists and ascetics, in the Persian Sufism, quiet­
ism was replaced by a joyous spirit. Sufism is also pan­
theistic. Only in these lights might Omar be called a
Sufist. God is the wine of life and the wine-bearer. But
there appears little of the mystical in the *Rubaiyat*.
Mystics cut across traditional theological concepts of God
and meet him face to face through personal experience. In

37 J. B. Nicolas, *Umar Khaiyam*, Trans. by F. Corvo,
(Lane-Bodley: London, 1903), pp. i-ii.
this the Sage succeeds and Omar fails. As said above, the
Omarian sallies into the supernatural world are rebuffed —
"My Soul return'd to me, and answered 'I myself am Heav'n
and Hell'," and "I heard as from without — 'The Me with­
in Thee Blind'!". FitzGerald's mysticism culminates in a
pantheistic sense of unity with nature rather than the
spiritual world. The Rubaiyat is the middle ground. The
Sage's words are pregnant with the occult; the youth's
scroll is devoid of mysticism.

In what other ways is the scroll comparable to the
Rubaiyat? The Youth's Agnosticism is one of the lowest
forms; it limits all knowledge to what the senses reveal.38
The Sage's follower unfolds his agnostic and materialistic
philosophy thus: There is no power in the world but Time,
and when man has become a part of the earth on which he
walks, neither he nor his soul continues to exist; "Night
and Shadow rule." To dispel the "darkness of the pall"
the youth turns in his pessimism to wine, laughter, and
golden music. Here is the same "emptiness and horror
of the dark" found in Omar; but the youth finds little in the
incommunicable dreams of the passing instant. Neither the
youth nor Omar has the desire to detach himself from the
delights of the world, however transitory. But where the
pessimism of the youth makes the whole world dark in

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anticipation of the time when "all is gone," Fitzgerald's Omar finds pleasure in the evanescent present and dismisses the future with the fatalistic assurance, "He knows! He knows!"

That these things should be so sweet and yet so brief was to Omar, as to Fitzgerald, the heart of the mystery; not a thought to be banished or to be replaced by some far-off hope, but a thought to be dealt with, to be wreathed with flowers, and to be made musical if it might be.

Fitzgerald fixes his attention on the beauty that is to be found in the world in spite of the unknown and unknowable. Tennyson's youth dwells in gloomy doubt, blacker and more gloomy by contrast with the Sage's gleaming faith. Vainly nature tries to tell him "Earth is fair" when his pessimism refuses to see beyond the dark meddlings of his own mind. Both the young man and Omar conclude that to drink and forget is the only course, since the mystery of God and Immortality is unsolvable. Both agnostics propound the dark philosophy that man is the only measure for all things, but where the essence of the scroll is the harsh mockery of life, Fitzgerald emphasizes "the pathos of short-lived beauty and happiness." The pessimism of Fitzgerald lies in his constant hedonism.

Fitzgerald is a lover of solitude and mystery.

39 Benson, p. 113.

40 Benson., p. 105.
a dreamer whose thoughts are discretely colored by visions both gloomy and voluptuous . . . His poem, essentially pessimistic, intellectual, and calmly pathetic combines an imaginative Romanticism with the discipline of a sober form.41

The youth's scroll reflects this sober view.

To summarize, I find more points of comparison with The Ancient Sage in the Rubaiyat than in the Tao Teh King which Tennyson credits with the ancestry of his poem. Because of Tennyson's habit of literary absorption and his familiarity with the Rubaiyat, I cannot credit the likeness to coincidence.

Comparison of Tao Teh King, The Ancient Sage, and the Rubaiyat has led to the following conclusion: Because of the similarity in the tone, structure, phraseology, and philosophy in The Ancient Sage and the Rubaiyat, and in spite of the differences, I feel that Tennyson was not only under the spell of the Ancient Chinese Sage but also influenced by the glory in Omar's shallow cup, when he sang

And when thou sendest thy free soul through heaven
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness

Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

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