



The Study of Rubaiyat attributed to Khayyam in Movies

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Abstract

Among the literati and men of culture of Iran, it is not exaggerated to call Khayyam one of the vaguest figures. One might recognize him certainly and resolutely through his philosophical and scientific works; however, it was his Rubaiyat attributed to him which created many arguments. This paper studies Hakim Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat in English and Persian language feature and non-biographical movies; hence, biographical movies depicting factual or imaginary life of Khayyam or any serials, TV productions, documentaries, non-English, non-Persian movies are not included. The aim is to expound any relationships between the film and Rubaiyat; therefore, according to the type of the applied quatrain, movie genre, plot, some categories are propounded to classify the movies in which Khayyam's quatrains are quoted such as Transiency-Death, Transiency-Carpe Diem, Heaven and Hell, and Determinism. Indeed, these categories can be applied to the theme of the movies or a single scene in which the stanza is quoted.

Keywords: Khayyam; Rubaiyat; Transiency; Death; Carpe Diem; Heaven and hell; Determinism; Feature movies



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The Study of Rubaiyat attributed to Khayyam in Movies

Milad Minakar and Amir Hossein Chitsazian

Introduction

Hakim Omar Khayyam is, universally, one of the most elusive figures. The Iranian polymath poet does not create any perplexities in his philosophical, astronomical, and scientific treatises but his Rubaiyat, which leads to a wide range of theories and hypotheses.

Abu'l Fath Omar ibn Ibrahim Khayyam was born around 439 AH/ 1083 AD and died between 515 AH/ 1124 AD and 520AH /1129 AD. "Up to date, there are fourteen treatises that are known to have been written by Omar Khayyam [...]. As one can see, Khayyam wrote little but his works are dense, original and written in very concise language" (Aminrazavi 31, 32). However, it was his enigmatic Rubaiyat which led to his universal fame. It seems that the approval of the authenticity of these Rubaiyat is impossible unless some quatrains to be discovered which dates back to Khayyam's time for the earliest quoted Rubaiyat is around a century after Khayyam's death.¹ But Khayyam's fame was due to Edward Fitzgerald's eloquent free translation of Rubaiyat in 1859 CE.² No sooner the first edition of the translation was published without the name of its translator, Pre-Raphaelites discovered it and contributed to its fame.

Based on the meanings of the quatrains, the movies genres, plots and atmosphere some classifications are made as follows: Transiency-Death, Transiency-Carpe Diem, Heaven and Hell, Determinism and Predestination.

In this study, the focus is on the feature English and Persian language movies; hence, biographical movies depicting fictional or non-fictional life of Khayyam or any serials, TV productions, documentaries, non- English, non- Persian movies are not included. There are, seemingly, other movies which are not identified so the paper result is based on the extant movies.

One of the difficulties of the research was the problem of finding the movies, and corresponding of English poems with Persian ones and vice versa and to do so Edward Heron-Allen's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with Their Original Persian Sources* was undeniably useful. Edward Fitzgerald's translations are used here as much as possible but in case of using other translations, the translator's name is mentioned. Dariush Kadivar's article, "Gaga for Khayyam: Hollywood's depiction of the great Persian Poet's life" was helpful as well.

Transiency-Death

The concept of the ephemerality of life has rooted in the world religions and literary canons as well as in Iran. Buddhism teachings and Rubaiyat can be considered as supreme examples of

the transiency of the world. However, there is a contrast between Buddhism and Khayyam's quatrains whereas the former bonds the transiency of life with Nirvana_ death is not the main issue_ the latter bond the ephemerality with death (Carus 680). Therefore, there is an interrelation between the transiency and death in Rubaiyat penetrated into some movies.

Queen of Desert (2015) directed by Werner Herzog is an epic biographical drama film depicting the life of Gertrude Lowthian Bell (1868 -1926) an Orientalist, archeologist, writer, traveler, and politician. Being enthusiastic about eastern culture, Bell, starring Nicole Kidman, came to Iran and got acquaintance with Cadogan, a junior diplomat, with whom she fell in love. In one scene, as Bell is talking to Cadogan, she notices an inscription with two Persian quatrains attributed to Khayyam, which are based on Forouqi edition (Forouqi & Ghani, 57). However, these quatrains are inauthentic and possibly not from Khayyam (Homaei, 5). Cadogan putting his finger under the first quatrain, translates as follows:" With them the seed of wisdom did I sow/ And with my own hand labour'd it to grow/ And this was all the harvest that I reap'd/ I came like water and like wind I go".³ (Figure 1)

It is the 28th quatrain of the first edition of *The Rubaiyat* (1859) translated by Edward Fitzgerald but the original Persian verse does not correspond with the Cadogan's translation.

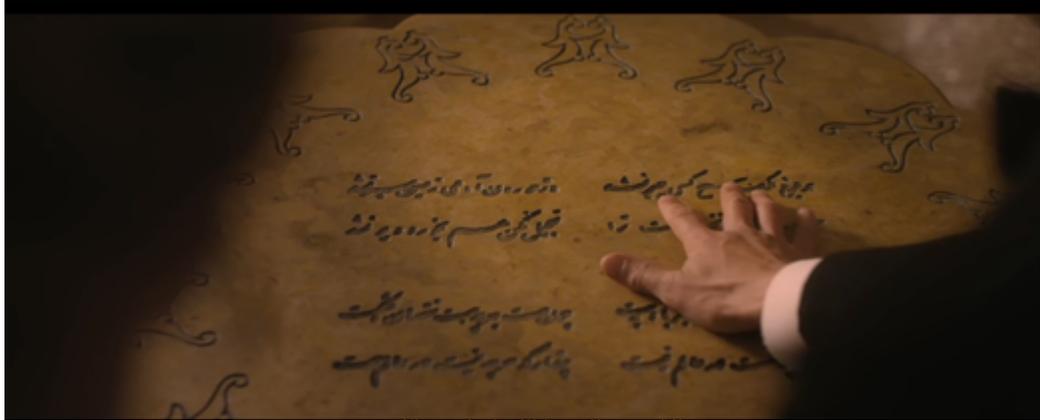


Figure 1: A still from *Queen of Desert*

The grave and death conceptions are more accentuated in the original quatrain (grave/eating human being by the earth); nevertheless, the utter transiency of earthly life can still be seen in the quatrain_ I came like water and like wind I go. Indeed, there is a huge difference between the created image of this quatrain and its unrelated translation with the setting of the scene which is normally the representation of Persian poetic images such as Roses and Nightingale's chirps. The related image, at least to the original quatrain, can be traced to the scene of *The Tower of Silence* representing a Zoroastrian ritual funeral which is adapted from the second chapter of *Persian Pictures* by Bell. Ascending the stairs, Bell and Cadogan encountered with human bones and vultures. Before these death elements, Cadogan said that he wished to kiss her. This paradoxical scene between love and death is an implicit salient theme in Rubaiyat.⁴

In *Doubt* (*Tardid* 2009), directed by Varouj Karim Masihi, a distich from Rubaiyat is quoted: “And this was all the harvest that I reap’d/ I came like water and like wind I go”.⁵ *Doubt* is an Iranian adaption of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The abovementioned distich is quoted in one scene when the apparition medium, Caliph, wants to prove his claim of talking to Siavash’s deceased father, i.e. Hamlet’s father. But it raises a question here: Why is this quatrain, which focuses on the transient life used instead of those quatrains pertinent to the doubt which is the theme of the movie? The doubt of reality could have come along with those quatrains pertinent to the metaphysical doubt. If we do not consider this quatrain as a secret message between Siavash and his father, it seems that Siavash cannot accept his father’s death, like Hamlet, and the quatrain seems to facilitate his acceptance.

The motif of transiency can be seen in *Wake in fright* (1971) as well. Directed by Ted Kotcheff, it narrates the story of a schoolteacher teaching in a remote area in Australia. As Christmas holidays begin, he sets off for Sydney to meet his girlfriend. Travelling by train to a fictitious city, Bundanyabba, aka Yabba, for catching the flight, he gambles away all of his money but 1 dollar. The film is an adaption of the same novel written by Kenneth Cook. In a scene when the protagonist, John Grant, is conversing with Janette, he quotes a distich from 14th quatrain of the first edition, “The moonlight “like snow upon the desert’s dusty face”” which is mentioned in the original story written by Kenneth Cook. This quatrain bears the transiency of

life and seemingly not only is it pertinent to John himself, but it can also be pertinent to Janette who has a false hope (“worldly hope”) to make love with John, “The choicest bit occurs at the beginning of the seduction, when Grant trots out a hackneyed line from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. “The moonlight, like snow upon the desert’s dusty face,” he carols, inflecting the words with pathos to parade his sensitivity, as they look over the fence at the moon lighting up, presumably, the gigantic mullock of tailings that runs down the middle of Broken Hill. What she’s thinking is, *Let’s get on with it, boyo*” (Jennings, Home Truth) But the image of “snow upon the desert” is a good metaphor for John as well whose hope to see his girlfriend is like a snow on the desert of that arid nowhere; Yabba. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Still from *Wake in fright*. The quatrain is quoted in this scene.

Duel in the sun (1946) directed by King Vidor and six other uncredited directors⁶ features the story of half-breed Pearl Chavez whose father kills his wife and her lover. When Pearl's father is hanged, she goes to her wealthy relative and is involved in a romantic relationship. In one scene, when Scott, Pearl's dignified father, is going to be hanged, he recites from 3rd edition Rubaiyat no.63:" Oh 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 bloomed forever dies". However, it seems that the transiency and death motif of the stanza refers to Pearl either for there is an interrelation between this distich and the voice over at the very beginning of the film: "And this is what the legend says: A flower, known nowhere else, grows from out of the desperate crags where Pearl vanished. Pearl, who was herself a wild flower, sprung from the hard clay - quick to blossom and early to die." Therefore, the quotation of the quatrain can be developed to the tragic romantic theme of the movie and to Pearl's father as well.⁷

Transiency-Cape Diem

The phrase of *carpe diem* (literally means "seize the day") was used in Horace's *Odes* and is concerning the joy of life but it pre-dates Horace. "Moving to ancient Mesopotamia, now, perhaps its best expression of the *carpe diem* philosophy is contained in its most famous classic, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which in part represents, as Thorkild Jacobsen characterises it, a

poem of “the Revolt against Death” [...] It dates from around 2000 BC” (Forrest The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam). The dichotomy of the transiency and the carpe diem comes along with a kind of hedonistic or nihilistic point of view in Rubaiyat; However, there is another point of view: “While it is true that one possible interpretation of Khayyam’s concept of impermanence could lead to nihilism, the more accurate understanding is reflected in the Qur’anic verse, “All things shall perish except His face” and “We come from Him and to Him we return,” which refers to the impermanence of all except the reality of God (Aminrazavi 102).

In one scene of *Queen of Desert*, while Bell and Cadogan are sitting on a ledge, they read the 11th quatrain of the first edition of Rubaiyat no. 11 though “Here with” is dropped: “(Here with) a loaf of bread beneath the bough/ A flask of wine a book of verse_ and Thou/ Beside me singing in the wilderness_ / And wilderness is paradise enow”. The tacit isolation existing in the quatrain is also shown in the scene. The joy of being together is conveyed through a desolated place and without “flask of wine”, “a loaf of bread”, “paradise” and “singing”. But the transiency of the “paradise” in the film likens to the Hafez’s poem which Bell recites just before receiving the Cadogan’s death news: “The nightingale with the drops of his heart’s blood had nourished the red rose. Then came the wind and catching at the boughs in envious mood, a hundred thorns about his heart entwined.” The last line of the stanza which is not read puts emphasis on the

transiency as well: “The wind of Death that swept my hopes away.” Cadogan reads another distich from the quatrain no. 7 of the first edition which represents the transiency too: “The Bird of Time has but a little way.”

Valentino (1977) directed by Ken Russell is a quasi-biopic about the legendary, silent movie superstar, Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926). In one scene Rudolph’s beloved quotes from the 1st edition, quatrain no.2 as a message from Rudolph to everyone: “Dreaming when dawn’s left hand was in the sky/ I heard a voice from out the heavens cry/ Awake my little one and fill the cup/ Before life’s liquor in its flask be cry”. Here “heavens” is misquoted and “tavern” should be replaced. The superficial reading of the quatrain is obvious from the reporter’s question, “He’s advocating an end to prohibition?” Another example of the misquotation is in a scene when the beloved recites:” A jug of wine, a book of verse/ Thou beside me in the wilderness” which is a mixture of different editions of Rubaiyat. In another scene, as Natacha Rambova, starring Leslie Caron, is walking with Valentino, starring Rudolf Nureyev, on the set of the movie *The Sheikh* (1921) recites the quatrain: “Here with a loaf of Bread beneath the bough... ” In this scene, apart from the location of wilderness and the presence of two lovers, it seems that this quatrain works as an alluring device. Valentino asks, “Did you write that?” and Rambova replies, “Omar Khayyam.” Then Valentino says, “Maybe he can write our subtitles.” However, Rubaiyat is not used in *The Sheikh*. It seems that the hedonistic reading is considered here and the contrast

between literal and figurative liquor is neglected, “The contrast between literal wine and the figurative liquor of life itself is perfectly good and calling the so-called “false dawn” (“a transient light on the Horizon about an hour before the ... True Dawn; a well-known phenomenon in the East,” says Fitzgerald in a note) is quite resonant” (Hollander 191).

The Saint in London (1939) directed by John Paddy Carstairs, is a thriller movie based on Leslie Charteris’s book series of *Simon Templar*, alias “Saint”, an antihero character who has a Robbin Hood-like character. In the movie as Simon, starring George Sanders, is with his girlfriend, Penny Parker, starring Sally Gray, in a restaurant, Penny misquotes the quatrain: “A jug of Wine, A loaf of Bread and Thou beside me in the Wilderness”. And after a pause she asks, “Erm... And how does it go on?” Simon answers,” Nobody ever knows”. The focus of this misquotation is merely on the epicurean moment of Penny and Simon.

The Music Man (1962) directed by Morton DaCosta is a musical movie based on Meredith Willson’ Broadway musical hit. It features the story of an itinerant con man names Harold Hill, starring Robert Preston, who comes to River City persuading the residents to buy musical instruments and uniforms and make a band for boys to protect them against the burgeoning of pool. As Harriet Malinowitz put in “the film depicts empiricism and phenomenology, logic and sophistry, classical rationalism and romantic expressionism, highbrow aesthetics and popular

culture, the Protestant work ethic and the capitalist pleasure fantasy, all vying for sovereignty in such quotidian sites as the local library, the schoolhouse, and the parlor music lesson.”

(Blakesley 246) Marian, starring Shirley Jones, who is a librarian and a piano teacher as well, tries to elevate the townspeople’s cultural level (cf. *Morning Glory*). In one scene, the mayor’s wife, Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn, furiously goes to the library. Putting the Rubaiyat book on the desk, she complains to Marian for giving “smutty book” to her daughter:” People lying out in the woods eating sandwiches, getting drunk with pitfall and with gin, drinking directly out of jugs with innocent young girls.” This misquotation and misinterpretation as well, seems to be due to Mrs. Shinn’s ignorance and, somewhat, her strict protestant-like view.

Morning Glory (1933) directed by Lowell Sherman and based on a Zoe Atkins play tells the story of a young girl yearning for stardom. Eva Lovelace, starring Katharine Hepburn, is a would-be theater actress whose talents are neglected by the producer Louis Easton and playwright Joseph Sheridan. In one scene, as Eva is accompanied by Henry Lawrence and Tyler Brooke and drinking champagne, Henry quotes 7th stanza from the 2nd edition of Rubaiyat:” The Bird of Time has but a little way to flutter” and Eva completes the verse:” And the Bird is on the Wing”. It seems that “the bird of Time” on the one hand is used in its absolute meaning, the transiency of life and carpe diem, which is represented here as an epicurean way of life. On the other hand, it can refer to Eva who is going to be a morning glory. Earlier when Henry realized

that Eva knows modern literature, and likes Richard Lovelace, he told her she “mustn’t be highbrow” however, when it comes to Rubaiyat, Eva completes the verse and Henry does not say anything. Indeed, it seems that Henry mustn’t be highbrow for he sees Hamlet’s famous tragic scene as a comic one.

Dariush Mehrjui’s *Good to be back* (*Che khube ke bargashti* 2012) tells the story of two intimate friends that have a squabble over a trivial would be flying saucer. It is originally a free adaption of Nikolai Gogol’s *The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich*. The protagonists are a dentist who returns to his country after years, and an engineer. Being friends, they enjoy passing time together and sometime later they become enemies. Khayyam’s verse is seen two times in the movie. The first time painted on the wall and for the second time at the end of the movie. Two last verses of Rubaiyat are used:” Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire/ And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire”.⁸ The distich is the essence of the movie in which when characters took easy everything they were happy while they began to squabble over the trivial things they were in a hell-like atmosphere. As Aminrazavi put in,” Khayyam sees the traditional descriptions of heaven and hell as metaphors which are reflections of our moments of joy and pain in this world” (Aminrazavi 122).

Another movie which used Transiency-Carpe Diem and hedonistic reading of Rubaiyat is *Unfaithful* (2002) directed by Adrian Lyne which is loosely based on Claude Chabrol's *La Femme Infidele* (1969). It narrates the story of a married woman named Connie, starring Diane Lane, who has an adulterous affair with a French antiquarian book dealer named Paul, starring Olivier Martinez. In one scene, before Connie leaves the Paul's apartment, he offers a copy of Rubaiyat. She reads: "Drink wine this is life eternal/ this, all that youth will give to you/ it is the season for wine, roses and drunken friends/ be happy for this moment, this moment is your life."⁹ In comparison with the original French movie, *Unfaithful* focuses more on female sexuality which is a case in Hollywood cinema (Yates 144). It seems that the quoted quatrain is reduced to an alluring device, as in *wake in fright* and *Valentino*, and as its content conveys, it represents the carpe diem and *zeitgeist* of Hollywood sexuality. "Jealousy and adultery are key themes in two of his [Lyne's] most well-known films *Fatal Attraction* and *Indecent Proposal*, and *Unfaithful* perhaps works as the third film in a trilogy in that respect" (Yates 143). Here unlike John who in *wake in fright* quoted a Khayyam's quatrain to seduce Janette, Paul did it so but he is successful in the seduction.

A different interpretation of carpe diem based on Rubaiyat might be seen in *The Silence* (*Sokout* 1998). Set in Tajikistan, it is directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf and tells the story of a blind young boy named Khorshid (literally means "the sun"). He lives with his mother and tunes

the musical instruments in an instrument-making workshop to make ends meet. The landlord asks for the rent and they have only five days to pay him otherwise they will be evicted.

However, he is close to losing his job for he is frequently late because he is distracted by the sounds in other word he follows his own world. As Ian Johnston put in, "There's a sense in these scenes that Khorshid is not only distracted by the sounds he hears but that he makes these sounds his own, creating his own world out of them. Makhmalbaf marks this with the repeated shots of Khorshid's fingers plugging and unplugging his ears and with the way the sound of running water is overlaid on the sounds he hears "(Johnston, *The Silence*). Apart from showing poverty, social relations, and Tajik culture, the movie focuses on the *carpe diem* as enjoying the nature not enjoying life, i.e. "It's an affirmation and a celebration of the power of art and imagination over material circumstances" (Johnston, *The Silence*). This seizing of time which is the theme of the film is represented in the scene when two young girl students attempt to memorize a stanza from Khayyam: "And if the "Wine you drink, the Lip you press/ End in what All begins and ends in—Yes/ Think then you are To-day what Yesterday/ You were_ To-morrow you shall not be less."¹⁰ (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Still from *Silence*. The girls try to memorize a quatrain.

The girls try to memorize the quatrain but due to their playfulness they do not succeed until Khorshid recites it and tells them how to memorize. It can be taken as two different views: one hedonistic carpe diem which is practiced by the girls while memorizing a quatrain concerning carpe diem, and the other is mystical carpe diem which is practiced by Khorshid; The approach of the movie towards carpe diem. In an interview with Makhmalbaf, when Haghghat asked him whether he was inspired by Khayyam in *The Silence*, he replied, “In *The Silence*, the scene by the river where the girl puts petals on her nails to imitate nail varnish and cherries on her ears as earrings is inspired by a poem by Fourough, but the general tone of the film is more inspired by Khayyam who says “You must live in the moment...” (Haghghat, Interview with Mohsen Makhmalbaf). This bond between Khayyamic view and the Forough’s poem can also be seen in

The Wind Will Carry Us by Kiarostami which will be discussed later on. On Khayyam and *The Silence*, Makhmalbaf remarks, "In most of Khayyam's poems, the central theme is "Make the most of the moment for we do not have long to live". We have to rid ourselves of our complexes about the past and not think of our concerns for the future. It's the same thing in *The Silence*. The protagonist is faced with eviction and about to be fired from his job. Despite all this, the little boy lives in the "moment". He sacrifices the past and the future in favor of the present. Although he is blind, he is fascinated by the beauty of the world that he perceives thanks to his extremely well-developed sense of hearing. Because of this, he is concerned by the creative process just like an artist is. *The Silence* is a kind of contemporary representation of the spirit of Khayyam. This film, for me, marks the passage from realism to surrealism. It is a conflict between objectivity and subjectivity. The story is simple – it's the story of a boy who, despite the love he receives from those around him, is deprived of the moments of happiness that he would like to experience. Around him he creates a world in which he can be happy. He loves the beauty of the sound of dry bread as he crunches it. He is satisfied with the bare minimum". (Haghighat, Interview with Mohsen Makhmalbaf).

Another approach towards mystical carpe diem and non-hedonistic can be seen in *The wind will carry us* (*Bad ma ra khahad bord* 1999) which is directed by eminent Iranian director,

Abbas Kiarostami. The film depicts the journey of a crew of filmmakers disguised as engineers to a remote mountain village to make a report film about an eerie ritual funeral. Hence they are death-watching a centenarian invalid woman. Among them just Behzad is seen during the film and the rest remains off-screen. A resourceful schoolboy, named Farzad, occasionally acts as Behzad's guide to the labyrinthine village (cf. *Algiers*) and a medium between him and the villagers. The expectation of death prolonged and Behzad's colleagues left him alone. Meeting a ditch digger who remains off-screen, Behzad notices a human thigh bone and asks the digger to give him. In another scene as Behzad is in the back seat of an old country doctor's motorbike, riding across the wheat fields and Van Goghian landscapes, the doctor "destined, naturally, to play the role of the guide or teacher (*Pir*) that every journey of initiation requires" (Elena 157) (Figure 4) talks about the beauty of the world and the virtues of nature and life, and quotes a quatrain attributed to Khayyam:" Some for the Glories of This World; and some/ Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come/ Ah, take the cash, and let the Credit go/ Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"¹¹ The quatrain is not plausibly pertinent to the scene itself, albeit it "is doubtlessly intended to capture certain wisdom that Behzad will finally accept." (Elena 161) The doctor's quotation of Khayyam and his praise of nature and beauty might be comparable to the ending of Kiarostami's *A Taste of Cherry* (*Ta'am e Gilas* 1997) in which the taxidermist "tries to talk that picture's protagonist out of suicide by talking up the joys of life and nature". (Cardullo

282) Apart from Khayyam's poem, other poets' are recited one of them which plays a thematic role and is in consistent with Khayyam's quatrain is Forough Farrokhzad's *The Wind Will Carry Us*, included in *Rebirth (Tavalod-e digar, 1964)* anthology, which movie title has borrowed its name from it. Indeed, the bond between sensuality and death, joy and fear which lies at the heart of Khayyam's quatrain can also be seen in Farrokhzad's *The Wind Will Carry Us* (Elena 163).

This dichotomy is apparently represented in a scene that two lovers, the ditch digger and the girl who gave milk to Behzad, meet each other in a graveyard. This dichotomy is also obvious in *The Queen of Desert* where Cadogan and Bell are in *The Tower of Silence*. However, the Khayyamic theme of seizing the moment and carpe diem due to the death is shown at the end of the movie where Behzad throws the bone into the river "this human bone, this piece of lifeless death, itself has acquired from the stream a new ability to move and participate in the flow of life, even as Behzad may have acquired a similar, internal capacity from his contact with his rural village.

(Cardullo 281)



Figure 4: Still from *Silence*. Behzad and the doctor are riding across the wheat fields

4. **Heaven and Hell**

Heaven and Hell are mentioned frequently in Rubaiyat but for the most part to convey the concepts of carpe diem and agnosticism. Albert Lewin in his *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), which is an adaption of Oscar Wilde's only novel, uses the concept of heaven and hell differently.

The film depicts the story of a handsome young gentleman named Dorian Gray whose painter friend, Basil, paints his portrait. When the painting is done Dorian wished that he could remain young and handsome for good and instead his picture becomes old. A friend of Basil, named Harry, becomes their mutual friend. The Mephistophelian Harry tempts young Dorian to enjoy life to its full. Dorian's picture _a symbol of his soul or conscience_ becomes hideous and deformed on account of committing deadly sins such as murdering.

At the very beginning of the movie the 66th quatrain of Khayyam based on the 3rd edition is shown and through the movie Dorian reads it and the film also ends with it: “I sent my soul through the invisible/ Some letter of that after-life to spell/ And by and by my soul return’d to me/ And answer’d, “I myself am Heaven and Hell”. Albert Lewin has wisely used the Rubaiyat to represent the theme of the story. “The last line describes the duality of human nature: the idea that every person has both Heaven and Hell, or good and evil inside”¹² (Drost 13). A very good representation of this duality might be seen in the room where Gray keeps his picture. This room contains some toys, reminding Gray’s childhood innocence, and here is also the very place where Basil is murdered by Gray; the encounter of evil and good, heaven and hell.

5. Determinism and predestination

A salient element found in Rubaiyat is concerning determinism which is a baffling problem. But this predestination or determinism is in contrast with the concept of *carpe diem*. “If determinism and predestination imply that one could not have done otherwise, Khayyam clearly did not believe in it. Repeatedly, he tells us in an imperative manner to be happy, live in the here and now and shed the worries of the temporal life; and this stands in opposition to the very notion of determinism” (Aminrazavi 123).

Pandora and Flying Dutchman (1951) directed by Albert Lewin features the legend of a Dutchman who is immortal for killing her innocent wife and for becoming mortal again, a woman should fall in love with him to the extent that she contents to die for him. A *Femme Fatale*, named Pandora, fell in love with him at last. Lewin has used the quotations of Khayyam in two of his movies: *Pandora and Flying Dutchman* and *The picture of Dorian Gray*. At the beginning of the movie an open book of Rubaiyat is shown with this stanza: “The moving Finger writes; and having writ/ Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit/ Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line/ Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.” It is quoted during the movie as well. This quatrain depicts the theme of the movie.

Algiers (1938), Directed by John Cromwell, is a faithful remake of Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko* (1937) which is an example of the French poetic realism style. It tells the story of a French jewel thief who escapes to a “native quarter” of Algiers; Casbah. Having fallen in love with a Parisian girl, starring Hedy Lamarr, Pepe came out of his labyrinthine prison-like stronghold and was betrayed by his castaway beloved, starring Sigrid Gurie, and finally police inspector Joseph Calleia arrested him. While Pepe and his friends are playing cards, one of his friends says, “We play the game but fate controls the cards” and then he quotes:” The moving finger writes and having writ moves on “. This quatrain corresponds to the underlying theme of French poetic realism “the (doomed) quest for happiness, and finally the tragic destiny” (Lanzoni, 73). By

inserting this line of Rubaiyat, it seems, Cromwell wants to convey what he lagged behind the original French movie and what he cannot represent by the means of cinematic medium: “the tragic destiny”.

Another example of determinism can be seen in *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) directed by Terry Gilliam. It is generally inspired by Chris Marker’s experimental short film *La Jetée* (1962). The movie depicts an apocalyptic world in which survivors are in a subterranean compound in 2035. A prison named James Cole, starring Bruce Willis, is selected as a volunteer (a Guinean pig) to find out the origin of virus release which is believed is done by a secret army named Twelve Monkeys. For doing the mission the underground scientists send him back mistakenly to 1990 instead of 1996 and Cole is kept in an asylum where he met his psychiatrist, Kathryn Raily, and the search for the truth begins.

In a scene, a poet in her lecture quotes verse 80th from the second edition:” Yesterday, this day’s madness did prepare/ tomorrow’s silence, triumph or despair/ drink! For you know not whence you came why/ drink! For you know not why you go, nor where”. This quatrain independently might have been considered as an instance of carpe diem and agnosticism. However, due to the movie one might contextualize it as an instance of predestination or determinism. “This reassessment of narrative shape delivers still higher fruit: moving from a

circular to a spiral structure implies a new relationship between determinism and free will. At first, *Twelve Monkeys* sets us up to accept a fated future. The poem being read upon Kathryn's first appearance [...] creates an immediate sense of predestined, inescapable momentum" (Hamner 143, 144).

According to the earlier drafts of the script more verses were quoted but in the final version only this verse was left.¹³ It seems that "madness" plays a key role in the film: "What's important here, however, is the link between claims of time travel and claims of impending apocalypse, both of which are considered mad. Insanity is the constant topic of the film. Many of the film's characters are mad; large portions of the film take place in a mental institution; and much of the film's dialogue is about insanity. The topic is even inserted into the poetry reading where the audience first sees Kathryn Raily" (Rosen 89).

6. Conclusion

Khayyam's attributed Rubaiyat bear different concepts such as Transiency of life, Determinism, destiny, carpe diem, theodicy and so forth. According to the examined movies in this paper, cinema has used Rubaiyat either to represent the theme of the movie or to accentuate the emotional or dramatic aspect of a scene or scenes.

The concept of transient life led into two different interpretations: death and *carpe diem*. The former seeks merely ephemerality and impertinency of life *per se* is considered while the latter apart from the transiency seeks a remedy for it that is *carpe diem*. The different understandings of *carpe diem* can be traced in the movies. One perspective concerning the *carpe diem* is to enjoy the present time which is based on the hedonistic view and it works like a remedy for all of the human sufferings. Movies like *Valentino*, *Unfaithful*, *Good to be back*, and so on are based on this perspective. On the contrary, another perspective concerning the *carpe diem* is to meditate on the moment to have a better understanding of the life in other word to have a mystical approach towards the *carpe diem*. Movies like *The Silence* and *The wind will carry us* are in this category.

The concept of heaven and hell is frequently used in *Rubaiyat* which for the most part focuses on the agnosticism and *carpe diem* as well. Indeed, the way that Albert Lewin used this concept is unique for its function of catharsis; however, it is mentioned in the novel too. Determinism and predestination are other salient motifs in *Rubaiyat* and movies like *Pandora and Flying Dutchman* and *Algiers* are in these categories. However, fatalism might lead into two different categories: Optimistic and pessimistic. As an instance, *Pandora and Flying Dutchman* might be included in the optimistic category although some tragic events are seen in the movie.

Algiers belongs to the pessimistic category and fatalism takes control the doomed life of the protagonist and like the labyrinthine location of the movie, there is no escaping from the predestination.

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ENDNOTES

¹ In Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi's *Al-tanbih 'ala ba'd asrar al-maw'dat fi'l Quran* (التنبيه على بعض اسرار المودعة في القرآن), written before 606(?) A.H, there is a quatrain attributed to Khayyam, however, earlier than this book, in Zahiri Samarqandi's *Sindbad Name*, 555 A.H, five quatrains are quoted but anonymously.

² It is not Fitzgerald who for the first time has introduced Khayyam to the west. Khayyam can be traced back in Joseph Scaliger's *De emendatione temporum* (1583 CE), Thomas Hyde's *Historia religionis veterum Persarum*

(1700 CE), Henry George Keene's English translation of one quatrain in *Fundgruben des Orients/Mines d'Orient* magazine (1816) and so forth.

³ The original Persian quatrain is as follows: "بر چرخ فلک هیچ کسی چیر نشد/ وز خوردن آدمی زمین سیر نشد/ مغرور بدانی که
"نخورده ست تو را/ تعجیل مکن هم بخورد دیر نشد"

⁴ Just to name but a few see quatrains no. 34, 35 and 47 of the first edition.

⁵ The original Persian distich is as follows: "پایان سخن شنو که ما را چه رسید/ چون آب بر آمدیم و چون باد شدیم"

⁶ The directors are as follows: William Dieterle, Otto Brower, B. Reeves Eason, William Cameron Menzies, Joseph von Sternberg, Chester Franklin.

⁷ *Duel in the Sun* has also become relevant with those movies related to Rubaiyat and Khayyam. For instance, not only was Albert Lewin who used Rubaiyat in two of his movies a friend of King Vidor, but he also was his script clerk in some movies. Furthermore, William Dieterle, the uncredited director of *Duel in the Sun*, later directed a Khayyam's biopic names *The Life, Loves and Adventures of Omar Khayyam* (1957).

⁸ The original Persian distich is as follows: "دوزخ شرری ز رنج بیهوده ماست/ فردوس دمی ز وقت آسوده ماست"

⁹ The English translator's name was not found but it has lots of similarities with Len Bracken's Persian Love, quatrain no. 13: "Drink wine...it's what remains of the harvest of youth/ the season of roses and wine and drunken friends/ Be happy for a moment, that moment's your life."

¹⁰ The original Persian distich is possibly as follows: "از دی که گذشت هیچ ازو یاد مکن/ فردا که نامده ست فریاد مکن/ بر نامده و
"گذشته بنیاد مکن/ حالی خوش باش و عمر بر باد مکن". However, Heron-Allen's translation might be more useful: "Remember not the day that has passed away from thee/ Be not hard upon the morrow that has not come/ Think not about thine own coming or departure/ Drink wine now, and fling not thy life to the winds."

¹¹ The original Persian quatrain is as follows: "گویند کسان بهشت با حور خوش است/ من می گویم که آب انگور خوش است/ این نقد
بگیر و دست از آن نسبه مدار/ که آواز دهل شنیدن از دور خوش است"

¹² Compare with Milton's *Paradise Lost* when Satan says, "The mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven".

¹³ These other quatrains follow the same maxim either. The deleted quatrains are as follows:

a) We are no other than a moving row/ Of Magic shadow-shapes that come and go/ Round with the Sun-illuminated
Lantern hold/ In Midnight by the Master of the show.

b) The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ/ Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit/ Shall lure it back to cancel
half a Line/ Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.