

Translator/Author

The Urth list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 07 May 1997

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m.driussi — 07 May 1997, 19:03

Reply: Item #0776694 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET#

Joel,

Interesting point re: Fitzgerald as cited source of quote. I never noticed that, but of course you are right and it does play some mirrors-that-look-at-mirrors tricks, as you suggest.

For your question about Wolfe's possible strong ideas about the nature of translation, I confess my ignorance. But to add a few tokens to your pile, here are some observations: one of Wolfe's favorite authors is Proust, yet he has "only" read Proust translated into English; likewise Wolfe read all his ancient Greek authors in English translation (he did study the language of ancient Greece with the aid of a private tutor, but this was in the 1980s and I suppose that it was only after his interest in ancient Greece had been so developed by reading translations).

I myself have not heard of any Omar Khayyam convention, new or old, that attributes his work to another. The convention of listing a translator =and= the author is quite handy (for praise or blame) since both are acknowledged; the listing of only a translator verges upon criminal <g>, and were it not for the loop-the-lupine-loop aspect you addressed, I might suspect that it was a mistake or error on the part of the copy editor, punishable by death or public humiliation. (I urge myself to refrain from throwing glass stones at the mighty rock --yet Tor has had some trouble with front matter of late. Witness Jack Vance's listed novel TO LOVE FOREVER in the front of the PLANET OF ADVENTURE omnibus. Hmmm. Vance reputedly hated the original published title, bestowed by the publisher, and I sense that he would like this one even less.)

=mantis=

Joel Priddy — 07 May 1997, 14:52 · follows m.driussi

Just a couple of quick comments...

Wolfe begins The_Urth_of_the_New_Sun_ with the quote:

Awake! for morning in the bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turrent in a Noose of Light.

This is from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, but Wolfe credits Fitzgerald. Edward Fitzgerald translated the Rubaiyat. This of course reflects the New Sun series where the author presents himself as a translator, but (if this conversation is possible without getting too far off track) does anyone know if Wolfe has some strong ideas about the nature of translation that he would consider the translator of a stanza to be more the stanza's author than the original poet? Or is there something specific to the Rubaiyat that would lend itself to this distinction (the way some

people have started listing Bacon as the credit for Shakespeare quotes, or the way you would consider the translator to be the key identifier/author of any given edition of the _Arabian_Nights_?).

Also, has it struck anyone else that Gene Wolfe's description of synergenic time travel in _Free_Live_Free_ is an excellent description of the process of reading a Wolfe book? Everytime you go back and visit the same place, you're a little better at it, surer on you feet, able to do more with the clues presented to you.

JOEL

Jim Jordan — 08 May 1997, 01:37 · follows Joel Priddy

I think Fitzgerald is regarded as having so paraphrased the Rubaiyat that he is virtually the author of his "translation." That may be all that Wolfe had in mind.

Of course, at the front of Shadow-Torturer is a quotation from Isaac Watts that is actually just a paraphrastic translation of Psalm 90.

Nutria

Richard Horton — 08 May 1997, 08:47 · follows Jim Jordan

Joel Priddy <jpriddy at saturn.vcu.edu> 05/07/97 09:52am >>> writes

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A little more like the latter: IIRC, Fitzgerald's translations (he did several, often quite different, editions) are very "free": it is quite common to regard him as in a considerable sense at least a "co-author" of the English version of the Rubaiyat. This is rather unique to the Rubaiyat, though, in very few other cases of translation would this be done.

I'm a little puzzled by the attributions to Bacon of Shakespeare quotes. This implies, I guess, an authorship question. Bacon is not, I believe, anymore taken seriously as a potential writer of Shakespeare's plays. Beside Shakespeare himself, the only serious candidate these days seems to be Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. In any case, even if William Shakspeare of Stratford did not write Shakespeare's plays, it would seem to me to make sense to accept "Shakespeare" as the desired pseudonym of the acutal author. At any rate, I'm not aware of any controversy about Omar Khayyam's authorship of the Rubaiyat.

Tusk

m.driussi — 08 May 1997, 16:04 · follows Richard Horton

Reply: Item #0985746 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INTERNET#

(Whoops. I said "TO LOVE FOREVER" was listed in front of PLANET OF ADVENTURE; I was mistaken--it is listed in Vance's most recent NIGHT LAMP. Or so I believe.)

Nutria is right. NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA: "FitzGerald, Edward . . . His masterpiece, a translation of THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM, appeared anonymously in 1859 . . . has long been one of the most popular English poems. Although actually a paraphrase rather than a

translation of a poem by the 11th-century Persian poet Omar Khayyam, it retains the spirit of the original in its poignant expression of a philosophy counseling man to live life to the fullest while he can."

Note spelling: FitzGerald. Copy editor must die! <g>

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 08 May 1997, 12:32 · follows m.driussi

WAKE! for the Golden Cat has put to flight
The Mouse of Darkness with his Paw of Light:
Which means, in Plain and simple every-day
Unoriental Speech -- The Dawn is bright.

The say the Early Bird the Worm shall taste.
Then rise, O Kitten! Wherefore sleeping, waste
The fruits of Virtue? Quick! the Early Bird
Will soon be on the flutter -- O make haste!

-- from The Rubaiyat of a Persian Kitten, by Oliver Herford (NY: Gramercy, 1993; facsimile reprint of 1904).

NUTRIA