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# Abstract

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The ʿAbbāsid dynasty came to power after a revolution in 750, and ruled the vast Muslim empire until the 930s and 940s. This period has often been dubbed the golden era of Islam, due to its prospering and often innovative cultural and scientific production. During this period, some of the fundamental texts in Islam were produced, collections of traditions from the Prophet Muḥammad and his followers, Qurʾān exegesis, jurisprudence and the legal discussions which led to the Islamic laws (*sharīʿa*). These texts are often referred to when women's situation in Islam is discussed. However, curiously, women's status in ʿAbbāsid literature is frequently examined without taking in account the breadth of this literature with its seemingly paradoxical images of issues such as gender, sex and women. This study attempts to contribute to a more comprehensive picture of women and gender in ʿAbbāsid literature, analyzing texts about women from completely different contexts with the help of narratology, in particular the methods elaborated by Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal. The texts analysed in this thesis are the biographies of pious women in *Kitāb al-tabaqāt al-kabīr* by Ibn Saʿd (d. 845), in particular Muḥammad's wife ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr, the biography of the ʿAbbāsid court singer ʿArīb, by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967) and the volume on women, *Kitāb al-nisāʾ*, in the adab anthology *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). The analyses explore how narrative technique is used to create authority, or authenticity, in the distinctive khabar-literature, to which all the analyzed texts belong. Moreover, the construction of gender is discussed, along with gender-based hierarchies and different approaches towards authority. The women's biographies in Ibn Saʿd's work are arranged around two poles: women's object-positions in marriage and subject-positions in piety, linguistically as well as thematically. Here, it is argued, we may

discern a normative tendency, which acknowledges women's capacity to act as individuals, as long as it is within certain spheres of society. These texts provide a static model for gender relationships, where the husband is always the absolute authority, reflecting a view of hierarchy as being constant. Conversely, the anecdotes in the more profane texts often have as their main point the overturning of hierarchies, and women have mostly the last word. Hierarchies and authorities are challenged on a thematic as well as a linguistic level. Possibly, the disagreement in women's possibilities and positions between the religious and the profane texts are due to the interpretation of the first Muslim community in Medina as being stable, whereas positions and hierarchies in ʿAbbāsid Iraq are uncertain and fluctuating. Although these positions are literary motifs, the analyses give an idea about the limits of thinkable behaviours and roles of women, limits that are far more flexible and permitting than generally maintained.

## Acknowledgements

**Note on transliteration and translation**
I follow the system for transliteration adopted by the Encyclopaedia of Islam, except that I render ج as j. Titles of works and technical terms have been provided with English translations. In the case of technical terms that are used extensively in the text, the English translation is only given the first time of mention, after that the Arabic word is used.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction, theory and method

The subject matter of this thesis is the representation of women in literature, and the source material is classical Arabic literature which has women as its explicit and main subject. Women are portrayed as individuals in medieval Arabic biographical dictionaries and are also a favoured subject in the outstanding ʿAbbāsid literary production. To inscribe someone's life in a biography is to make it public. Accordingly, there must be something in this life that is considered of public interest for the society in which the biography is written. Generally, women did not take part in the different Islamic sciences or exercise the professions which had their own biographical dictionaries. However, except for elite women, such as wives and mothers of caliphs and occasional female scholars, there are especially two groups of women who are frequently portrayed in the medieval Arabic literature, whose lives for one reason or another were considered of public interest.

The first group consists of pious women, especially women from the first Muslim community. The other group of women portrayed as named individuals consists of singers, musicians and poets, who lived and worked in the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid empires. These two groups of women are portrayed in two of the works that will be analysed in this thesis, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* by Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), on the first Muslim community, and the biographies of women in *Kitāb al-aghānī* by Abū al-Faraj (d. 362/972-73) on music and singing. [1] Two biographies from these works are chosen for close readings, the biography of the prophet Muḥammad's wife ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr and the biography on the ʿAbbāsid singer ʿArīb. In addition to these texts a third work is examined, namely the volume on women, *Kitāb al-nisāʾ* in the *adab* anthology *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* by Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889), [2]

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1 Years are given in hijra year and AD year successively, e.g. 168-356/784-972. The death date of Abū al-Faraj is uncertain, see p. 44 below.
2 Hereafter these works will be referred to as *Ṭabaqāt, Aghānī* and *Nisāʾ*. The latter refers to the volume on women in *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* specifically, while *Ṭabaqāt* refers both to the whole work and to the volume on women and *Aghānī* mostly refers to women's biographies in this work.

which also provides a link between these two disparate groups of women, as it contains narratives about both. It also introduces new groups of women, such as the anonymous, eloquent and witty women of the anecdotes.

In 1992, Hilary Kilpatrick and Stefan Leder called for studies of classical Arabic prose more in line with modern literary theory, which is a neglected area considering the quantity and quality of this literature. [1] Several years later, ther is still a considerable lack of studies. As a main focus of research, Kilpatrick and Leder suggested the narrative technique of the short narrative units which build up the classical Arabic literary works. In accordance with their proposal, this thesis will use a modern literary method, narratology, and combine it with another neglected area in studies of classical Arabic literature, namely gender studies. There are plenty of studies of women in the history of Islam, but surprisingly few focusing on its 'golden epoch', the 'Abbāsid, which take into account the various and sometimes conflicting gender representations in the literature produced during this era. Inspired by Michael Cooperson who suggests that the development of biographical traditions within various fields has to do with the urge to legitimate this particular field, this thesis will use the method of narratology in an attempt to establish whether narrating itself is connected with creating authority, the authority needed to legitimate the subject of the biography, as well as the group she belongs to. [2]

The chosen texts are among the earliest in their genres, from the early 'Abbāsid period. Although some of the texts contain quotations from earlier sources, these quotations were arranged by the authors during the 'Abbāsid period, and it is in this form we know them today. It is therefore the 'Abbāsid construction of gender that is in focus, even when analysing the biographies of the women in the first Muslim community. Gender is, in fact, an important issue in 'Abbāsid literature. [3] However, gender is dealt with in a sometimes contradictory

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1 Stefan Leder and Hilary Kilpatrick, 'Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map', *Journal of Arabic literature* 23, no. 1 (1992).
2 Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.
3 See e.g. Julia Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves in Abbasid Society,' in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 121-22, and 130. See also Rowson's informative study of the categorization of gender in some Medieval Arab works on sexual behaviour and practices: Everett K Rowson, 'The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval Arabic Vice Lists,' in *Body Guards: The*

manner; at least that is the picture a modern reader easily gets. As to women, they are on the one hand instructed by the normative literature to submit themselves to their husbands and play the passive part, while on the other hand women do the reverse in numerous anecdotes and tales. Instead of taking these contradictions as points of departure for analysis, studies tend to overlook them, and only extract the information that fits into their hypotheses. One reason for this is that certain types of literature are often examined without considering others, even though they are produced in the same milieu and sometimes even by the same author. Julia Bray maintains that there is a tendency in historical research on ʿAbbāsid society and literature to ignore 'neighbouring discourses', and to extract information from one single literary genre. This in turn might be one of the reasons for the lack of observations of women's roles in this society.[1] Hopefully, by means of comparing disparate discourses, this thesis will contribute slightly to a more comprehensive picture of gender and women in ʿAbbāsid literature.

The theoretical framework and method of this thesis focus on gender and narratology, based on the methods of Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal, as presented below in this chapter. Chapter 2 will give a general background of ʿAbbāsid society and literature, the authors mentioned above and their works. Chapter 3 comprises a formal narratological analysis of the two main texts of this thesis, the biographies of ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr and ʿArīb, primarily based on Genette's method. These two biographies are translated and attached in the thesis; the biography of ʿAʾisha in Appendix 1, and ʿArīb in Appendix 2. Chapters 4, 5 and 6, include analyses of narratives from the three works, *Nisāʾ*, *Ṭabaqāt* (especially ʿĀʾisha's biography) and *Aghānī* (ʿArīb's biography in particular), primarily based on Bal's narratology. Finally, in the conclusion, the analyses will be compared and discussed.

## Aim

The aim of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, the narrative techniques will be explored with the help of Genette's classical narratology, asking

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*Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, eds. Julia Epstein and Kristina Strauss (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).
1 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 129.

whether they could be connected with the specific claim of the biographical genre, namely the claim for authority. Secondly, Bal's revision of Genette's narratology will be used to analyse the variety of women's roles and positions in these texts, with special attention to the comparison between the different types of narratives. Furthermore, the thesis will attempt to discern possible gender ideologies in these texts, that is, ideas about roles, behaviour and practices connected to gender, which are often, but not necessarily, presented as norms.

## Earlier research

Despite an increase during recent decades, there is still a scarcity of research on classical Arabic literature relying on methods from the field of literary studies, especially combined with a gender-approach. Moreover, compared to studies of women's history in Europe, serious study of Middle Eastern women's history is still in its initial stage, and, in the words of Nikki Keddie: 'a great mass of documents needs to be unearthed or restudied with women's question in mind'.[1] Of course, there are studies on women in classical Arabic literature, yet most of them are descriptive rather than analytic. Women's factual situation in the Arab Muslim Middle East after the coming of Islam is a common subject of both scholarly books and articles, and of numerous popular-religious treatises. One central concern has been to explore whether Islam lead to improvements or deteriorations of the situation of women.

While most scholars agree that reformation of women's roles and conditions has met with difficulties in Arab-Islamic history, not least through the official interpretation of Islam, they arrive at somewhat different explanations.[2] For research on the early Muslim era, 'Abbāsid source material is used, although the readings of these sources are often partial, as Julie Scott Meisami remarks.[3] As to the less scholarly works, unfounded assertions about women in this epoch are abundant and reproduced. The main obstacles to a historical outlook have been the

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1 Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, eds., *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 1.
2 On this issue, see Keddie and Baron, eds., *Women in Middle Eastern History*, 5ff.  See also Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1-34.
3 Julie Scott Meisami, 'Writing Medieval Women: Representations and Misrepresentations,' in *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam*: Muslim Horizons, ed., Julia Bray (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

ideological potential of the first Muslim *umma* as part of the sacred history and the lack of documentary source material, while historical surveys from the later centuries are facilitated by the larger amount of documentary sources.

The role of women has been an important subject for centuries in Arab scholarship.[1] In modern research, three phases in research on women in Arab history may be identified.[2] The first studies held a positive view on the portrayed women as active and powerful.[3] They were, as Bray puts it, 'unselfconsciously progressive'.[4] These include Nabia Abbott's biography of 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr (1942), her study on the 'Abbāsid queens Khayzurān and Zubayda (1946), and her articles on pre-Islamic and early Islamic women (1941-42).[5] Abbott's studies are comprehensive; they rely on a sizeable number of sources which she has read thoroughly. However, they are influenced by the presumptions of her age, as when she finds psychological explanations when the sources do not. The impression is not scholarly when, for example, she uncritically quotes direct speech in the sources as if it really constituted the personalities' own words.[6] She did not avoid what would be the main issue for most later studies on women in Islam, and for the dispute about women's positions in Islam, namely the supposedly improved status the Qur'ān gave to women, while at the same time there are a few verses in the Qur'ān which seem to put forth women's inferior position (e.g. 2:228 and 4:34). However, she explains them as being the result of 'harem intrigues' that distracted Muḥammad and, together with Muḥammad's toleration of established practices, led to the fact that 'he left woman forever inferior to man, placing her one step below him'.[7] Nevertheless, she claims that Muḥammad was 'a

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1 See Ruth Roded, ed., *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 1.
2 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 122-23.
3 Roded, ed., *Women in Islam*, 11.
4 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 122.
5 Nabia Abbott, Aishah; *The Beloved of Mohammed* (London: Saqi Books, 1985), Nabia Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), Nabia Abbott, 'Pre-Islamic Arab Queens', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58, no. 1 (1941), Nabia Abbott, 'Women and the State in Early Islam: Mohammed and the First Four Caliphs', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1, no. 1 (1942), and Nabia Abbott, 'Women and the State in Early Islam: The Umayyads', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1, no. 3 (1942).
6 Cf. the portrait of 'Ā'isha in Abbott, *Aishah*.
7 Abbott, 'Women and the State 1': 124. Moreover: 'They [traits in Muḥammad's personality] help to explain how, on the one hand, Mohammed strove successfully for the improvement of the economic and legal status of *all* Moslem women, and how, on the other hand, he left woman forever inferior to

great lover of the ladies', a trait that sometimes has been called Muḥammad's feminism.[1]

Abbott argues that the real deterioration of women's status took place during the 'Abbāsid era. Her accusation of 'the trio of polygamy, concubinage, and seclusion of women' is by now classic, and has been reproduced by others after her.[2] All the same, it is striking how many portraits of powerful women from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period Abbott finds in the sources.

In another early study Margaret Smith (1928) reconstructs the biography of the eighth century Sufi Rābi'a, emphasizing women's strong position in Sufism.[3]

Ilse Lichtenstädter (1935) also has a positive ambition in her study on women in pre-Islamic warfare, declaring that she hopes she has 'inspired others with the love and admiration which I feel for the members of my own sex in the land of the Prophet'.[4] Women are rare in the literature she examines, the *Ayyām al-'arab*, yet she draws general conclusions about women's role in warfare and in the pre-Islamic Arab society from the limited sources she had access to. Even though she is aware of the pitfalls of deducing historical information from the *Ayyām al-'arab* literature,[5] she falls into these traps somewhat as her descriptive study does not discuss the possible literary conventions in this literature about the heroic Arab past. Evidently, these tales should be considered as fiction, and were written down much later, in the ninth and tenth centuries.[6] However, her observations are interesting. The preferred qualities of a good woman in the *Ayyām al-'Arab* are 'strength of determination and judgement, quickness of comprehension and ability of observation'.[7] Furthermore, Lichenstädter finds no linguistic or stylistic differences between the descriptions of women

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man, placing her one step behind him.' (Abbott, 'Women and the State 1': 107. With the last statement she alludes to the verses 2:228 and 4:34 in the Qur'ān.

1 Abbott, *Aishah*, xv.

2 Abbott, *Queens of Baghdad*, 8. She claims that these phenomena are characteristics of the degeneration of the 'Abbāsid culture, but admits in another article that especially concubinage was a threat to the 'free and noble Arab woman' quite early, in the early Umayyad caliphate: Abbott, 'Women and the State 2': 351.

3 Margaret Smith, *Rābi'a: The Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islām* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; reprint, 1984).

4 Ilse Lichtenstädter, *Women in the Aiyâm al-'Arab: A Study of Female Life During Warfare in Preislamic Arabia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1935).

5 Ibid., 2.

6 For example the Ayyām in *Aghāni*, and *al-'Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn Rabbihi.

7 Lichtenstädter, *Women in the Aiyâm*, 77.

and of men: 'The same impartiality with which they relate any event, avoiding alike extravagant laudation of one hero and the extreme depreciation of another, is observed in the narrative about women; the narrator tells these stories in the same objective way as those about men, neither emphasizing their virtues nor exaggerating their faults.'[1]

Gertrude Stern (1939) made a somewhat similar study using one of the sources in this thesis, the women's section in *Ṭabaqāt* by Ibn Saʿd, in addition to some other texts, such as early ḥadīths.[2] Her study of marriage in the early Muslim community is both systematic and convincing. For example, by examining the *isnāds*, it concludes that polygyny was not common; instead both men and women seem to have married frequently but monogamously.[3]

After these intentionally positive portraits of early Muslim women, there was scarcely any study on women in early Islam for some decades, and this lack of interest is what we might refer to as the second phase.

The third phase is the current research following the feminist movement in the 1960s.[4] This research maintains somewhat contradictory objectives. On the one hand, 'some recent feminist scholars have abandoned the optimism of their predecessors and set up as a polemical target what they identify as a crudely polarised Islamic male discourse which obliterates female agency and can readily be made to serve repressive modern agendas.'[5] Moreover, the 'presumption of simple sexual polarity is based on readings of the sources which often leave much to be desired, and which derive in the first instances from ʿAbbāsid materials, since these are felt to establish a, if not the, normative image (and programme) of Islam.'[6] Here we have the text-readings (even though they are not always careful, as noticed by Meisami[7]) which attempt to locate a decisive moment in Islam when women's position became, or started to become, derogated.

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1 Ibid., 85.
2 Gertrude Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1939).
3 Ibid., 62.
4 See Ruth Roded, 'Mainstreaming Middle East Gender Research: Promise or Pitfall?' *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (2001), for an overview of research on gender in Middle East studies from the 1960s onwards.
5 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 122.
6 Ibid., 122-23.
7 Meisami, 'Writing Medieval Women.' 6, n. 10. Meisami makes a thorough and critical analysis of Leyla Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam*, Fedwa Malti-Douglas' *Women's Body, Women's Words*, and Denise Spellberg's *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*.

We will return to some of these readings below. On the other hand, a number of articles and some books emphasize Arab and Middle Eastern women's agency in history, especially elite women from the 14th century onwards. There are several anthologies on the subject of women's historical, economic and political power in the Arab Middle East; many of them are about women in the Mamluk era, or the Ottoman Arab provinces.[1] While the main body of research has a historical approach, there are some literary studies, such as Remke Kruk's analyses of themes related to women in popular epic.[2] The anthology with most interest for this thesis is probably *Writing the Feminine* (2002), edited by Manuela Marín and Randi Deguilhem, as it includes images of women in poetry, epic and proverbs, as well as women in biographical dictionaries.[3]

Biographical dictionaries have been subjected to research in order to extract historical information. Ruth Roded's (1994) quantitative study on Ibn Saʿd's work, among others, provides a valuable overview of women in Arab biographical dictionaries from the ninth to the twentieth centuries.[4] She found that the highest number of women portrayed in biographical dictionaries is those from the first generations of Muslims, close to the Prophet and his companions. There are also women from the field of knowledge and piety as well as women from the ruling elite, but to a much lower degree. She almost bypassed female singers, poets and musicians, as their portraits are generally not part of biographical collections. Among other research on women in biographical dictionaries, although on a much smaller scale than Roded's, is Huda Lutfi's (1981) study of al-Sakhāwī's fifteenth century *Kitāb al-nisāʾ*, the last volume of his biographical dictionary *al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ fī aʿyān*

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1 E.g. some articles in Beck and Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World  Women* , Gavin Hambly, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) and Amira el-Azhary Sonbol, ed., *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005). See also Roded, 'Mainstreaming Middle East Gender Research: Promise or Pitfall?' for references; she mentions especially studies on women and *waqf*, and other economic activities.

2 E.g. Remke Kruk, 'The Bold and the Beautiful: Women and 'fitna' in the 'Sīrat dhāt al-himma'. The Story of Nūra,' in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*:, ed. Hambly and Remke Kruk, 'Click of Needles: Polygamy as an Issue in Arabic Popular Epic,' in *Writing the Feminine: Women in Arab Sources*, eds. Manuela Marín and Randi Deguilhem (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2002).

3 Marín and Deguilhem, eds., *Writing the Feminine*.

4 Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections, From Ibn Saʿd to Who's Who* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994).

*al-qarn al-tāsi'*. [1] The women included here are more or less contemporary with al-Sakhāwī, many of them traditionalists, i.e. working in the field of knowledge. They tend to be portrayed as examples for women: 'The ideal female image projected by al-Sakhāwī comes through as the pious, modest, knowledgeable and generous woman. As a wife she is portrayed as patient, peaceful and frugal.'[2] All the same, Lutfi's study provides an interesting picture of the social lives of upper middle-class and elite women of his time. Asma Afsaruddin made another smaller study (2002) of biographical collections on women, where she compares the presentations of a limited number of women in Ibn Saʻd's ninth century *Ṭabaqāt* with the fifteenth century work *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba* by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī.[3]

Muslim legal-religious literature has been scrutinized as to issues concerning women. Yet, the problem with this kind of normative literature is that we do not know to which extent the norms were conformed to in early Islam.[4] As to history-writing, Abbott is one of the few scholars who bases her research on this material, together with some of the other studies mentioned above. Maria El Cheikh (2002) has studied *adab*-works with the intention to survey women's social history, but so far this research is at the initial phase.[5] El Cheikh compared in a survey of marriage literature the chapters on marriage in *'Uyūn al-akhbār* by Ibn Qutayba, one of the texts analysed in this thesis, and *al-'Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi (328/940).[6] After a synopsis of the most common themes in regard to women, she

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1 Huda Lutfi, 'Al-Sakhāwī's Kitāb al-*Nisā'* as a Source for the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women during the Fifteenth Century A.D.' *Muslim World* 71 (1981).
2 Ibid., 112.
3 Asma Afsaruddin, 'Reconstituting Women's Lives: Gender and the Poetics of Narrative in Medieval Biographical Collections', *The Muslim World* 92, no. 3/4 (2002).
4 See e.g. Cristina de la Puente, 'Juridical Sources for the Study of Women: Limitations of the Female's Capacity to Act According to Mālikī Law,' in *Writing the Feminine*, eds. Marín and Deguilhem, 96: 'Legal writings are composed with the aim of modifying and regulating the conduct of the community in which they are to be applied. However, in the Middle Ages, it is difficult to verify the range of influence of such regulations and the degree of authority that they enjoyed within society. Yet, their ability to reform or initiate certain types of conduct, prejudices and attitudes should not be underestimated.' See also Huda Lutfi's interesting article about the fourteenth century Egyptian religious scholar Ibn al-Hajj's writings on women in Huda Lutfi, 'Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy Versus Male Shari'i Order in Muslim Presciptive Treaties,' in *Women in Middle Eastern history*, eds. Keddie and Bardon.
5 Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, no. 2 (2002) and Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Women's History: A Study of al-Tanūkhī,' in *Writing the Feminine*, eds. Marín and Deguilhem. For *adab*, see below p. 43.
6 El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse.'

concludes that there are two main and contrasting female types in these texts, each tending to extreme feminine idealization and misogyny, and both being 'the construct of the dominant masculine voice': 'the beautiful, obedient and virtuous wife stand as a contrast to the ugly, witty, aggressive and old female'.[1]

Readings of ʿAbbāsid legal texts tend to be one-sided. For example, Leila Ahmed (1992) argues that even though Islam in practice institutionalized the curtailing of women's autonomy and agency in society, there was always the possibility to interpret the message of the Qurʾān in a more favourable way for women in accordance with its egalitarian spirit. The later interpreters, however, tended to choose the least favourable alternative: 'The political, religious, and legal authorities in the ʿAbbāsid period in particular, whose interpretative and legal legacy has defined Islam ever since, heard only the androcentric voice of Islam, and they interpreted the religion as intending to institute androcentric laws and an androcentric vision in all Muslim societies throughout time.'[2] However, as also Meisami points out, Ahmed does not support her hypothesis with any extensive reading of the texts by and about these 'political, religious, and legal authorities'.[3] She may, for example, make a generalizing utterance about women's absence in 'records relating to this period', which would, upon reading these records, prove not to be fully true.

> In Abbasid society women were conspicuous for their absence from all arenas of the community's central affairs. In the records relating to this period they are not to be found, as they were in the previous era, either on battlefield or in mosques, nor are they described as participants in or key contributors to the cultural life and productions of their society.[4]

Ahmed's study belongs to the current research on women in the Arab Middle East and Islam which assigns passivizing, or even misogynous,

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1 Ibid., 190.
2 Leyla Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 1992), 67.
3 Meisami, 'Writing Medieval Women,' 65.
4 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 79, also quoted in Meisami, 'Writing Medieval Women,' 48.

elements in Islamic history to the ʿAbbāsid era. Apparently, the ʿAbbāsid source material has not been read with regard to its various forms and ambiguities, as also Bray points out (quoted above). Moreover, selected texts have been read as conveying general facts about all women in the ʿAbbāsid society with implications for gender roles in contemporary society.[1] Ahmed and other scholars replicate quite uncritically Abbott's accusations of this era as having a derogative impact on women's factual situations in the Middle East and Islam.[2] The supposedly restrictive practices towards women in the ʿAbbāsid era have been traced partly to the influences of the traditions in the conquered areas, and partly to the huge access to slaves, used as concubines.[3] As to the latter, especially Fatima Mernissi holds the *jāriya* (pl. *jawārī*; i.e. the female slave in upper-class households: see 2.6.3.3) responsible for Arab women's lack of powers. In Mernissi's feminist analyses (1991, 1996) of the gender-relations in today's Muslim society, obligations for women such as obeying their husbands are attributed to the ʿAbbāsid 'slave society', while she accentuates women in the first Muslim society as models for equality between the sexes.[4] She certainly acknowledges the sexual inequality prescribed by

1 See Meisami, 'Writing Medieval Women,' 47, who questions this attitude: 'to what extent can – or should – textual representations be used as the basis for general assumptions about the status of women in medieval Islamic societies? This question is crucial, since many feminist critics, largely in response to modern political discourses in which the status of women has taken on a central and symbolic role, invoke medieval texts to account for contemporary attitudes.'
2 E.g. Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, 79-80. While Ahmed quotes Abbott, several later scholars quote Ahmed's assertion about the patriarchal environment of ʿAbbāsid jurisprudence, e.g. Kecia Ali, 'Progressive Muslims and Islamic Jurisprudence: The Necessity for Critical Engagement with Marriage and Divorce Law,' in *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*, ed., Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003). Cf. Fatima Mernissi, *Women's Rebellion and Islamic Memory* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1996), 81ff. She blames ʿAbbāsid despotism in general and the *jāriya* in particular for women's inferior position.
3 See especially Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, Mernissi, *Women's Rebellion* and Amira el-Azhary Sonbol, 'Rise of Islam: 6th to 9th Century,' in *Encyclopaedia of Women in Islamic Cultures: Methodologies, Paradigms, and Sources*, 1, ed., Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 7; Sonbol argues that the ideals of womanhood in the Qur'ān are equal, in contrast with the more restrictive medieval *fiqh*, which was produced 'in answer to the new cultures and traditions that formed medieval Islamic cultures'.
4 See various articles in Mernissi, *Women's Rebellion*. See also her free reinterpretation of the traditions in Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991), where she concludes that Muḥammad's wives were women's rights activists with the Prophet's consent, but that he was overthrown by darker, misogynist forces in his community: 'He was a man of almost 60 and he was surrounded by remarkable and distinguished women like Umm Salama, ʿAʾisha, and Zaynab. They were women who were younger than he, intelligent, and, above all, actively involved in political life and demands for a different status for women. ʿAʾisha, his best beloved, was to be the prey that his enemies seized upon to make him suffer, to make him taste the bitter fruit of loss of confidence by accusing her of adultery. Hurt and weakened, he lost his ability to stand up to ʿUmar, and he agreed to the confinement of women. He

the Qur'ān, but she blames the jāriya for its successful survival until today: 'the models of hierarchical relationships that the Qur'an imprints in the deepest zones of the Muslim personality would not have retained such influence in the twentieth century had it not been for the expansion of a legendary Muslim empire that allowed sexual inequality to assert itself and to spread through the phenomenon of the jāriya.'[1] On the other hand, according to her, women of the first Muslim community, such as 'Ā'isha, are 'independent and make demands', and are 'partners in the political game'; moreover 'history accords them enormous importance', as seen in the biographies by Ibn Sa'd.[2] During the Umayyad era, aristocratic women still took their independence and authority for granted, and protested against 'the veil and polygamy'.[3]

However, for the period of the 'Abbāsids, women's position changed profoundly: 'From this point on, on the political stage, women were no longer anything but courtesans'.[4] From then on, men preferred slave women, as with them 'the man was by definition superior'.[5] Finally, the jawārī triumphed over free women, according to Mernissi, as 'they obeyed more readily than a *hurra* (free woman). Obeying was the *jariya's* function. That was what she was bought for.'[6] This historical fact, she argues, still has an impact on Muslim women in discussion of their role in politics: 'those who argue, in the name of the Muslim tradition, that our role in the political arena is to obey, not to lead, draw for this on a very precise period in Muslim history, the Golden Age, the age of absolutism which began with Mu'awiyah'.[7] Yet all these assumptions about the role of slave women do not draw on any readings of sources; Mernissi only refers to a few single paragraphs in *Thousand and One Nights* and *Aghānī*.

Closer to the aim of this thesis is *Woman's Body, Woman's Word* by Fedwa Malti-Douglas (1991), even though it also presupposes that early representations are connected with contemporary attitudes.[8]

gave his consent to the *hijab*. He gave his consent to the reestablishment of male supremacy': (Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, 163-64).

1 Mernissi, *Women's Rebellion*, 69.
2 Ibid., 81-82.
3 Ibid., 83.
4 Ibid., 84.
5 Ibid., 85.
6 Ibid., 87.
7 Ibid.
8 Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4: 'in the centuries-old Arabic textual tradition, a

Malti-Douglas analyses women's roles in some selected literary works from the Arabic literary heritage. In the chapter 'The anecdotal women' images of women in adab works by Ibn Qutayba and a few other authors are in focus. Although the chapter conveys interesting thoughts about women in *adab* (see below, 43), the analysis is not wholly reliable, as Malti-Douglas has selected a few anecdotes which seem to confirm her thesis, that woman's voice in literature is linked to her sexuality and body. This fact in turn, according to Malti-Douglas, is linked to the male supremacy, which does not let her take command of the situation except by means of ruses. Although Malti-Douglas affirms that 'a great number of female witticism and ruses in adab works revolve around female sexuality and women's bodies', she gives only a few examples from various works.[1] However, this connection between women's eloquence and body is emphasized in very few anecdotes in e.g. Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-nisā'*. Moreover, sexuality is a common topic in many anecdotes, women's and men's alike, and both sexes are depicted as sexual beings.

## Gender, history and narratives on women: a theoretical framework

The focus of this study is not the individual lives of certain women, even though the bulk of the analyses is devoted to 'Ā'isha and 'Arīb. The texts analysed below most likely provide us with historically valuable information about the lives of these women, as well as the general conditions for women in the Arab peninsula and Iraq during the first centuries after hijra, but the methodological problems are insurmountable. The period between the real lives of the portrayed women and their biographies is most often considerable. As to the biographies of the first women in Islam, they were written at least 150 years after the lives of the women. While the extant sources rely on earlier written sources, there is no evidence of sources contemporary with the women other than oral ones. Considering the political, religious and ideological importance of the subject matter, the origins of Islam, it is not unlikely that material has been more or less altered in

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dialectic operates between mental structures involving women and sexuality in the modern age and their antecedents in the classical period.'
1 Ibid., 33.

the process of transmission. The biographies of singers and poets lack the political potential (e.g. legitimating parties, families, religious groups) of the biographies of the first women in Islam. Instead, they display an entertainment potential, which probably was a selecting and supplementing factor in the composing of the biographies. Therefore, trying to reconstruct the lives of these women through a reading of their biographies would be a somewhat futile operation. Although impressive persons with interesting life-stories, ʿĀʾisha and ʿArīb are considered in this thesis as narrative characters more than as women once of flesh and blood. Sad as it might be, it is still no cause for despair, since what we might find by reading the biographies *as literary texts* might allow even greater perspectives. The women who are the subjects of the biographies are forever lost for us; their bodies have mouldered away. But what is left for us to explore is the literary project of the biographies: to (re)construct a woman's life through narratives, as well as the identity-constructing and/or gender-constructing ideologies behind this project.

Accordingly, the issue here is not so much the lives of individual women, but what was *thinkable* for women at a certain historical period. [1] In this view, history and literature, reality and text are intertwined and respond to each other. What a society allows women to perform in fiction, women's textual limits and possibilities, even though it might be impossible for average women in real life, may reveal something about the gender ideologies of that society. Hence, this study proceeds within the realm of gender studies, particularly as defined by some scholars from the discipline of history (see below). Basically, the concept of gender has to do with the social and cultural definition of the biological sexes, and with which roles were recognized for men and women. Gender ideologies, then, are ideas as well as attitudes in regard to gender in one or several groups in the society.

Although it is women's roles that will be analysed in this thesis, and the word 'women' that will be employed more than the word 'gender', 'women' are always referred to with the concept of gender in consideration. In other words, the concept of 'gender' is central to the theoretical framework of this thesis, but the word 'women' will be

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1 This is also the intention of Bal, when she reads narratives of women in the *Book of Judges*. Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 33. See also p. 25 below.

more recurrent. As Judith Bennett remarks: '"women" is a slippery concept in theory, but in practice it usually acts as a stable category – for its time and place – that can critically determine a person's life changes'.[1]

The theoretical discussions of Bennett, whose interest is the medieval history of England, have been especially useful for this thesis, as have those of Joan Scott, who has written about gender in French history. Scott defines gender as follows: 'gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.'[2] According to her, gender is involved in basic attempts to systematize the world, first by producing symbols, and then by endeavouring to control these symbols with normative concepts 'expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines'.[3] The symbols seem to be open for interpretations and can probably be found in various forms of expression, certainly in literature - 'Eve and Mary as symbols of woman' in Western tradition, as well as 'myths of light and dark, purification and pollution, innocence and corruption'.[4] The normative concepts that take up these symbols are more rigid; they tend to 'take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine'.[5] Furthermore, they are involved in a conflict for hegemony, the end of which rewrites history.

> In fact, these normative statements depend on the refusal or repression of alternative possibilities, and sometimes overt contests about them take place (at what moments and under what circumstances ought to be a concern of historians). The position that emerges as dominant, however, is stated as the only possible one. Subsequent

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1 Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 9.
2 Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1999), 42.
3 Ibid., 43.
4 Ibid., 43.
5 Ibid.

> history is written as if these normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than of conflict.[1]

After a normative concept has succeeded in the struggle for hegemony, which Scott refers to in the quotation above, a critical reading is needed for uncovering it. Such a reading is what Bal labels 'countercoherence', a reading that tries to see through the manifest, that which the text presents as natural.[2] Bal links the striving for coherence with that for authority, which she thinks is opposed to a gender-equal society.[3] Scott calls for a similar critical reading in the process of historical investigation: 'The point of new historical investigation is to disrupt the notion of fixity, to discover the nature of the debate or repression that leads to the appearance of timeless permanence in binary gender representation.'[4]

Binary gender representations are not only symbols in high culture and metaphysics. On the contrary, they have permeated most layers of society. In the texts analysed in this thesis, binary gender representations are found when women and men are categorized as two distinctly separate entities, or even as opposing entities. Thus a popular motif in anecdotes is the verbal battle between a man and a woman (see ch. 4 and 6). Moreover, this tendency has been shown by anthropological studies from various geographical areas. An example could be illuminating, even though it is quite far from the context of our texts. In the 1950s, Jean and Robert Pehrson found that nomad women and men among the Marri Baluch in Pakistan often saw each other as enemies: 'The dichotomy of the sexes is particularly dramatized in the husband-wife relationship, which is frequently represented by the informants as a relationship of structurally inevitable opposition and hostility.'[5]

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1 Ibid.
2 Bal, *Death*, 5 and 20-21.
3 For instance when she justifies her deconstructive readings before traditional feminist readings of the Bible: 'For it is not the sexist interpretation of the Bible as such that bothers me. It is the possibility of dominance itself, the attractiveness of coherence and authority in culture, that I see as the source, rather than the consequence, of sexism.' Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.
4 Scott, *Gender*, 43. Mariana Valverde suggests that narratology is a useful method for 'interpretation of historical systems of signs' in a comment in *Journal of Women's History* 1993, published in Sue Morgan, ed., *The Feminist History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), 171.
5 Robert N. Pehrson, *The Social Organization of the Marri Baluch*, ed. Fredrik Barth (New York: 1966), 51.

Other historians suggest that in earlier history gender was not defined as a binary opposition, but as a hierarchy.[1] Nevertheless, hierarchy might well be implied in the binary opposition. Historically, the dominant position of the man in a binary gender representation is the norm and that of the woman is its opposite. Yet the understanding of 'women', as well as 'men', is not stable; it shifts not only historically and geographically, but also between different social and cultural contexts at the same time and location. In the words of Denise Riley: '"women" is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; "women" is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned'.[2]

The fact that binary representation of gender is also predominantly hierarchical does not mean that 'women' are always subordinated in specific and actual situations. In this regard, 'power relationship' is a useful concept as well as an analytic tool, which often indicates a relationship where power is not static. Power is of course not an uncomplicated notion, which, in the analytical model of 'power relationship', certainly but not automatically might have wider consequences. In practice, women could often have the upper hand in power relationships. In addition, reality and literature are always much more subtle and nuanced than concepts and systems. Still, the fact that a woman might be the dominant party in a power relationship, as well as acting as an independent subject, does not mean that the assumption of a gender hierarchy is refuted, or, as Bennett puts it: 'Women's history has shown, again and again, that women have not been merely passive victims of sexual inequality; women have also colluded in, undermined, survived, and sometimes even benefited from the presence of patriarchy.'[3] Gerda Lerner, whose study of women in, among others, Near Eastern history, is a source of inspiration for this thesis, suggests that: 'The basic assumption with which we must start any theorizing about the past is that men and women built civilization jointly…Once we abandon the concept of women as historical victims, acted upon by

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1 Anna Clark in *Journal of Women's History* 1993, published in Morgan, ed., *History*, 169.
2 Denise Riley, 'Does Sex Have a History?,' in *The Feminist History Reader*, ed., Sue Morgan (London: Routledge, 2006), 150.
3 Bennett, *History Matters*, 10. See also Gerda Lerner, *Women and History: The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

violent men …we must explain the central puzzle – woman's participation in the construction of the system that subordinates her.'[1]

In this context, Deniz Kandiyoti's notion of 'patriarchal bargain', which she derived from studies of, among others, Middle Eastern societies, might be relevant.[2] The Middle East is, according to Kandiyoti, a 'classic patriarchy', defined as patrilineal and patrilocal.[3] Kandiyoti criticizes the use of patriarchy as an abstract notion, and calls for 'a more culturally and temporally grounded understanding of patriarchal systems'.[4] Her concept of patriarchal bargains opens for an understanding of women's strategies in patriarchal societies. For example, in the traditional patrilocal extended family, where the young brides are subordinated to their mothers-in-law, these young women can expect a revered position when they grow older with their own daughters-in-law submissive to them, if they follow the rules set up for them and give birth to sons. This possible reward may lead to women's internalizing of the rules of patriarchy, and maximizing of their advantages from it with the help of their own 'individual power tactics', often built on manipulations.[5] As a consequence, women may find advantages in societies seemingly restrictive to them and resist innovations that are outwardly profitable for them.

> The institution of purdah [seclusion], and other similar status markers, further reinforces women's subordination and their economic dependence on men. However, the observance of restrictive practices is such a crucial element in the reproduction of family status that women will resist breaking the rules, even if observing them produces economic hardship. They forego economically

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1 Lerner, *Creation*, 36. Leila Ahmed relies on Lerner in her *Women and Gender in Islam*. However, in the part on women in early Islam, she tends to declare Muslim women to be exactly 'historical victims', acted upon by men, as well as by ancient Near Eastern and Greek practices, while Islam in its essence is an advantageous religion for women.
2 Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society* 2, no. 3 (1988). Numerous studies of women's conditions have been inspired by Kandiyoti's concept of 'patriarchal bargain', in that it allows recognizing women as subjects, not only passive victims, although they might be theoretically (and of course practically) subordinated. See for example Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Ingvild Flaskerud, eds., *Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East: Two Hundred Years of History* (New York: Berg, 2005).
3 Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining', 278.
4 Ibid., 274.
5 Ibid., 280.

advantageous options …for alternatives that are perceived as in keeping with their respectable and protected domestic roles, and so they become more exploitable.[1]

The notion of patriarchal bargain could be valuable when analysing the women's positions and choices in the texts below, as it allows an understanding of women's agency and ability to maximize their advantages within the limits given.

On a semantic level, conceptions of gender may be expressed in language, often as binary oppositions. Over time, words which involve women have often acquired negative connotations, in a process of historical 'semantic derogation' of women.[2] In proverbs, words with negative denotations used as metaphors could easily denote women in general terms, i.e. all women are such and such. In our material we will find that a woman could be called, for example, a 'lousy leather collar'.[3] These negative metaphors are quite easy to detect; no deeper analysis is needed. It would be more interesting to look into their positions in the wider context, the reactions to these expressions and their historical significance, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Texts that draw on such negative metaphors are clearly misogynist, a literary trend that was also flourishing in medieval European literature.[4]

Critical readings of texts are particularly fit for uncovering the ideologies 'within' them, as texts both respond to and help in creating ideologies. As maintained by Scott, 'the question about *how* hierarchies such as those of gender are constructed or legitimized' is a study of 'rhetoric or discourse' rather than of 'ideology or consciousness'.[5] Yet it is also possible to maintain that it is exactly the rhetoric and discourse

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1 Ibid.

2 Margaret Gibbon, *Feminist Perspectives on Language* (London: Longman, 1999), 25.

3 غُلّ قَمِل Ibn Qutayba, '*Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1930), 2, see p. 91 n. 1 below.

4 Cf. Howard R. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). A much more delicate question is whether the pragmatic grammatical level of a language can be analysed from a feminist perspective. Of course, the fact that the masculine gender is the norm in the language reflects social biases, as expressed by Denis Baron: 'the masculine in language, whether in word choice or in grammatical form, is assumed to be the norm, while the feminine is ignored or barely noticed. This reflects a distorted world view in which women function as the second sex and language simply holds a mirror up to nature.' Dennis Baron, *Grammar and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 2.
Yet this normalization of one gender to the exclusion of the other is the result of a long process, the origin of which is impossible to detect.

5 Scott, *Gender*, 4.

that feature the ideology, and ideology that shapes rhetoric and discourse. According to Bal, narrative is 'a genre function in the dynamics of ideology'.[1] She distinguishes between the overt ideology expressed in 'non-narrative comments' in a text, and the 'naturalized ideology' hidden in the story or 'embodied in the narrative representations'.[2] This division between overt ideology and naturalized ideology might be functional when reading Ibn Qutayba's text, which consists precisely of a mixture between non-narrative comments and stories. However, it is not the 'overall ideology' Bal is interested in, but 'the gaps, breaks, inconsistencies, and problems that any ideology necessarily entails', which she labels 'textual problems'.[3]

The hidden ideologies are of course more subtle and difficult to distinguish, especially if the text was written more than a thousand years ago. Nevertheless, if literary works have been quoted, written down, rewritten and memorized by several transmitters, and thus preserved for more than one thousand years, we might assume that they conformed to enough representations of a current ideology accepted by a not insignificant number of people with culturally influential positions. Similarly, the author would not have been authorized and remembered if he was not at all consistent with the network of values and beliefs that forms a hegemonial ideology. He could certainly be in conflict with some of them, or refer to another network of values and beliefs than the one of the dominant culture, but he would probably not be able to talk and be transmitted if he totally opposed the fundamentals of the network he referred to. In addition, the texts analysed in this thesis belong to the historical discourse, which is always essentially ideological.[4]

## Method

The method chosen for the analyses is that of narrative theory, or narratology, as I consider it to be a useful and rational tool for analysing the literary work *as text*. Derived from structuralism,

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1 Bal, *Death*, 33.
2 Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2 ed. (Toronty: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 31.
3 Bal, *Death*, 34.
4 See Roland Barthes, 'Le discourse de l'histoire', *Information sur les sciences sociales* 6, no. 4 (1967): 73.

narratology is characterized by a certain systematic rigor. Although its earlier practitioners' urge for universalism was somewhat futile, as they based their developments on European classics and did not seriously test the assumed universality, I regard its focus on observable structures and linguistic phenomena as perhaps the most reliable basis for a modern interpreter to approach a pre-modern text, together with linguistic skills and adequate knowledge of the historical context. Ideally, narratology is 'an unproblematic point of reference for interpretations with different perspectives'.[1] Even if there is always an interpretative component in the analysis, narratology should at least ensure that the interpretations are based on the actual text.

However, the following analyses will not approach literary forms as interesting in themselves but as conveyers of meaning. Thus language and narrative forms will be examined with the aim to uncover, if possible, the relations between form and meaning, between forms and women's textual positions, and between women's textual positions and gender constructions. These relations, in turn, can help an examination of the gender ideologies in the society they were produced in.

Consequently, narratology will be used in this thesis as a heuristic tool, in accordance with the view that 'narratology is not a theory but a heuristic for interpretation'.[2] Bal argues that the narratological model might at least make the analyses comprehensible and possible to follow, used as 'a heuristic tool that reveals problems rather than solves them'.[3] Narratology as a heuristic and intellectual tool makes the analyses accessible and should be used in the service of a critical practice.[4] Bal holds a fairly optimistic but not overwhelmingly positive motivation for using narratology as a ground for analysis of the Old Testament: 'Needless to say, this method is not all-encompassing. It does, however, allow us to establish connections between textual features and social meanings, and that is more than most methods of either historical or literary schools do.'[5]

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1 Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, 'Narrative Theory and/or/as Theory of Interpretation,' in *What is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 211.
2 Ibid., 208.
3 Bal, *Death*, 21.
4 Mieke Bal, *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology*, ed. David Jobling (Sonoma, Calif.:Polebridge Press, 1991), 27 and Bal, *Narratology,* 4.
5 Bal, *Death*, 32.

INTRODUCTION

The analyses will rely on the narratological models outlined by Mieke Bal and Gérard Genette. Bal has already been referred to in several instances, and her theories are influential on this thesis. Genette is a main theorist of the narratological school which focused on the discourse, the way a story is narrated, rather than the story itself, the plot and the characters. The narrative theory of Bal elaborates Genette's narratology, using his terminology in parts while changing other parts. Bal owes much to Genette's pioneer work on narrative discourse, although she has also been his ardent critic.[1] In brief, she combines Greimas' focus on the plot, with its actants and actors (characters), with Genette's focus on the discourse and the narrating.[2]

The fundamental distinction in Genette's narratology is the one between *histoire* (story), *récit* (narrative) and *narration* (narrating).[3] Story is used in the common sense of the word, 'the totality of the narrated events', which are, so to speak, the events outside or beyond the narrative. Narrative is 'the discourse, oral or written, that narrates them', that is, the text we have access to, and are able to evaluate. Narrating, finally, is 'the real or fictive act that produces that discourse'.[4] Genette's focus lies on the relationship between these levels: between narrative and story, narrative and narrating, and story and narrating.[5] The relation between narrating and narrative is what he calls the *narrating instance* or situation.[6] Another of Genette's terms that will be defined below is *focalization*, which regulates the narrative information.

Bal, in turn, uses a somewhat different distinction, between the layers *text*, *story*, and *fabula*.[7] She summarizes her version of narratology as follows:

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1 Mieke Bal, 'The Point of Narratology', *Poetics Today* 11, no. 4 (1990): 728-29, and Mieke Bal, ed., *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, *Major Issues in Narrative theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.
2 Algirdas Julien Greimas, *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*, trans. Paul Perron and Frank Collins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106-20.
3 Hereafter the English terms will be used. The three distinctions are often referred to as 'levels', e.g. by Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 27, and also by Bal, even though she sometimes uses terms such as 'layers', or 'planes', to distinguish them from the more technical term 'narrative level'.
4 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1988), 13; see also Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 27.
5 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 29. Narrating is the translator's rendering of narration. Bal prefers to use the word 'narration' for narrating; see below.
6 Ibid., 31.
7 Bal, *Narratology*, 6.

> A narrative text is a linguistic text, hierarchically organized, in which a subject recounts a story, that is, the vision, focalized by a subject, of a fabula […] The key terms are *text*, *story*, and *fabula*, which describe the three constitutive levels of the text; and *subject*, which entails an *object* as its necessary complement. With the help of the concept of *level*, derived from a hierarchical conception of linguistics, it is possible to construct the model of this theory.[1]

Fabula, in Bal's sense, is more or less equivalent to Genette's term 'story', defined as 'a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors', while story, in Bal's terminology, is the textual presentation of the fabula, more or less equivalent to Genette's narrative.[2] Finally, text is the text, the work of art, the film, i.e. the artefact in which 'a narrative agent tells a story'.[3] Defined as such, this layer is more or less equivalent to Genette's narrating. In her application of this narrative model, Bal uses the less theoretical distinction between 'level of speech' (which she also calls the level of narration or language), 'level of vision', and 'level of the fabula' (which she also calls the level of action).[4] These are simply the activities that mould out the layers above: narration (and of course language) shapes the text; vision (or more technically focalization) singles out which of the events in the fabula will be included in the story, and how they will be organized; and finally, actions move the fabula forward.

The terminology and concepts which have been considered useful for the analyses in this thesis are summarized below. Genette's model has a functionality that makes it appealing for a first study of a text, although it naturally does not apply to all texts from all periods. In addition to this, I find it useful to apply Bal's model for subject-positions and roles, not least as she has used them for feminist

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1 Bal, *Story-Telling*, 155.
2 Bal, *Narratology*, 5.
3 Ibid., 16.
4 See Bal, *Death,* 35 and the table in her appendix. Narration is the same as Genette's narrating (in the English translation); for Bal's use of it, see specifically Bal, *Narratology*.

interpretations of ancient texts. Nonetheless, I object to Bal's linking of subjectivity with psychoanalytic theory, finding it anachronistic as a model for reading ancient texts and inconsistent with her otherwise scientific approach.[1] Still, as her psychoanalytic interpretations are related to the receptions of the Old Testament text and modern response to Biblical women, rather than the historical context of its origins, they are probably valuable in that perspective. Genette's distinction between story, narrative and narrating will be used, as they are more established and easier to handle. Furthermore, Genette's terminology for narrative situation will be used, and sometimes elaborated on. As to focalization, Bal's elaboration of Genette's term will be applied. Moreover, while Genette focuses on the discourse, Bal also pays attention to the plot and the characters, which is of central interest for the analyses in this thesis where her model for subject-positions is essential.

The analyses in this thesis are roughly divided into two parts: Chapter 3 focuses on the narrative discourse, using Genette's terminology, while Chapter 4 uses Bal's terminology on subject-positions. Chapters 5 and 6, in turn, combine both models.

## Narrative rhythm, situation and focalization

Genette offers a systematic account of the relationships between story time and narrative time, with the help of tools such as order, duration and frequency. As to order, Genette disentangles systematically different kinds of anachronisms. As we will see, order is a complicated question in medieval Arabic literature, where deviations from chronological order are the rule. Genette's terminology would certainly give a picture of the 'disorder' in the medieval compilations, but without being able to contribute to this complicated question. Duration, on the other hand, or what Genette labels 'speed', is a concept that will be taken into account in the narratological analyses of the texts.[2] The narrative speed is organized into four basic forms, or narrative *movements*.[3] These movements are *ellipsis, pause, scene* and *summary*. The alternation between them makes up the rhythm of the narrative. Until the end of the nineteenth century, scene and summary were the

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1 Scott also has objections against psychoanalysis as a valuable method for historical research, at least its universal claim. Scott, *Gender*, 44.
2 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 87.
3 Ibid., 93-94.

dominating rhythm in European literature: 'summary remained…the most usual transition between two scenes, the "background" against which scenes stand out'.[1] This is indeed also the case with the classical Arabic narratives, where descriptive pause is rare.[2]

Genette's terms for explaining the narrative situation, also called the narrative instance, will be helpful for describing the classical Arabic texts in this thesis.[3] Narrative situation is defined by Genette as 'the way in which the narrating itself is implicated in the narrative'.[4] More specifically, it refers to the relations between the narrator and the story narrated. To understand this relation, an examination has to be made of narrative level and person.[5] Genette uses the term *diégèse* for the universe in which the story takes place, which is not similar to the story itself. This word has been rendered *diegesis* in English, which is confusing as *diegesis* is Plato's term for pure narrative, in contrast to *mimesis*, the dialogue.[6] From the word *diégèse* Genette derives adjectives defining the narrative levels, *diegetic*, *extradiegetic*, *intradiegetic*, and *metadiegetic*.[7] The narrating instance of the first narrative is extradiegetic; it takes place outside the diegesis, and thus its narrator is extradiegetic. This narrator is the first narrator, and could be the real author or the fictive author. The events he/she narrates are inside the diegesis, and thus called diegetic or intradiegetic. The narrative that is narrated by a diegetic narrator takes place inside the first narrative; this second narrative is labelled metadiegetic. As examples of extradiegetic and diegetic narrations, Genette provides various European classics. Defoe is the author of Robinson Crusoe, but he is not interesting for narratological analysis. Robinson is the extradiegetic narrator, as well as a character in his own story.[8] Furthermore, metadiegetic or second-degree narrative is, according to Genette, 'a form that goes back to the very origins of epic narrating', with examples such as *Odyssey* and *Thousand and One Nights*.[9] In several instances, Genette takes *Thousand and One Nights* as the classic

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1 Ibid., 97.
2 On the other hand, poetry might have a descriptive function in these texts (see p. 37-38).
3 Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 212-15.
4 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 31.
5 Ibid., 215.
6 Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 17-18.
7 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 228ff.
8 Ibid., 229.
9 Ibid., 231.

example of complex narrative levels.[1] When Scheherazade narrates her stories, as she is inside the diegesis, and thus a diegetic narrator. The events she relates, in turn, take place on a metadiegetic level, and when some of the characters she narrates about relate a story, they are metadiegetic narrators.

In Bal's application of the narratological model to the Book of Judges, she identifies speaking with narraing, and treats any speaking character as a diegetic narrator. The narrator might, so to speak, delegate the narrating to a character who speaks in direct discourse (Genette's *reported speech*). Bal calls this speaking character the *hypodiegetic* narrator.[2] She prefers the term hypodiegetic to Genette's metadiegetic in this respect, as Genette claims that the narrative inside a narrative occurs on a higher level, while Bal maintains that this level should be considered as lower.[3] In her view, the first narrator narrates on the lowest level, and the characters act on the lowest level in the diegesis. Direct speech on this level could be, according to Bal, hypodiegetic narration. Indirect speech (Genette's *narratized speech*), on the other hand, is no longer speech; it is integrated into the narrative, becoming 'an event like any other'.[4] Furthermore, the fact that direct speech occupies a place apart from narrative is demonstrated by a linguistic feature: it 'is inserted into the narrative text by the use of a mark of transition, most often a declarative verb.'[5] In the medieval Arabic narratives, the 'mark of transition' is a formula, the verbal phrase 'he/she said' (*qāla/qālat*). However, this does not mean that all direct speech is hypodiegetic narration. In order to become narration, it has, according to Bal, to 'be brought about, if only virtually, by the agents that define the narrative'; otherwise the direct speech is 'hypo-discourse', but not narration.[6] In another context, she explains this as '[w]henever direct speech occurs in the text, it is as if the narrator temporarily transfers this function to one of the actors'.[7] Certainly it might not always be easy to discern the 'agents that define the narrative'. Yet I believe that the extension of the concept of narration to

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1 Ibid., 31, 33 and 214.
2 Bal, *Story-Telling*, 90.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 81.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 90.
7 Bal, *Narratology*, 8.

characters is useful for analysing the classical Arabic texts, with their predilection for direct speech and elaborated narrative levels. The texts are full of quotations, i.e. narrations of narrations, and the narrative act does not stop with the first narrator. He/she might well quote one of the characters, who, in turn, becomes a narrator without the formal recognition of it, i.e. being named in the *isnād* (see below, p. 35). The analyses in this thesis will allow for consideration of both the speakers and the narrators, not always distinguished as different categories since the system of narrative levels sometimes makes a distinction impractical or even impossible. Scenes with direct speech in the medieval Arabic text serve both as a dramatic device, mentioned above, and as a legitimating device (see ch. 3). The imitating of the narrating act in the scenes provides the text with a kind of authority. Moreover, as the summarized narratives are generally told from the outside (what Genette would call *external* focalization, see below), a character's feelings and thoughts are not revealed except when she/he, or someone else, speaks about them, in direct speech. In addition, scenes in narrative are often the only opportunities for women to narrate in medieval Arabic literature (except in the pious literature, as we will see below). The effect is the same whether the talking woman is a narrator or a speaker; the text allows her to speak with her own words, fictional or not. The difference is that the actor always plays a role in the story, while the narrator does not.[1]

A second set of terms that is useful in this thesis is related to person. Genette criticizes the common categorization of narratives in 'first-person' and 'third-person', as the narrator always is the first-person of his/her narrative.[2] 'Person' is a grammatical and rhetorical choice only, and is not always relevant for describing the narrative situation. Instead, it is the relationship of the narrator to the story that has to be illuminated. Genette prefers the terms *heterodiegetic*, where the narrator is absent from the story he/she tells, and *homodiegetic*, where the narrator is also one of the characters.[3] The distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic is one of the most useful of Genette's tools in the analyses of classical Arabic narratives. The status of the homodiegetic narrator differs. She/he might be the hero of the story, a

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1 Ibid., 9.
2 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 243-44, and Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 97.
3 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 245.

status Genette designates *autodiegetic*.[1] The narrator might also be a witness, an observer with a secondary role in the events taking place.[2] The witness-narrator might have a narrative function of 'setting off the hero'.[3] In the classical Arabic texts analysed below, we will find all these positions of the homodiegetic narrator.

Genette's term focalization is more or less the same as 'point of view' but with less emphasis on the visual, being more of 'the focus of narration'.[4] The focalizer is the character 'whose point of view orients the narrative perspective', not necessarily the same as the narrator.[5] Genette suggests that there are three types of possible focalizations in narratives.[6] The first type has no focalization at all, zero focalization; the narrator is omnipotent and knows more than the characters know. The second type is internal focalization, where one or several characters are focalized and the narrator knows only what the character knows. The third type is external focalization, where the narrator has no access to the characters' minds at all; the characters are focalized from outside.

Bal points out a flaw in this description, namely that the actual distinction between Genette's second and third types is that in the second, a character 'sees', while in the third he/she 'is seen', i.e. the character is either subject or object of focalization.[7] Yet the concept of focalization is what Bal finds most valuable in Genette's theory, although she argues that he does not elaborate its critical potential, without which the analysis does nothing but repeat the ideology of the texts.[8] She finds the distinction between narrator and focalizer essential, and she elaborates the concept of focalization further, providing it with an ideological aspect.[9] Focalization is much more than point of view – it is the 'centre of interest', including selection, vision and presentation.[10] The most significant realization of the focalizing act is the representation of the characters in a story; while presenting the character to the reader, the focalizer directs her/his understanding of the

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1 Ibid.
2 Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 245.
3 Ibid., 102.
4 Ibid., 189.
5 Ibid., 186.
6 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 189-90.
7 Bal, *Story-Telling*, 83.
8 E.g. ibid., 75ff, 84.
9 E.g. ibid., 3 and 80.
10 Ibid., 92.

character: 'The reader can interpret – indeed, can pass judgment on – a character. That is because, in one way or another, the character is readable, or shall we say "visible": the reader "sees" it. The reader sees it through the medium of an agent other than the character, an agent that sees and, seeing, causes to be seen.'[1]

This does not mean, however, that focalization is static. On the contrary, focalization may shift rapidly in a narrative; the focalized character may him/herself become the focalizer. This would, in Bal's understanding of the terms, be a shift from external to internal focalization.[2] The external focalizer is anonymous, and often indistinguishable from the extradiegetic narrator. In such a case, the narrator and the focalizer are still two autonomous entities, although they are mutually dependent; Bal calls them 'narrator-focalizer'.[3] A subtle analysis of how focalization shifts between characters in a story might reveal something about the power play between them.[4]

## Subject-positions

The unearthing of the agent on the different levels of the text is a main concern in Bal's narratology. Her theory of agents is basically about what she labels a text's *subjectivity*.[5] In her version of narratology, the agent of acting is as important as the agents of narrating and focalizing. To Genette's two simple questions for identifying the narrator and the focalizer, *Who speaks?* and *Who sees?*, Bal adds a third: *Who acts?*[6] Emphasizing these three questions, Bal thus shifts focus to the agents, the acting subjects on the various levels: narrators, focalizers, and actors. In *Death and Dissymmetry*, Bal elaborates the three levels in regard to women's *subject-positions*, narrative *roles* and 'the success and distribution of *actions*'.[7] These three elements (positions, roles and actions) are the foundation for her analytical model, each with various aspects operating on the three levels.[8] The role on the level of narrating

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1 Ibid., 87.
2 Ibid., 92.
3 Ibid., 94.
4 See for example Bal's analysis of The Cat by Colette, Ibid. 94ff.
5 Ibid., 94, 160.
6 Bal, *Lethal Love*, 20.
7 Bal, *Death*, 35.
8 The model is found in a lucid figure in Bal, *Story-Telling*, 160. This figure is further elaborated in the tables in Bal, *Story-Telling,* 166-67, and Bal, *Death*, 248-49. In my short presentation of this model, I have synthesized some of the ideas in the tables.

is speaker, while the possible positions here are grammatical subject (or object) vis-à-vis causal subject. The action taking place at this level is speech.  On the level of narrative, the role is focalizer and the action is focalization. The positions on this level are as privileged focalizer vis-à-vis lack of vision. An analysis of the positions taken might reveal the ideological centre. The role on the last level, the level of story, is actor, while the action taking place is acting, or rather, the way of acting (behaviour) and its effect. The subject-positions here might be for example the initiating of actions and accomplishing of them.

The term 'subject-position' is rooted in linguistics, derived from the grammatical subject of the verb. However, the subjects of narration, focalization and action do not have to be grammatical subjects. Conversely, the grammatical subject does not have to be causal subject. In fact, the grammatical subject may conceal the causal subject, who is the character responsible for an event, as when Jephthah's daughter is allowed to speak in Judges 11:36: 'Speech turns the daughter into the grammatical subject, an efficient way to repress the identity of the subject responsible for the event, in other words, the *causal* subject.'[1]

In addition to a subject, every activity has an object: the narrated (on the level of narration), the focalized (on the level of focalization), and the acted upon (on the level of the action).[2] The relation between subject and object is essential in Bal's theory of agents; the question 'who is acted upon' is as important as 'who acts'.[3] Hence, an investigation of the subjects also includes the objects, and opens for a study of power-relationships. The power-relationships are never static; the object can at any time turn into a subject and vice versa. However, some object-positions are never transformed to subjects; these are the object-positions which I will label *absolute object*. It is this absolute lack of subject-position which is the opposite of power in the diegesis.[4] The lack of subject-position may be ideological, as Bal finds in her analyses of women's positions in the Book of Judges: 'the textual figurations of subject-positions open to women or closed off from them

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1 Bal, *Death*, 36.
2 Cf. Bal, *Story-Telling*, 87-88.
3 Cf. ibid., 80ff.
4 Bal, *Death*, 32-33.

give some insight into what sort of lives, what sort of contributions to society, were, not so much "real", but "*thinkable*" for women.'[1]

The characters in a story are involved in a *network of subjects* – they are relating to each other according to the degree of power they are provided with in the narrative.[2] The degree of power of a character is measured by its possibility to act as a subject of narrating, focalizing and acting, as outlined by Bal in for example the first chapter of *Death and Dissymmetry*.[3] The distribution of power among the characters in a network of subjects might be detected by an analysis of their possibilities to act as subjects: whether they are allowed to speak and act, and whether their words and action have any significance in the story, as well as whether their vision is taken into account.

Besides upgrading the characters in a story, Bal pays attention to narrative roles. This, in turn, opens for an analysis in line with Bal's rebellious project: to read against the apparent 'intention' of the text – the project she labels countercoherence (see above, 16). A character with no subject-position whatsoever may all the same play a crucial narrative role.[4] As an example, Bal refers to the women given and taken in marriage in Judges 3:6.[5] In Bal's view, their role in the narrative is to trigger Yahweh's anger, which has severe complications, such as the ensuing war. Hence, the role of the women given and taken is essential, as without it the subsequent events in Judges 3:8-9 would not have taken place at all.[6] Likewise, the fact that a character is, for example, subject of speech does not mean that she is automatically enjoying power or playing a narrative role. She might have a totally insignificant role in the network of subjects she is part of, or her speech might be powerless in a false dialogue, which in fact is more or less a monologue in the imperative.[7] Similarly, the subject of action may not be the initiator of it. She may only act on someone else's behalf, without the freedom to choose the kind of action.[8]

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1 Ibid., 32-33.
2 For 'network of subject-positions' see ibid., 234, although I use the term slightly differently (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6, where I use it for 'network of characters' and the distribution of power between the characters).
3 See also her reading of Colette's novel The Cat, where the male character is privileged, as he is for the most part entrusted with the narrating and focalizing: Bal, *Story-Telling*, 94-107.
4 Bal, *Death*, 33.
5 Ibid., 32.
6 Ibid., 33.
7 Cf. Bal, *Story-Telling*, 161.
8 Ibid., 162.

Some of Bal's examples are immediately applicable to the texts analysed in this thesis, perhaps because she derives them from the Hebrew Bible, whose language and motives have a distant affinity with the classical Arabic narrative. Linguistic features to pay attention to are, for example, imperatives and questions.[1] They may connote power; the one who gives an order has power, as well as, depending on the context, the one who answers a question. The question might be used to emphasize someone's authority in the pious texts, while the imperative might be played with in the subtle and elegant power play in the profane texts. Another linguistic feature is the passive transformation, where the grammatical subject is no longer the causal subject.[2] There is, as Bal points out, a striking difference between the two sentences 'This girl was raped' and 'A man raped this girl'.[3] In the first sentence, nobody is responsible for the action, which becomes a state more than an event. This observation will have implications for the reading of the texts analysed below, where women tend not to be active subjects but objects or passive subjects of certain activities.

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1 Ibid., 161.
2 Ibid., 162-63.
3 Ibid., 162.

# Chapter 2: Background

The ‘Abbāsid dynasty came to power after a revolution in 132/750, and ruled the vast Muslim empire for almost two centuries.[1] After 334/946, the ‘Abbāsid caliphs remained in Baghdad, until the invasion of the Mongols in 1258, but practically without political influence. During the early ‘Abbāsid period, influence was successively transferred from the Arabs, who dominated the Umayyad caliphate in 41-132/661-750, to the conquered people, the non-Arabs and new converts.[2] The caliph himself was of Arab descent, at least in the male line, which was what counted. The ‘Abbāsid family claimed to be related to the prophet Muḥammad, but the Persian administrators and later the predominantly Turkish military commanders held real political power. The cultural and intellectual climate was prospering, which granted the scholarly and intellectual products of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate abiding influence. One main condition for this was of course the economic prosperity due to industry and trade.[3] The successful conquests brought wealth to many; especially the court accumulated enormous riches, which were partly spent on sponsorship of poets, musicians and intellectuals.[4] This period has often been called the heyday of Islam.[5]

The caliph moved to the new capital Baghdad in the former Sasanid area. Iraq at this time was a multiethnic society.[6] The inhabitants belonged to a diversity of religions; there were Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Gnostics, and Muslims.[7] Persians with influential positions in the Sasanid state converted to Islam and retained their influence in

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1 The literature about the ‘Abbasid Empire is extensive. For some standard works, see among others Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East From the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (London: Longman, 1986), and Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
2 See Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 134.
3 See Bernard Lewis, "Abbāsids,' in EI², vol 1:19.
4 See Hugh Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliph*s (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004) esp. ch. 5, 'Poetry and Power at the Early Abbasid Court'.
5 'The Abbasid caliphate in the eighth and ninth centuries was as central and pivotal to world history as the Roman Empire was in the first and second. Like the Roman Empire, its legacy was to influence politics and the development of society for generations to come.' Ibid., xxiii-xxiv.
6 See Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 169-274.
7 Ibid., 277-509.

the new Empire.[1] Christians with knowledge of Greek and Syriac contributed translations of the Hellenic intellectual tradition.[2]

When new groups converted to Islam, the opposition against the Arab aristocracy grew. Meanwhile, activities took part among religious scholars in places such as Medina, Kufa and Basra in order to settle the philosophy and practice of Islam. Since the Umayyad period, scholars had collected ḥadīths, sayings and traditions from the Prophet and the first umma, sorting out of correct ḥadīths from false, and discussed the interpretation of the Qur'ān, sometimes in opposition to the central power.[3] This trend continued under the 'Abbāsids in the elaboration of the Islamic law, sharī'a.[4] It involved not only the writing of Islamic jurisprudence, but also history-writing, especially the early history of the Prophet and the Muslim community, regarded as the sacred history of Islam.[5] However, even if Arabs were no longer in the majority, and no longer had a monopoly on power and influence, Arab values were still associated with the origins of Islam, and considered as important for the Muslim identity. Pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry were studied in order to define the correct Arabic language. This linguistic concern was also a religious one, as correct Arabic language was the language God used when he sent down the Qur'ān. Yet correct Arabic could not be the only reason for preserving this enormous corpus of narratives and poetry from and about the Arabs in 'Abbāsid literature, which sometimes, or rather often, conflicted with Islamic values. It rather served as representing the distant past, no longer existent, against which the modern 'Abbāsid individual could distinguish his/her own society.[6] The Arabs belonged to a shared Muslim past, when men were warriors and women were actively promoting the interests of their tribes.

As to women's role in the intellectual activities, it seems to have been limited, at least in what has been preserved for posterity. There are for example no women writers. Yet there were women transmitters, narrators and poets, whose words have been preserved. In 'Abbāsid

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1 See Lewis, "Abbāsids,' 17.
2 See Hodgson, *Classical Age,* 235.
3 See e.g. ibid., 247-56.
4 See e.g. ibid., 315-45.
5 See Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 45.
6 See Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 126-27 for her discussion on this topic.

society professional women such as ʿArīb seem to have had an important role in the cultural milieu.  However, their number should not be exaggerated. Then again, women were the object of debate, analysed and pictured in numerous literary passages. They were occasionally treated as actors in the society by historians, and their duties and proper behaviour were discussed by the jurisprudents and other religious scholars.

## ʿAbbāsid literature: genres and forms

ʿAbbāsid literary production is characterized by its creativity and breadth. An enormous quantity of literature was produced during this era in several fields with different genres, such as the various religious sciences, philosophy, philology, legal literature, administration and government, historical writing, natural science, poetry and belles-lettres.[1] In the renderings below, I will distinguish between historical writing and adab, the two genres to which the texts in this thesis belong. However, the ʿAbbāsid writers did not always themselves acknowledge the separation in different genres. *Adab* (belles-lettres), for example, was not seen as a separate genre.[2] Both adab and history-writing may contain narrative units with historical content as well as poetry.

 As for the texts that will be submitted to analysis below, they are not cohesive, long narratives; instead they are broken up into shorter units, from one sentence to one page long. These units are labelled *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*). The khabar is a short detached narrative, depicting a whole episode, a detail of an episode or an issue connected with it. It is introduced by a chain of transmitters, an *isnād*, while the narrated information is called *matn.* This easily quoted narrative contributes to the eclectic nature of the classical Arabic literature. One specific khabar could be inserted in practically any genre or form of classical Arabic literature. A narrative in the khabar form about an event in the prophet Muḥammad's life, for instance an encounter with one of his companions, belongs to the genre of ḥadīth literature due to its subject matter, which in turn belongs to the wider genre of religious literature.

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1 For a broad overview of the genres and categories of Abbasid literature, see Julia Ashtiany et al., eds., ʿ*Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and M. J. Young et al., eds*., Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period*, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
2 See Ashtiany et al., eds., ʿ*Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, xi.

However, the same narrative may as well be inserted in a history book depicting the history of the first umma, or a biography of either Muḥammad himself or of this particular follower. In this case it belongs to the genre of history-writing. The main formal differences between the literary works are the arrangement and selection of akhbār and choice of additional material. In addition to akhbār, *Ṭabaqāt* includes genealogical lists. Ibn Qutayba's *'Nisā'* amalgates akhbār with poetry, sayings, proverbs, and popular tales. *Aghānī* consists of akhbār that very often include poetry.

The khabar form comprises both ḥadīths and what is commonly labelled anecdotes, terms which describe the content of the khabar. Whereas anecdotes are chiefly entertaining, ḥadīths tend to be didactic and normative. As to anecdotes, one distinguishing feature is the characterizing of a person rather than the narration of an event.[1] They should preferably depict known personalities, as stated by al-Jāḥiẓ: 'Anecdotes are only truly interesting when one knows the characters and can trace them back to their sources by establishing a kind of contact with their protagonists. If they are separated from their elements and their context, then half of their piquancy and originality is suppressed.'[2] The anecdote has to be 'complete', according to the classical definition given here by Lionel Grossman: 'What most people would consider the classical anecdote is a highly concentrated miniature narrative with a strikingly dramatic three-act structure consisting of situation or exposition, encounter of crisis, and resolution – the last usually marked by a "point" or clinching remark, often a "bon mot".'[3].

As to the ḥadīth, the term is often used interchangeably with khabar.[4] Rather, it is formally a khabar with a specific content. Initially both khabar and ḥadīth were narratives about the life of the Prophet and sayings by him, but it was the latter which was to become the technical

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1 Stefan Leder, 'The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing,' in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1992), 11 and 310. His studiy does not distinguish between khabar and anecdote, neither do , Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 11, and Hartmut Fähndrich, 'The Wafayāt al-Aʻyān of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, no. 4 (1973): 441ff.
2 The quotation is found in the introduction to *Bukhalā'*. It is translated by Pellat and quoted from Ch Pellat, 'Nādira', EI[2], vol. 7.
3 Lionel Gossman, 'Anecdote and History', *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 149.
4 Khalidi, *Thought*, 18, cf. Stefan Leder, 'Prosa-Dichtung in der akhbār Überlieferung', *Der Islam* 64, no. 1 (1987): 6-7.

term for these narratives as they were formed into a specific discipline. Due to its content and connotations, the ḥadīth could be classified as belonging to the wisdom literature, which also embraces proverbs and sayings. In this thesis, I use the term 'proverb' for an anonymous statement, often introduced by a formula, and 'saying' for a statement attributed to a person, well-known or not. Just like the proverb, the saying has a generalizing claim: the individual may represent everyone, and a universal truth may be derived from one single example. A saying by a named authority could formally be classified as a khabar, if uttered in a specific situation. The proverb, on the other hand, is noticeably distinct from the khabar, as it does not refer to a specific situation.

The mixing of prose and poetry is also a characteristic of classical Arabic literature; as stated by Geert Jan van Gelder: 'Classical Arabic literature is full of stories and anecdotes in which poetry plays an essential and crucial role in the plot: it may cause conflicts or prevent them; it may save lives or destroy them'.[1] We find poetry integrated in stories in both *Aghānī* and *Nisā'*. *Ṭabaqāt*, however, does not include poetry, whereas the earliest history-writing uses poetry liberally.[2] Poetry in the khabar literature analysed here does not generally advance the story of the narrative although it may play a crucial role. Poetry may reflect and analyse the events in a narrative. In Wolfhart Heinrichs' study of early khabar literature, he finds two groups of poems: poems that reflect the events (as part of the action or commenting on it) and poems by later poets mentioning subjects in connection with the events or the location of the events.[3] Poems that reflect the events are, according to Heinrichs, legendary and invented by the narrator in order to prove the facts conveyed by the narrative. They most often appear at the end of the narrative, functioning as a proof of its accuracy.[4] Van Gelder has examined the role of poetry in *The Thousand and One Nights*; in these fictive stories poetry may be inserted by the narrator, but more frequently, it may be uttered by one of the characters in the story, sometimes in the form of a letter.[5] The poems are generally not themselves events in the stories, but rather

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1 Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Poetry and the Arabian Nights,' in *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 1, eds. Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 15.
2 Rosenthal, *History*, 67-68.
3 Ibid., 258-59.
4 Ibid., 259.
5 van Gelder, 'Poetry and the Arabian Nights,' 15.

function as complements, in which emotions and visual elements are described. The poetic language is metaphorical and at the same time universal, transforming the particular event into a shared experience.[1] Poetry is also operative in 'Abbāsid anecdotes and romantic tales as expressions of individual emotions.[2]

## Khabar and history

The word khabar seems to allude both to the narrative itself, the story which is told, and to the narrative situation, that is, its transmission.[3] The khabar was probably orally transmitted and it is uncertain at which point it was written down.[4] akhbār were collected in minor works, none of which has survived more than as quotations in later books.[5] The obscure origins and transmissions of these early narratives have made their reliability as sources for historical information a topic of discussion by later scholars – medieval Muslim scholars as well as modern Western.[6] They could be fabricated or, especially if transmitted orally, distorted by memory. This sceptical view is further enhanced by the sometimes flexible relationship between fiction and truth in akhbār. A 'well fabricated lie' could be accepted in certain texts, if it has narrative qualities that 'match the demand for truthfulness'.[7]

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1 Ibid., 16.
2 Bray gives an example of a slave girl who expresses her sincere affection for her owner in a poem: 'Though the [poet's] voice dates from long ago and far away and is that of a free man, not a slave woman, it perfectly reflects her feelings, and even describes the exact details of her situation', Julia Bray, 'Verbs and Voices,' in *Islamic Reflections, Arabic Musings: Studies in Honour of Professor Alan Jones*, eds. Robert G. Hoyland and Philip F. Kennedy (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004), 179.
3 Rosenthal defines the word as signifying both 'information' and the events which are informed about, just like the word 'history': Rosenthal, History, 11.
4 As to the possible oral origin of akhbār and ḥadīths, the debate on this subject is too immense for this chapter, as it is not directly within the scope of interest for this thesis. For a summary of Western scholars' view of the reliability of this material, which is connected with its oral versus written transmission, see Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1998). Khalidi provides two brief but informative overviews of the question of orality and authenticity and of some of the main treatises on these subjects: Khalidi, *Thought* , 20, n. 6 and 26, n. 20. Sezgin holds the most positive opinion when he claims that all names in the isnād refer to written works: Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, bd 1: Qur'ānwissenschaften, Hadīth, Geschichte, Fiqh, Dogmatik, Mystik bis ca 430 H.* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 240. Among the many attempts to date the beginning of writing down the akhbār, see Claude Cahen, 'History and Historians,' in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, eds. Young, et al., 190, where the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (65-88/685-705) is suggested.
5 Cahen, 'History and Historians,' 190.
6 For a modern evaluation of the possibility to attain historical facts from khabar literature, see Leder, 'Khabar.'
7 Stefan Leder, 'Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī', *Oriens* 32 (1990): 75.

Each khabar is a complete story in itself, or a fragment of a story, without necessarily being part of a progressive series of events, where one event is understood as the cause or effect of another.[1] This predilection for short, independent narrative units may puzzle the modern reader and has been given various explanations. Khalidi explains the 'fragmentary character' of the early ḥadīth literature, which could also apply to khabar literature, by 'the scarcity of writing materials and early suspicion of any non-Qur'ānic texts'.[2] Others propose that it stems from the early oral transmission.[3] In this case, the shortness of the khabar is also consistent with its degree of truthfulness, as it is easier to memorize a shorter unit.[4] However, the khabar also displays a concept of history as episodic rather than chronological.[5] The isnād enhances the episodic character of the khabar, framing it and augmenting its autonomy.[6] Although the akhbār often are arranged chronologically, there is nothing intrinsic in the khabar that induces chronological or any other arrangement. The khabar is characterized by a predilection for scenes. When Rosenthal describes its typical characteristics, he also reveals the modern reader's difficulties in approaching these ancient texts. 'Situation and color' are in conflict with 'sober facts', as the latter is closer to the truth than the former, and a historian's task is to present ready analyses:

> [F]rom its ancient predecessor, the battle-day narratives, the khabar form retained the character of the vividly told short story, the preference for situation and color as against sober facts. The action is often presented in the form of a dialogue between the principal participants of an event which relieves the historian of what should be his

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1 Rosenthal, *History*, 11.
2 Khalidi, *Thought*, 20.
3 See Daniel Beaumont, 'Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions', *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 6-7.
4 See Stefan Leder, ed., *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 38-39
5 See Donald J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) for an interesting study of the interactions between episodic and linear time in pre-modern historiography, although he does not treat the Arabic heritage.
6 See Rosenthal, *History*, 66.

real task, that is, presenting a clearly expressed analysis of the situation, and leaves such analysis to the reader.[1]

Rosenthal holds that these characteristics were an instrument for 'stimulating historical interest among the young and the men of general education' and that it was this 'literary quality' of the khabar literature that made it attractive for later authors of adab.[2] Leder traces the 'dramatic effects and colourful descriptions' of many akhbār to their oral origin, possibly among popular storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*).[3]

However, in spite of these qualities, the khabar belongs to a tradition of a critical and scientific approach, appealing to the critical ability of the readers, realized in the *isnād*. The isnād is the reference system of the early Arabic factual texts; the trustworthiness of the text relies on the trustworthiness of its transmitters, and on the plausibility of the actions of transmission noted by the isnād. The isnād could also be seen as a method for systematizing the narrative levels in the text (see above, 25-26). Another literary function of the isnād is to enhance the realism of the narration.[4] In texts where the truth claims are less crucial, such as the anecdotes in *Nisā'*, which illustrate general tendencies rather than factual events, the role of the isnād is clearly symbolic. It is generally shortened; one name is enough to indicate its connotation. If this is one of the authorities in Islam, such as ʿAlī, ʿUmar, or ʿĀ'isha, the khabar is primarily normative. The name could also be one of the authorities of Arabic folklore, such as Amsaʿī, indicating a genuine Arab origin, the second most authoritative milieu after the first Muslim umma in Medina. The name could be simply 'a Bedouin', demonstrating that this saying is proverbial and from an Arab nomadic setting.

The early Arabic history-writing could, in modern terms, be called a dialogic project. In this project, the other, that is the reader, is an equal subject. The narrative situations formalized by the isnād give the impression of discussions and dialogues, especially when the formulas for orality are used, such as *qāla* (he said) and *ḥaddatha* (he related). The reader is also regarded as competent, and has to do his/her own

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1 Ibid., 67.
2 Ibid.
3 Leder, 'Khabar,' 311.
4 According to Leder the isnād provides an 'alleged realism' to the khabar: ibid., 307. Elsewhere, however, he admits that the isnād is not merely a literary device: Leder, 'Features': 74.

critical analysis. A modern reader of scholarly works is used to being presented with one version of an event and one interpretation of it, while the early Arabic historian may present several versions of an event, without any interpretations. Two or more akhbār depicting different versions of the same event are often juxtaposed without commenting on which of the versions should be regarded as true. The reader of the early khabar literature has to struggle with the text and its versions, if she/he is striving for one single analysis. This procedure relies on the reader's critical judgment; it is up to the reader to form an opinion about the event, by evaluating the contents of the various akhbār and their isnāds. All the same, the early Arabic history-writing is also hierarchical, as the narrative situations are more likely to have been monologic than dialogic.

The isnād and the arrangement of akhbār described above distinguish scholarly works from popular. In this matter, akhbār literature resembles the contemporaneous popular genre, to which *Thousand and One Nights* belonged, although with a totally different result.[1] In 'serious' literature, such as historiography, we have only access to the last version of a narrative; as to the other versions, there are only the names of their narrators in the chain of transmitters. The story, however, is supposed to be identical on each level, while in *Thousand and One Nights* each narrative level inspires a new story on a new level. Perhaps the strict systematizing of the narrative situation in contemporary scholarly literature responded to, or in some way was related to, the fictional use of the narrative situation in popular literature. In the account of *Thousand and One Nights* by Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), he compares the stories in it with false akhbār, narrated with the intent to dupe people.[2]

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1 While the earliest extant manuscript of the collection is dated to the fifteenth century, at least one Arabic fragment from the ninth century has been found; see Nabia Abbott, 'A Ninth-Century Fragment of the "Thousand Nights": New Light on the Early History of the Arabian Nights', *Journal of New Eastern Studies* 8, no. 3 (1949). In the fragment described by Abbott, the narrating characters, Dīnāzād and Shīrāzād, are Persian women, while the setting is Arabic. Dīnāzād asks the other woman to narrate about *adab shāmī aw aʿrābī*, i.e. 'Syrian or Bedouin correct manners': Abbott, 'Ninth-Century Fragment', 132-33.
2 Masʿūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, quoted in Abbott, 'Ninth-Century Fragment': 150. According to him, *Thousand and One Nights* is the popularized version of the Arab translation of Persian *Hazār Afsāna*. Shīrāzād and Dīnāzād are mentioned by their names, contrary to the other characters he enumerates, indicating that these two women are the two main characters.

## History-writing and biography

Various forms of history-writing, such as *sīra* (biography) and *ta'rīkh* (dating, mostly annalistic works), use the same corpus of akhbār; the difference lies in the arrangement and selection. The earliest interests of Arabic-Muslim historiography were the Prophet's *sīra*[1] and his wars (*maghāzī*), together with the narratives about the battles of the pre-Islamic Arabs (*ayyām*), the genealogies of the tribal Arabs (*nasab*, pl. *ansāb*) and the tales of the earlier prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*).[2] The *sīra*, in turn, could be inserted in other forms of history-writing, such as the annalistic, as well as in adab.[3] Several biographies, *siyar*, could be compiled in biographical dictionaries relating to different disciplines, or spheres of Islamic civilization, such as transmitters of hadīth, jurisprudents, poets, physicians, etc.[4] They were arranged according to various principles, one of which is *ṭabaqāt*. The term *ṭabaqa* (pl. *ṭabaqāt*) denotes generation, class or layer.[5] According to the principle of *ṭabaqāt*, biographical articles were arranged chronologically in 'generations'. The genre began to develop in the 8th century, but none of the earliest works are extant. The two earliest extant works are *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* by Ibn Saʿd and *Kitāb al-shuʿarā'* by Ibn Sallām (d. ca. 846), on poets.[6] Other *ṭabaqāt* works portray men, and occasionally women, from various professions, such as poets, traditionalists, jurists, philosophers and physicians.[7]

One of the incentives behind the collecting of biographies, at least in the religious branch, was the need for evaluating isnāds, and thus knowing more about the individuals who transmitted traditions from the

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1 There are early siyar (s. sīra) on prominent persons other than the prophet Muḥammad, quoted by Wadād al-Qāḍī, 'Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance,' in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed., George Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 97. Such biographies included those on ʿAlī's sons and ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muttalib.

2 See Khalidi, *Thought,* 30.

3 The annals often comprise biographies of rulers, so-called dynastic historiography: Rosenthal, *History*, 87.

4 On biographical dictionaries, see M. J. Young, 'Arabic Biographical Writing,' in The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period, eds., J. D. Latham et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 169ff.

5 Ibrahim Hafsi, 'Recherches sur le genre Tabaqāt, I', *Arabica* 23, no. 3 (1976), 230. For a comprehensive study of *ṭabaqāt*, its origin, methods of classification and branches, see Hafsi, 'Recherches 1' and 'Recherches 2".

6 Al-Qāḍī provides a list of earlier *ṭabaqāt* works, including biographies of the 'learned and ignorant', poets, jurists, ḥadīth transmitters and cavaliers: al-Qāḍī, 'Biographical Dictionaries', 119-20, n. 24.

7 E.g. Young, 'Arabic Biographical Writing,' 169ff.

Prophet.[1] However, this is obviously not the object for less religious disciplines, such as medicine. Instead, the biographical construction and composition of individual life stories within a certain discipline, tradition or socio-cultural environment reflect and contribute to the self-image of this discipline or environment.[2] They were not only products of the developing self-image during the formative era of Islam, but also actively contributing to it. Moreover, the popularity of biographical dictionaries, with biographies of individuals whose main merit was their belonging to the community, indicates a specific conception of history: 'the history of the Islamic Community is essentially the contribution of individual men and women to the building up and transmission of its specific culture; that it is these persons (rather than the political governors) who represent or reflect the active forces in Muslim society in their respective spheres.'[3]

## Adab

The term adab has multiple meanings. The early meaning of the term has to do with training and education, while it later came to refer to a kind of literature. Implied in the first notion is that adab is not only education, it is the 'right' education, as adab also referred to manners and morals. Initially, it meant the manners and morals of the pre-Islamic Arabs, as they were portrayed in *jāhilī* (pre-Islamic Arab) poetry and prose.[4] Their adab was to serve as model, just as the Prophet's sunna was a model for Muslims.[5] When Islamic society developed under foreign influences, the meaning of adab as manners and morals lost its necessary connection with the old Arabs. In the earliest extant epistle addressed to scribes, by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d.132/750), adab is used with the meaning 'good education'. This education included religious literature and the Qur'ān, poetry, and history of the Arabs as well as the non-Arabs.[6] Some hundred years later, Ibn Qutayba intended in *'Uyūn al-akhbār* to cover all matters a

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1 See Rosenthal, *History*, 101.
2 Cooperson, *Biography*, e.g. 6-7 and 16.
3 Hamilton Gibb, 'Islamic Biographical Literature,' in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), 54.
4 See Khalidi, *Thought,* 89.
5 F. Gabrieli, 'Adab,' in EI[2], vol 1:175.
6 Khalidi, *Thought*, 91.

well-educated Muslim should know and be able to converse about.[1]
Here adab is used as a term for good manners in the sense 'good
upbringing, urbanity and courtesy'.[2] This later meaning was implied in
the high societies of the 'Abbāsid capital, frequented by the singer
'Arīb whose biography is analysed below. To have adab meant to be
courteous and elegant, to know the etiquettes of eating, drinking and
dressing.[3] Meanwhile, adab came to mean the intellectual knowledge a
man or woman should possess to become courteous and urban.[4] Finally,
adab is the designation of a vast diversity of literary works, containing
such knowledge.

   'Abbāsid adab literature embraces creative products such as poetry,
grammar, the history of the Arabs, as well as non-Arab traditions
(Iranian, Indian, etc.).[5] In fact, history is a main subject in adab
literature, although history here has a moral intention; history is used as
an exemplar for human behaviour.[6] History in adab is to a high degree
episodic, in the form of akhbār; a historical topic is illustrated by
various reports without any regard to chronology.[7] History is often
presented in anecdotes, which have a dual aim: to entertain and to
edify.[8] However, adab deals with all aspects of life, spiritual as well as
profane. For example, *'Uyūn al-akhbār* provides pieces of religious
knowledge as well as profane. The signification of an *adīb*, a producer
of adab literature¸ in contrast to an *'alīm*, a scholar, was rather that the
former did not specialize in one or a few branches of knowledge, but
practised several.[9]

   Although adab undoubtedly belongs to the high culture which only
the intellectual elite had access to, it contains a large corpus of what
seem to be popular narratives in the form of anecdotes or tales. This

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1 S.A. Bonebakker, 'Adab and the Concept of Belles-Lettres,' in *Cambridge History of Arabic
Literature*: 'Abbasid Belles-Lettres., eds., Julia Ashtiany et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1990), 30.
2 Gabrieli, 'Adab,' 175.
3 E.g. ibid., see also 'Arīb's biography, Appendix 2, khabar 42 below.
4 Ibid., 175.
5 Ibid., 175-76.
6 For history and adab, see Khalidi, *Thought*, 83-130.
7 Ibid. 101 and 110: 'It [*'Uyūn al-akhbār*] is a directory of historical information rather than a work of
history. In this sense, Jahiz and Ibn Qutayba were at one, since neither felt the need to arrange
akhbar in chronological order, treating history instead as a collection of individual reports which
illustrated or displayed various aspects of the human condition.'
8 See Fedwa Malti-Douglas, 'Texts and Tortures: The Reign of al-Muʻtaḍid and the Construction of
Historical Meaning', *Arabica* 46, no. 3-4 (1999), 324.
9 Bonebakker, 'Adab,' 24.

popular content has induced researchers to use adab material for the study of unofficial history, the history of the 'common' or even marginalized people.[1]

## The works and their authors

The authors of the works analysed in this thesis flourished during a period in which a predominantly oral literary culture was becoming more and more textual and book-based.[2] In addition, even if a low percentage of the population were able to read, reading and writing were not exclusively reserved for the absolute elite.

> Writing and books were no longer the privilege of a very narrow elite, but now the prerogative also of students, scholars, bookmen, autodidacts, and others, and included many works written specifically for autodidacts and those wishing to learn adab on their own…The new readership expanded to include landlords and landowners, merchants and entrepreneurs, judges and jurists, physicians, poets and litterateurs, teachers, and of course, other scholars.[3]

A textual literal culture generates readers, while the oral culture had its listeners. However, in this era the two categories, readers and listeners, could as well fuse, since the texts were read and discussed in *majālis* (sing. *majlis*), literary circles or sessions, mostly held in private homes.[4] There are several types of majālis, for example the musical gatherings mentioned in 'Arīb's biography (see e.g. App. 2:40, 52 and 60) and literary sessions. The musical majlis included music and singing as well as discussions on aesthetic and theoretical issues, as well as criticism.[5] The literary majlis was of two main kinds, salons and study-circles.[6] The caliph had his own majlis, also mentioned in 'Arīb's biography,

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1 E.g. Abdallah Cheikh-Moussa, 'L'Historien et la littérature arab médiévale', *Arabica* 63, no. 1 (1996) See El Cheikh's overview in El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse'.
2 See Shawkat Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 1.
3 Ibid., 1-2.
4 See e.g. ibid., 55-56, and George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 60ff.
5 George Sawa, Music *Performance Practice in the Early 'Abbāsid Era 132-320 AH / 750-932 AD,* 2 ed. (Ottawa: The Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2004), 111.
6 Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 55.

which could involve 'singers, poets, lawyers, scholars, storytellers, and petitioners'.[1]

As to the authors of the works analysed in this thesis, they are primarily editors, even though they often add their own contributions. They compiled their material from other books, arranged it, and added their own introductions and some comments. Yet according to the concept of authorship in their cultural context, they should be titled authors of the works; they deserve the title because of their endeavours, selection and arrangement of their material. The author of a classical Arabic historical work could display his creative authorship, even if his work relied on earlier akhbār. He arranged the akhbār, made logical connections between several episodes and commented on their contents or transmissions. In this thesis, the authors might be titled as such or variously as author/editor, and at least Abū al-Faraj is also a critic. The lack of originality has been a problem for some modern scholars, who have attempted to prove that a certain author is more than a mere editor and to explore his creative persona by examining his literary works. Originality has been seen as more valuable than conveying tradition.[2] However, the reliance on quotation has also made it easier to detect female authorship, even though women's contributions are embedded in the literature in a way that makes it meaningless to distinguish them as separate narratives.[3]

## Ibn Saʿd and *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*

Muḥammad ibn Saʿd was born in Basra ca. 168/784 and died in Baghdad in 230/845.[4] As scholars did in his days, he travelled to the centres of learning, Basra, Baghdad, Kufa, Mecca and Medina, where he studied and collected traditions. When he settled in Baghdad he became the secretary of Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Wāqidī, who was

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1 Ibid., 151, n. 35.

2 Cf. Fähndrich, 'Wafayāt' and Fähndrich, 'Compromising the Caliph: Analyses of Several Versions of an Anecdote about Abū Dulāma and al-Mansūr', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8 (1977), 37: 'The present paper is to support, through the analysis of one anecdote, the contention that Ibn Khallikān, in general, does not simply copy the works of his forerunners.'

3 See Marlé Hammond, 'Literature: 9th to 15th Century,' in *Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures: Methodologies, Paradigms, and Sources*, 1, ed., Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 43 and Marlé Hammond, 'He Said "She Said": Narrations of Women's Verse in Cassical Arabic Literature. A Case Study: Nazhūn's hijāʾ of Abū Bakr al-Makhzūmī ', *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003).

4 J. W. Fück, 'Ibn Saʿd,' in EI[2], vol. 3. The information on Ibn Saʿd is mainly derived from this article, and from Sachau's introduction to *Kitāb al-tabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 3.

one of the main figures in early Arabic historiography.[1] Al-Wāqidī is one of Ibn Saʿd's main informants, often referred to in *Ṭabaqāt* as Ibn ʿUmar (see App. 1).[2] However, much of Ibn Saʿd's information is derived from other sources, such as the genealogist Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, and *Kitāb nasab al-anṣār* by ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmāra. Ibn Saʿd follows the Arabic historiographical tradition, with its special demands for authority, trustworthiness and critical thinking. He provides, if possible, more than one report to confirm an event, with different transmitters, although the text (the *matn*) might be verbatim. Separate sentences might be transmitted with different isnāds, but taken from the same main narrative. The reader's critical judgement is presupposed, to be activated, for example, when there is more than one version of an event.

*Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* is often considered as one of the most valuable historical works, due to its enormous mass of material and its early age.[3] The individual akhbār and biographies in the work are continually quoted in later works during the ages, even in our time. According to Cahen: 'This voluminous collection is of untold value to us, not only for its intrinsic merit but because it is often the only source to provide us with information before such information has been modified by a change of outlook in later works.'[4] The incentive behind Ibn Saʿd's compilation is discussed. Some historians think that its aim was to facilitate the study of ḥadīth.[5] Others emphasize Ibn Saʿd's professionalism as a historian.[6] Undoubtedly, several rationales can be found in *Ṭabaqāt*, such as the need to identify transmitters, the interest in genealogy, the development of history-writing, as well as others.[7] Donner points to the crucial need for ʿAbbāsid historians to establish a chronology, which was neglected in the earliest days of Islam, when emphasis was put on timeless piety.[8] Ibn Saʿd composed *Ṭabaqāt* about two hundred years after the formation of the first Muslim community,

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1 Stefan Leder, 'Al-Wāḳidi,' EI², vol. 11. Al-Wāqidī was under the patronage of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī, whom we will meet again in this thesis.
2 See Khalidi, *Thought*, 45. Al-Wāqidi is credited with two *ṭabaqāt* works which are no longer extant: Hafsi, 'Recherches 1', 242.
3 See Gibb, 'Biographical Literature,' 58.
4 Cahen, 'History and Historians,' 195.
5 W. Raven, 'sīra,' in EI² vol. 9: 660-63, and Young, 'Arabic Biographical Writing,' 168-87.
6 Cf Khalidi, *Thought*, 44-48.
7 Cf Roded, *Women*, 5.
8 Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*; see e.g. ch. 10.

in a society which had undergone enormous changes. The centre of power had moved to Iraq, and a multiplicity of cultural groups was involved in the documentation and transformation of Islamic principles and practices, in order to suit the new situation. History-writing was an important device for keeping together this multifaceted community and for defining its relation to others. In this view, the biographies of the members of the first umma are parts of the 'historicizing legitimating' of the Muslim community.[1]

*Ṭabaqāt* consists of eight volumes in its European printed version, with more than 4,250 biographical entries altogether.[2] In this thesis, these entries will be referred to as biographies, even though they vary considerably in length; the shortest could not be called biographies in a modern sense. Volumes 1 and 2 are devoted to the Prophet's sīra, the longest and most comprehensive biography in the work. It consists of the prophet Muḥammad's connections with earlier prophets and his call to Islam, the revelation of the Qur'ān, and finally the formation of the first Islamic society. We are informed about the Prophet's character and outward appearance, his hair and beard, clothes, rings, weapons, etc. Volume 3 consists of biographies on the early Muslims who participated in the battle of Badr;[3] volume 4:1 of early Muslims who emigrated to Axum and took part in all other battles;[4] volume 4:2 of men who were not among the earliest believers, but did accept Islam before the conquest of Mecca. Volume 5 depicts the followers in Medina, Mecca and other places at the Arabian Peninsula, volume 6 those in Kufa, while volume 7 covers the followers in the rest of Iraq and the Muslim world. The last volume, 8, depicts women predominantly from the companions in Mecca and Medina.[5]

## *Ṭabaqāt* and women

*Ṭabaqāt* includes a relatively large number of biographies of women, altogether 620, collected in a special section at the end of the work.

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1 Ibid., 112.
2 This thesis relies on Eduard Sachau's edition from 1904-1915, the first modern edition. There is a later edition, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Ihsān ʿAbbās, Beirut, 1960-68, 9 vols.
3 The battle of Badr, 624 AD against the Meccans where the Muslims won their first major victory.
4 A group of the earliest Muslims in Mecca migrated to Axum before the hijra to Medina, in fear of persecutions on two separate occasions.
5 For Ibn Saʿd's criteria, see al-Qāḍī, 'Biographical Dictionaries,' 97ff., and Hafsi, 'Recherches 1', 235 and 43ff.

Roded reckons the percentage to be 15 percent of the total amount, which is far more than the majority of later compilations, some of which do not include any woman at all.[1] In addition, even though most of the biographical articles in it are short, they are extensive compared with those in similar works. Ibn Sa'd's section on women has had a great impact, and still has in conveying the images of early Muslim women, which are elaborated on even today.[2] According to Gibb, it supplies 'almost the sole materials for the social activities and status of women in Muslim community'.[3] Although later biographical compilations also include women, especially the *ṣāḥibāt* (female companions to the Prophet)*,* none comes close to Ibn Sa'd regarding quantity and length of the individual articles. In *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt* by Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ (d. 240/854), 128 entries out of 3,375 are on women, which is 4 percent of the total amount.[4] They are, similarly to Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* gathered in a separate, final section of his biographical dictionary.[5] In the biographical dictionary by Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965), the entries on both men and women are short, but men's entries are somewhat more substantial.[6] The entries are arranged alphabetically, but women are always treated after the men under each letter. Entries on women amount to 324 entries out of 11,489, which is 3 percent of the total amount.[7] In the biographical dictionary by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070), women's entries are arranged separately, in the last volume of the work.[8] They amount to 399, or 9 percent, of the total 4,225.[9] Abū Nu'aym (d. 430/1038) includes only a few women in his dictionary of Sufis, and only women from the first generation of

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1 Roded, *Women*, 5.
2 See for example Marilyn Booth*, May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt* (Berkely and London: University of California Press, 2001), 281-310, and Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 119-34. See also Hoda Elsadda, 'Discourses on Women's Biographies and Cultural Identity: Twentieth-Century. Representations of the Life of 'Aisha bint Abi Bakr', *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001), which deals with the use of these models in modern times. See also Gibb, 'Biographical Literature,' 58, and Hafsi, 'Recherches 1', 243.
3 Gibb, 'Biographical Literature,' 58.
4 Roded, *Women*, 3.
5 Khalīfa Ibn Khayyā ṭ *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt,* ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: 1966-67).
6 Muhammad Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-thiqāt*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān (Hyderadab: 1973-1982).
7 Roded, *Women*, 3.
8 Yūsuf ibn 'Abdallāh Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Kitāb al-istī'āb fī ma'rifat al-aṣḥāb*, 2 vols. (Hyderadab: 1900-01).
9 Roded, *Women*, 3.

Muslims.[1] Their entries are considerably shorter than the men's, 28 women in 38 pages, while 649 men occupy more than 2,500 pages; entries on women make up 4 percent of the total number.[2] Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) devotes one volume of his *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* to women, yet they make up only 2 percent of the whole work.[3] The majority of women portrayed, altogether 196, are from the Umayyad period.[4]

The relatively large number of entries on women in *Ṭabaqāt* by Ibn Sa'd has induced some researchers to label it unique, these entries are considered to be Ibn Sa'd's original contribution: 'L'originalité de ce receuil, en sa dernière partie, est qu'il reserve une place non négligeable aux femmes Compagnons'.[5] However, even if *Ṭabaqāt* includes more and longer biographies on women than other works, it is not without gender-bias. Divisions based on gender are current throughout *Ṭabaqāt*.[6] The women's section in this work is a clear-cut example of how women's place in society is regarded, and Ibn Sa'd's organizing principle is influenced by strict gender segregation.

> A quel rang, Ibn Sa'd situe-t-il les femmes Compagnons?
> On ne peut pas s'attendre à ce qu'il les classe sur un rang
> égalitaire, pas plus en function du critère d'antériorité que
> du critère de proximité. Il se contente, ce qui est déjà une
> concession considérable, de les placer dans la dernière
> partie. Elles sont à part dans son œuvre, comme elles le
> sont dans la société.[7]

Moreover, even if the entries on women in Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* are generally longer than in similar compilations, most of them are very short; only thirty-five biographical entries amount to one whole page (in the printed version) or more. Of all the biographical entries, 346 consist of no more than a short introduction, in which the woman's

1 Ahmad ibn 'Abdallāh Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā wa-ṭabaqāt al-asfiyā'* (Cairo: 1932-38).
2 Roded, *Women*, 3.
3 Ibid.
4 See Hilary Kilpatrick, 'Some Late 'Abbāsid and Mamlūk Books about Women: A Literary Historical Approach', *Arabica* 42, no. 1 (1995): 60-61.
5 Ibrahim Hafsi, 'Recherches sur le genre tabaqāt, I', Ibid. 23, no. 3 (1976): 243.
6 See al-Qādī, 'Biographical Dictionaries,' 101.
7 Hafsi, 'Recherches 1': 244.

genealogy is presented, as well as her possible conversion to Islam, allegiance to the prophet Muḥammad, and possible emigration to Axum and Medina. The introductions summarize the genealogical endeavours of the Arab scholars before Ibn Saʿd, such as Ibn Kalbī, together with the historians' attempts to sort out relations and activities of the ṣaḥāba (companions of the Prophet). In some entries, the introduction may include information about topics such as the woman's death, her marriage, the circumstances in which she met the Prophet, whether she related a tradition from or about him or his wives and nearest men. In a few entries only her tribe is mentioned, without any extensive genealogy.

While men's biographies are arranged according to which battles they participated in, their date of conversion and, finally, geographical area, women's biographies are arranged on the basis of family (marriage and tribe-belonging). Even though the first biographical entry in the women's section is on a woman, Khadīja bint Khuwaylid, who undeniably achieved her prominent standing from her own actions, this is more or less an exception. Khadīja is the only woman whose individual actions and merits precede her tribal and marital belonging. Her merits lie in the fact that, except for being Muḥammad's first wife, she married him on her own initiative and to his favour, and was the first who believed in his prophecy and the second Muslim after him. Khadīja's biography is followed by entries on the female members of Muḥammad's family, his daughters, paternal aunts and cousins. The main merit of these women is obviously their kinship with the Prophet, not their deeds. After the biographies of the Prophet's female relatives we find the biographies on Muḥammad's wives, and subsequently some shorter notices on possible wives. Next follows a section containing wife-related issues such as dowry, maintenance, the wives' ḥijāb (seclusion), the Prophet's sexual capacity, and the wives' pilgrimage with the Prophet, concluding with the story of the Prophet's concubine Māriya, the only woman after Khadīja who had a child with him. After this thematic section, there are the biographies of the women belonging to the tribes of Mecca and Medina, the quantitatively largest part of the women's section. The organizing principle here is tribe and clan belonging, with Muhammad's tribe Quraysh at the head. Finally there is a shorter section with women from the next generation of followers who transmitted traditions from the wives and others from the ṣaḥāba.

The women's biographies are thematically rigid; there are some main themes which are rarely absent, such as genealogy (*nasab*), relationship with the Prophet and status in the umma. Almost none of the entries lack genealogical information about tribe and paternal ancestors. Genealogy enhances the women's status in the community, an important issue in *Ṭabaqāt*. The women's status is also improved by an early conversion as well as male relatives' positions. However, the main verification for a woman's elevated position is her relation to the Prophet. A marriage to the Prophet gives the woman the highest possible status, even if relations to other prominent men are underscored in the biographies as well. Estimations of a woman's position function as a means of valuating her credibility as a religious model, or as a transmitter of traditions, or to legitimate her male relatives, tribe and ancestors.

The wives and some of the elite women have a specific set of themes which do not occur overall. Most important is *asbāb al-nuzūl*, explanation of the historical circumstances around the revelation of a verse in the Qur'ān, and sunna, how these women practised rituals and daily issues such as weddings, funerals, ritual piety and clothing. The main theme in the wives' biographies, however, is their ranks. In the biographies of the established wives, their standing is proven by divine interventions and dreams, the degree of intimacy with the Prophet, and the position of their parents. Favourite wives are often enumerated and their signs of preference compared. In the case of the captive concubines, the question is whether they married the Prophet or not. The jealousy of the other wives, especially that of 'Ā'isha, is used as a literary device to enhance a certain woman's position. This device is elaborated in the biographies of potential wives, where some of the Prophet's established wives are said to have plotted against a woman proposed as wife, which ultimately prevented the marriage.

## Abū al-Faraj and *Kitāb al-aghānī*

Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī was born in 284/897, most likely in Baghdad, although his family lived for a period in Isfahan after the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus.[1] The date of his death is uncertain,

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1 Hilary Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and Author's Craft in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's Kitāb al-aghānī* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 14.

while several sources state that he died in 356/967, Kilpatrick argues for the date 362/972-73, and as it seems plausible it is adopted here.[1] Abū al-Faraj studied in Kufa and Baghdad, two of the period's intellectual centres.[2] Kufa was the centre for studies on Arab history and grammar, as well as the old Iraqi musical tradition. After his studies in Kufa, Abū al-Faraj settled in Baghdad and worked for the administration, a common career for the intellectuals of the time. Obviously his work took him to foreign places, where he also gained information for his personal project, writing on music and song.[3] He was able to fulfil his project with the help of the Buyid caliph Mu'izz al-Dawla's secretary and later vizier, al-Muhallabī, who led an intellectual circle. Abū al-Faraj was known for being eccentric, with a 'neglected appearance and personal uncleanness'.[4] Nevertheless, his wit and knowledge made him a coveted boon-companion.[5]

*Kitāb al-aghānī* (the Book of Songs) is one of the most famous and quoted medieval Arabic literary works.[6] It comprises song lyrics and poetry as well as narratives on the contexts of the songs, and portraits of persons involved in the musical and cultural life of the Arabs from the sixth century until Abū al-Faraj' own days. He arranged the reports and composed *Kitāb al-aghānī* in the middle of the tenth century. According to Yāqūt, it took him fifty years to collect the material.[7] As specified by the title, *Kitāb al-aghānī* is a book about songs and it is structured around songs, with no consideration to chronology, alphabetic order, or other common structuring principles. Nevertheless, it is also an adab work, and as such it shifts constantly from the sublime to the burlesque, from the heroic to the mean. Both Western and modern Arab literary historians seem to have had problems with the more indecent narratives, and have often concentrated on the heroic tales, the stories about pre-Islamic and early Islamic wars, heroes and poets.[8]

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1 Ibid., 20.
2 Ibid., 15.
3 Ibid., 18.
4 Ibid., 18, see also Yaqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb,* ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 2 ed., vol. 5 (London: Luzac & co, 1929), 152.
5 Sawa, *Music Performance*, 22.
6 I use the Dār al-kutub edition of *Kitāb al-aghānī*, which has 24 volumes.
7 Yaqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, 150-51.
8 Rosenthal has translated the story about the Medinan singer and entertainer Ash'ab, which at least includes several scatological anecdotes: Franz Rosenthal, *Humor in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1956).

The whole work is divided into three parts.[1] The first part is arranged around various top lists, such as Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī's 'Top hundred' which he made on the command of the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 227-32/842-47).[2] Each song is presented together with its context, such as context of performance, composing, and anecdotes about persons connected with the song. The second part is devoted to caliphs and caliphs' children who composed songs, in chronological order.[3] The third part is Abū al-Faraj's own choice.[4] Abū al-Faraj uses the same method of compilation as Ibn Saʿd, following the Arabic historiographical tradition, with a meticulous isnād, mentioning of variants and comments upon the trustworthiness of certain reports.[5] He describes and accounts for his method to the reader (see App. 2:10). Poetry in *Aghānī* often has an etiological function. Just as some narratives in *Ṭabaqāt* seek to explain the circumstances around the revelation of Qurʾānic verses, many narratives in *Aghānī* aspire to explain the circumstances around the creation of poems and songs.

### Women in *Aghānī*

*Aghānī* contains some thirty biographical articles on women. Some of them are included in articles on men, or in narratives about an event. In addition, some of them are quite short. Most of the women artists portrayed in *Aghānī* are slaves, but seem to have had a relatively high degree of freedom. Five of the women artists with their own biographies in *Aghānī* flourished in the Umayyad era: Jamīla,[6] ʿAzza al-Maylā,[7] Sallāma al-Qāss,[8] Ḥabāba and Sallāma al-Zarqā.[9] Sallāma al-Zarqā lived in Kūfa, the rest in Medina, though Sallāma al-Qāss and Ḥabāba were bought by the caliph Yazīd and brought to the Umayyad court in Damascus. Jamīla and ʿAzza al-Maylā had *mawlā* status, i.e. they were not 'real' Arabs but protected by an Arab tribe, or freed slaves, while Sallāma al-Qāss and Ḥabāba were slaves. Among women singers from this early period who are narrated about in other instances,

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1 Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs,* 28.
2 Volumes 1-9 of the Dār al-kutub edition.
3 Volumes 9-10 of the Dār al-kutub edition.
4 Volumes 10-24 of the Dār al-kutub edition.
5 For Abū al-Faraj's method, see Sawa, *Music Performance*, 26-28.
6 Aghānī, vol. 8:186-236.
7 Ibid., vol. 17:162-77.
8 Ibid., vol. 8:334-51.
9 Ibid., Ḥabāba in vol. 15:122-45 and Sallāma al-Zarqā in vol. 15:54-69.

we find Khulayda al-Makkiyya.[1] Shuhda and her daughter ʿĀtika bint Shuhda, who lived in Basra, are mentioned in a short notice.[2] Other women from the early caliphate portrayed in *Aghāni*, are the poets al-Khansā and Layla al-Akhyaliyya.[3] The rest of the women artists with their own biographies lived during the ʿAbbāsid period. Two of them were free; ʿUlayya bint al-Mahdī[4], the sister of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-93/786-809), and ʿUbayda,[5] her contemporary, a pandore-player and singer, who performed for her living. The remaining women were slave singers and poets with access to the court, and many of them were later freed. Baṣbaṣ was mainly associated with the caliph al-Mahdi (r. 158-69/775-85).[6] ʿInān,[7] Danānīr,[8] Duqāq,[9] and Dhāt al-Khāl[10] flourished during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Badhl lived in the reign of caliph al-Amīn (r. 193-98/809-813),[11] ʿArīb and Mutayyam in the reign of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 198-218/813-833).[12] Shāriya is associated with the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r.218-227/ 833-42),[13] Farīda and Qalam al-Ṣālihiyya with the caliph al-Wāthiq,[14] and, finally the poets Maḥbūba and Faḍl were associated with the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61).[15]

The structure of *Aghānī* lacks gender division, in contrast to later abridgements of it, such as Farmer's twentieth-century *A History of Arabic Music*, in which notices on the female musicians are brought together at the end of each chapter.[16] Malti-Douglas points to the fact that the slave women in *Aghānī* are identified by their first name and

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1 Ibid., vol. 16:190.
2 Ibid., vol. 6:261-62.
3 Ibid., vol. 15:76-110 and 11:204-50.
4 Ibid., vol. 10:162-85.
5 Ibid., vol. 22:205-10.
6 Ibid., vol. 15:27-36. Naturally a singer could live through more than one caliph's reign, as for example ʿArīb did.
7 Ibid., vol. 23:85-93.
8 Ibid., vol. 18:65-72.
9 Ibid., vol. 12:282-85.
10 Ibid., vol. 16:342-53.
11 Ibid., vol. 17:75-80.
12 Ibid., ʿArīb in vol. 21:54-88 and Mutayyam in vol. 7:293-308.
13 Ibid., vol. 16:3-15.
14 Farīda in Ibid., vol. 4:113-19 and Qalam al-Ṣāliḥiyya in vol. 13:347-50.
15 Maḥbūba's biography in Ibid., 22:200-203 and Fadl in vol. 19:301-13. Of course, famous and long-lived singers such as ʿArīb and Shāriya were still active in al-Mutawakkil's court, as well as, for example, Farīda, see Michael Stigelbauer, *Die Sängerinnen am Abbasidenhof um die Zeit des Kalifen Al-Mutawakkil* (Wien: VWGÖ, 1975)
16 Henry George Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century* (London: Luzac and Co, 1929). According to him ʿArīb's name is ʿUrayb, d. 841 (Farmer, History, 132-33).

the name of the owner, without the detailed genealogy that men often are introduced with. [1] Yet, as in the case of 'Arīb, the author compensates for that lack with his enthusiastic praise. Some narratives, however, depict musical professional life as gendered, as when 'Arīb is said to be better than all women and many men (App. 2:1, 2, 58). Ishāq had 'never seen a woman who combines so many good characteristics as she does' (2:2). 'Ubayda was the best pandore player among women. [2] Furthermore, women's music was different from men's music, as indicated in 'Arīb's biography (2:3): 'When I heard its softness, I knew it was new, from women's singing'.

## Women and the power of music

Women played a prominent role in the early 'Abbāsid musical life, especially as singers, but also as players of the lute and other string instruments. [3] They could act as benefactors of music and as song teachers. [4] Like other cultural branches, music prospered from the multicultural and cosmopolitan environment in the 'Abbāsid capital of Baghdad: 'Music echoed this multiculturalism. Musicians, music theorists, and music litterateurs were also from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, colours and creeds, and all were treated equally. The music product was a conglomeration of musical styles (Near Eastern, Arabic, Persian, and Byzantine)'. [5]

   Women had already played a prominent musical role in pre-Islamic Arabian tribes. [6] Arabic sources show that public musical activities were regarded as appropriate for free, even noble, women, not only for slave women as would later be the case. [7] Just as with Hebrew women, Arab women's musical activities are attested in regard to lamentations of the dead and to praising victories. [8] However, the sources we have for life in pre-Islamic Arabia are few and uncertain. Farmer claims that all professional singers in Arabia before Islam were women, slaves or

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1 Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body,* 37.
2 'Ubayda's biography, *Aghānī,* vol. 22:207.
3 Sawa, *Music Performance*, 19.
4 As noticed in the biographies of, among others, 'Arīb, Jamīla, and Shāriya.
5 Sawa, *Music Performance*, 7.
6 Farmer, *History*, 10.
7 Ibid.. 6, and Nāsir al-Dīn al-Asad, *al-Qiyān wa-l-ghinā' fī l-'asr al-jāhilī* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir 1379/1960), 56.
8 Farmer, *History*, 10.

freed, and that male singers were a phenomenon inherited from the conquered areas.[1]

In the early 'Abbāsid era, the four significant legal schools agreed in their ban of music, even if there were diverse opinions within the schools.[2] The Shāfi'ī school, for example, permitted music such as *ḥudā* (camel drivers' singing) that did not arouse unlawful desires, contrary to *ghinā'* (singing), which was considered indecent.[3] Many theologians hold the opinion that the only music that was allowed in Islam was the melodious chanting of the Qur'ān, though this limitation was generally not followed. The debate did not end with the prominent theologians' ban of music; it continued to be lively.[4] However, while a few 'Abbāsid caliphs banned music, such as al-Muhtadī (r. 255-56/869-70), most of them supported it.

Abū al-Faraj was closely associated with the 'Abbāsid court in Baghdad in an era when the 'Abbāsid empire was marked by political and economic crises, caliphs were assassinated, and there were fighting between army commanders and riots by the victims of the crises.[5] Abū al-Faraj seems to have been driven by nostalgia for a glorious past.[6] The caliphs' patronage of music declined, and at the same time, religious hostility to music and the sins involved in it, such as wine-drinking and lax sexual morals, grew. The Ḥanbalī school of law became important in Baghdad in the beginning of the tenth century and also succeeded in involving caliphs in the opposition to music. Followers of the Ḥanbalī school attacked the living quarters of the musicians and destroyed their musical instruments. Houses were broken into and searched for women musicians, and at least one killing of a woman singer is recorded, a professional mourner.[7] One of Abū al-Faraj's objectives was evidently to defend the arts of singing and music and their practitioners. In contrast to Ibn Sa'd, whose work legitimated individuals' authority by proving their closeness to the subject matter, i.e. the origins of Islam, Abū al-Faraj rather seems to legitimate the subject matter, music and singing, by proving the professionalism and

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1 Ibid., 44.
2 Ibid., 29.
3 Ibid.
4 Farmer, *History*, 146.
5 See Kennedy, *Caliphates*, 187-99.
6 Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 22.
7 Ibid.

excellence of its practitioners. One main theme in the biographies of women singers is the excellence and necessity of music. In one anecdote about Jamīla, she doubts whether her singing is compatible with religion and approved by God, and asks a group of people for their opinion.[1] Some of them are positive toward music, and some of them negative, but they are all cut off by a pious old man, 'with wisdom, knowledge of the law and experience', who gives an eloquent speech in defence of music and singing. He declares that her profession is approved by God, and that music even strengthens the morals of people.

> Singing is one of the greatest delights and gives more pleasure to the souls than anything else. It inspires the heart, strengthens understanding, brings pleasure to the soul, and expands mental perception. That which is difficult is made easier by it. Armies become victorious through it. Despots are subdued by it so that they despise themselves when they hear it. It heals the sick and those whose heart, understanding, and perception have died. It makes the rich richer and the poor more contented and satisfied when they hear it so that they no longer seek wealth. He who holds on to it is a learned man, and he who abandons it is ignorant. There is nothing more glorious and beautiful than song. Why is it considered right to abandon it, and why should it not be used to stimulate the worship of our Lord?[2]

In Sallāma al-Qāss' biography there is another example of the ideal bond between singing and piety. When the new governor of Mecca, 'Uthmān ibn Ḥayyān al-Murrī, intends to purify the town from singing

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1 *Aghānī*, vol. 8:224-26.
2 Ibid., vol. 8:225.

لانّ الغناء من أكبر اللذات وأسرُ للنفوس من جميع الشهوات يُحيى القلب ويزيد فى العقل ويسرّ النفس ويفسح فى الرأى وينيتسّر به العسير وتفتح به الجيوش ويذلل به الجبّارون حتى يمتهنوا أنفسهم عند استماعه ويبرئ المرضى ومن مات قلبه وعقله وبصره ويزيد أهل الثروة غنّىً وأهل الفقر قناعة ورضاً باستماعه فيعزفون عن طلب الأموال من تمسّك به كان عالما ومن فارقه كان جاهلا لأنه لامنزلة أرفع ولا شىء أحسن منه فكيف يستصوب تركه ولا يستعان به على النشاط فى عبادة ربّنا عزّ وجل

and immorality, Sallāma is spared after he has heard her singing and become enchanted.[1] To convince him she displays her full capacity, from conversing with him about his ancestors, a subject she excelled in, to chanting from the Qur'ān, singing a ḥudā, and finally, singing one of her own songs, which 'Uthmān enjoyed most of all.[2]

There are also several narratives about the power of music and poetry, but without the connection to piety. One common motif is poetry's power to make people ready to forgive. 'Arīb forgives Ibn Ḥāmid after he recited an emotional poem to her (2:57). Ibn Ḥāmid, in turn, hesitates to visit 'Arīb, but after she sends a poem to him, he comes immediately (2:62). Mutayyam is angry at her master, to whom she is very close. She refuses his excuses until he sends her a beautiful letter with a poem, which finally convinces her.[3] Jamīla shows compassion for the rough poet al-'Arjī when he writes a poem to her. He is hunted in Mecca after he has killed a man who had argued with him. Before the murder, he commands his slaves to rape the man's wife while the husband was looking. Al-'Arjī then flees to Medina and asks Jamīla for protection, but she had sworn not to sing his poetry and not to let him in her house because of his 'useless playing and foolishness'.[4] Instead, al-'Arjī is accommodated in the house of al-Aḥwaṣ, Jamīla's neighbour. There he composes the poem which makes Jamīla feel sympathy even for this brutal man, and she invites him to her house so that she can sing the poem for him.

Jamila's tolerance following al-'Arjī's poetic accomplishments is close to another motif, that of the disapproving relative, or some other person, who reproaches a man for spending too much of his time listening to music and associating with female singers. The relative is then invited to listen to a singer, after which he is absolutely convinced of the excellence of music. When the Umayyad caliph Yazīd's relatives send a man to blame him and prevent him from drinking and listening to music, this man becomes convinced of the excellence of singing after hearing the caliph's slave singers and changes his opinion.[5] As was the case with Sallāma, it was not only the singers' voices that convinced

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1 Ibid., vol. 8:341-42.
2 See Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri: Language and Literature*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 96.
3 Aghānī, vol. 7:299.
4  Ibid., vol. 8: 230-31.
5 Ibid., vol. 15:130-31.

the man, but also their piety. The piety of Yazīd's slave singers consisted in their chaste seclusion; they refused aggressively to be seen by others than their master and his closest relatives. Another example is when Hārūn al-Rashīd's relatives blame him for spending too much time and money on the singer Danānīr.[1] After they had heard her singing, they forgave him. The caliph al-Muʿtaṣim was also blamed for buying Shāriya for seventy thousand dinār, but the blamer became infatuated with her when he heard her singing.[2]

## Music and slavery

Musicians could be either slaves, freed slaves or free, but they were all dependent on their patron. The patron of musicians, the caliph himself, or another wealthy person, had the absolute right to order his/her protégés to immediately attend and perform at gatherings, any time of the day.[3] The musician's social status did not matter; everybody was treated equally in this regard. The slave singers, predominantly women, belonged to the most privileged class of slaves.[4] The female slave singer was more of a 'hired female entertainer', who helped in showing off a family's wealth.[5] Slavery at this time did not categorically imply lack of freedom and power; rather it was a juridical status, and involved different states of subservience for different classes of slaves.

Slavery was widespread during the ʿAbbāsid era, and penetrated the families to the degree that it could be seen as a social force.[6] Domestic slavery was common not only in elite households, but also among the middle classes, where slaves often contributed to the family business.[7] They were practically family members, except that they could not inherit. If a slave concubine gave birth to her master's child, the Islamic law granted her freedom after his death, and she attained the status of *umm walad* (mother of child). In fact, an umm walad had a somewhat more secure position than a free wife, who could easily be divorced.[8] A

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1 Ibid., 18:67. Her owner is ʿArīb's grandfather Yaḥyā al-Barmakī.
2 Ibid., 16:10.
3 Sawa, *Music Performance*, 113ff. The caliph's irrefutable invitation is the issue in several anecdotes in ʿArīb's biography; see App. 2.
4 Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15.
5 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 136-37.
6 Ibid., 134.
7 Ibid., 134-35.
8 Ibid.

man could also stipulate that his slave concubine would be liberated after his death, even if she did not give birth to a child. In that case, she was called a *mudabbara*. Competent concubines were able to gain real power for themselves and their families in the caliphs' court. Indeed, many of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs had mothers who were slave concubines, and who did not hesitate to interfere in the state's affairs.[1] This fact obviously follows the pattern in patriarchal societies, where women may be in access of power through their fathers, husbands or sons.[2]

A freed slave could possess his/her own slaves. In the musical world, where the pupils most often were slaves, this was not rare. There are several examples of female singers in *Aghānī* who had their own slaves when they were liberated, both household slaves and singers – for example ʿArīb, Shāriya and Badhl. There are even examples of women who allegedly used their own male slaves for sexual purposes, such as ʿUbayda and Duqāq. The princess ʿUlayya had some kind of relationship with her brother's slave, with whom she was in love, but the sexual motif is not explicit in the portrait of her, probably because of her position.

The female slave singer is often referred to as a *jāriya* (pl. *jawārī*).[3] While a jāriya calso denotes any domestic female slave in upper-class households, *qayna* (pl. *qiyān*) is a specific term for a professional female singer, slave or not. In the introduction to ʿArīb's biography, Abū al-Faraj distinguishes between qayna and *mughanniya*, the common term for a singer in the feminine. ʿArīb is a mughanniya of the modern age, but she reaches the standard of the qiyān of old, Jamīla and ʿAzza al-Maylā and others, who flourished in the Umayyad period. The pre-Islamic and early Islamic female singers were called qiyān; the word is also used in *Aghānī* for early ʿAbbāsid singers, such as Baṣbaṣ. In Abū al-Faraj's usage, the term designates a certain artistic and musical quality, and also nostalgia for the old days and the old singing.

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1 See Abbott, *Queens of Baghdad*, on Khayzurān, the mother of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics in the Harem of al-Muqtadir,' in *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, eds. Brubaker and Smith, on Shaghab (al-Sayyida).
2 See Lerner, *Creation*.
3 Jāriya originally denotes 'a girl', and is used with this denotation both in *Nisāʾ* and ʿĀʾisha's biography. However, in *Aghānī* it tends to denote a female slave. Similarly, a male domestic of singing slave was called *ghilmān*, boy. For ghilmān in musical performance settings, see Sawa, *Music Performance*, 119-20. Just like the jāriya the male slave could be used by his master for sexual purposes, but unlike the jāriya, such liaison was unlawful. Abū al-Faraj is credited with a book about male slave singers, *al-Ghilmān al-mughanniyyūn*: Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb* 152.

Connected with the profession is a certain honour, displayed with abundance in Jamīla's biography. Another qayna with honour is Khulayda al-Makkiyya. When Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh, great grandson of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, proposes to her, she refuses to accept a secret marriage. She prefers a sinful relationship to marrying in secret, as the latter would make her 'a disgrace for the qiyān'.[1]

## Ibn Qutayba and *'Uyūn al-akhbār*

Ibn Qutayba, born 213/828 in Kufa and died 276/889 in Baghdad, is one of the most famous ninth-century authors, in the field of theology as well as adab.[2] He produced a large number of works on a range of subjects, covering many scholarly and social fields. Though a faithful sunnī traditionalist, he was inspired by the Torah and the Gospels as well as by Ibn al-Muqaffa'.[3] Altogether, as Lecomte puts it, 'Ibn Qutayba's culture amalgamates in several ways the four great cultural trends of his period: the Arabic trend proper', i.e. religious, philological and historical sciences, 'the Indo-Iranian current, which contributes a certain administrative culture and a certain conception of the social relations in a developed society; the Judaeo-Christian trend, which adds a certain spiritual ferment; and, in a lesser degree, the Hellenistic trend which contributes the taste for logic and experimental knowledge'.[4]

*'Uyūn al-akhbār* is a systematically arranged anthology covering a wide range of topics, divided into ten sections, which in turn are divided in several chapters.[5] The work was to set a model for later adab compilations.[6] *'Uyūn al-akhbār* is also divided according to a descending scale, from the highest supremacy to women as the final

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1 ولا كنت عارا على القيان  in the biography of al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbās, *Aghānī,* vol. 16:192, Bulāq, vol. 10:15.

2 For more information about Ibn Qutayba, see Gérard Lecomte, 'Ibn Ḳutayba,' in EI[2], vol. 3, and Gérard Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba, l'homme, son oeuvre, ses idées* (Damascus: 1965).

3 Who in turn 'reproduces a late Hellenistic ethical system with a definite Stoic tinge mixed with Iranian political thought' and even 'Iranian/Zoroastrian lore': Judith Josephson, 'The Multicultural Background of the *Kitāb al-Ādāb al-kabīr* by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Muqaffa',' in *Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon* I: Oslo-Göteborg Cooperation 3rd - 5th June 2004, eds. Lutz Edzard and Jan Retsö (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 166-67. See also Lecomte, 'Ibn Ḳutayba,' 845-46.

4 Lecomte, 'Ibn Ḳutayba,' 846-47. See also Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 361-76.

5 I use the Dār al-Kutub edition, 4 vols., Cairo, 1925-30. Section is here used alternatively with book in translation, as *kitāb* may signify both.  'The book on women' (*Kitāb al-nisā'*) should be understood as the section or the volume on women.

6 Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 237.

stage.[1] The first section in the work is dedicated to power, *Kitāb al-sulṭān*, with akhbār about early Muslim rulers, together with Persian, Indian and Arabic wisdom, poetry, and ḥadīths. The second section, *Kitāb al-ḥarb,* deals with proper warfare, conduct, weapons, and horses, among other things. Subsequent to this is a section on nobility, *Kitāb al-su'dud*, which deals with various marks of nobility. After this excursion in the higher spheres, the fourth section presents various human dispositions and discommended characteristics, *Kitāb al-ṭabā'i' wal-akhlāq al-madhmūma*. The fifth section is about knowledge and eloquence, *Kitāb al-'ilm wal-bayān*. Eloquence is an important characteristic, since without it a person's knowledge will not be recognized. This section is followed by a section on piety and asceticism, *Kitāb al-zuhd*. The seventh section is about male friendship, *Kitāb al-ikhwān*, with topics such as which friends to choose and how to guard friendship. It is followed by a section on objects of desire, *Kitāb al-ḥawā'ij*, and how to achieve them. The ninth section is on food, *Kitāb al-ṭa'ām*, including medical effects. Finally, the tenth and longest section is on women, *Kitāb al-nisā'*, a subject that also includes various physical traits and diseases.

*'Uyūn al-akhbār* was written with an edifying aim, to contribute to the urbanized bureaucrats' education, with its examples of acceptable knowledge, attitudes and opinions in the intellectual circles patronized by the 'Abbāsid power centres. Ibn Qutayba writes in his introduction:

> I have collected for you what I have put together in this book so that you yourself may extract the best of it and impose on your soul. May you so rectify it [your soul] with its [the book's] sagacity and clarify it from defects of character in the same mode as when you clarify white silver from its dross, and discipline it by applying its good manner of acting, correct way of conduct, noble manner and dignified character. You should insert it into your talking whenever you converse and your style whenever you write.[2]

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1 See Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body*, 30.

2 Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-akhbār, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1925) كَ:

The reader should extract the best of the content in this work in order to correct his soul, i.e. his moral character. Yet the most important result seems not to be the moral correction, but the ability to display wit and suitable moral education in verbal interactions. Except for this introduction, Ibn Qutayba does not interfere through comments or critique; his task is compiling, choosing and arranging.[1]

## The Book on Women in *'Uyūn al-akhbār*

*Kitāb al-nisā'* is divided into a number of chapters. The title of the first chapter, which is also the subtitle of the whole section on women, underlines the tendency of the work: 'The Book on Women – their moral qualities, physical attributes, how we would prefer them to behave and what is detestable'.[2] Men's relations to women are the main point, with specific advice about how to choose a suitable wife. The other chapters are: 'Suitable husbands', 'Motivating marriage and condemning continence', 'The chapter on beauty', 'The chapter on ugliness', 'The chapter on blackness' (of skin), 'The chapter on old women and old men', 'The chapter on physical attributes' (length, beards, eyes, noses, stench, leprosy, lameness and scrotal hernia),[3] 'The chapter on dowry', 'Time for marriage', 'Speeches of requests to marry', 'Guardians' instructions to women before bringing them to their husbands', 'The chapter on supervision of women and social interaction with them', 'Women's talk', 'The chapter on gaze', 'The chapter on qiyān, lutes and song', 'Kissing', 'To come in to women and sexual intercourse'[4], 'The chapter on procuring', 'The chapter on adultery and sin', 'The chapter on women's depravity', 'The chapter on childbirth and children', 'The chapter on divorce', 'The chapters on

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جمعت لك منها ما جمعت فى هذا الكتاب لتأخذ نفسك بأحسنها وتقوّمها بثقافها وتخلصها من مساوى الأخلاق كما نخلص الفضة البيضاء من خبثها وتروضها على الأخذ بما فيها من سنة حسنة وسيرة قويمة وأدب كريم وخلق عظيم وتصل بها فى كلامك اذا حاورت وبلاغتك اذا كتبت

1 Khalidi, *Thought*, 110.

كتاب النساء – في اخلاقهن وخلقهن وما يختار منهن وما يكره       2

3 In the printed version, each of these physical attributes makes up one chapter, but I have chosen to treat them here as one all together. This chapter will not be submitted to the analysis.

4 الدخول بالنساء 'to go in to women' refers to the man's taking his newly wed wife into a special tent for the consumation. See p. 59 below and several instances in App. 1. The term is also explained in App. 1:2, n.5.

lovers other than lovers among the poets', and finally there is a chapter with the title 'Beautiful love poems'. Themes that occur in these chapters as well as the modes of expressing them will be presented in Chapter 4.[1]

Some of the chapters are entirely, or almost entirely, composed of poetry, such as 'Women's talk', which includes poems about sweet words of the beloved, and of course 'Beautiful love poems'. Others are mostly, and sometimes entirely, about men. This is true of the chapter on physical attributes; hence it is not included in the analysis. Nevertheless, the fact is that narratives and statements about men make up a significant bulk of the section as a whole. For example, in several of the narratives in the three first chapters, as well as in some later, women are not present either as subjects or as objects. In the chapter on speeches, for example, suitors and fathers are mentioned, but far from always the daughters and brides. In the chapters on beauty, ugliness and old age, there are slightly more descriptions of men than of women.

Except for anecdotes and poetry, *Nisa'* includes a large corpus of wisdom literature: proverbs, sayings and ḥadīths. The proverbs are introduced by the formula *kāna yuqāl* (it used to be said), and often have a sign identifying the Arab setting, as for example: 'Al-Aṣmaʿī said: an old man from the ʿAnbar tribe reported to us, he said: It used to be said: Women are three…' [2] Firstly, al-Aṣmaʿī is known for transmitting pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab material, and secondly, the Arab setting is authorized by the anonymous 'an old man from the ʿAnbar tribe'. There are two major sources of sayings in *Nisā'*. Firstly, there are the sayings attributed to individuals from the first Muslim community and to various religious authorities. Two such authorities, ʿĀ'isha and ʿĪsā (Jesus), each introduce a chapter. Secondly, there are figures from the Arab tribe-setting, named and well-known poets, as well as unnamed men from specific or unspecific tribes. A reference such as 'A man said', or 'A Bedouin said', does not necessarily imply an Arab setting, but the fact that scholars such as al-Aṣmaʿī, Ibn al-Aʿrābī, or Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ are quoted as the transmitter indicates that the tradition is derived from the Arab or Arabized tribes of the

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1 See also El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse', for an overview of the most significant themes and motives in *Nisā'*, compared to Ibn Rabbihi's *'Iqd al-Farīd*.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 2. الأصمعيّ قال: أخبرنا شيخ من بنى العنبر قال: كان يُقال: النساءُ ثلاث...

Arabian peninsula and Iraq. The prophet Muḥammad is the ultimate authority, and the ḥadīths attributed to him have a special position in *Nisā'*. They introduce six chapters, some of which are the most normative in the volume.[1] Most often the implication of the ḥadīth agrees with the rest of the material in the chapter, but there are some cases when it is in conflict with one or more of the subsequent statements. For example, in the opening ḥadīth of the chapter named "kissing", the prophet Muḥammad encourages kissing one's wives, while the following statement condemns it.[2]

## Adab, anecdotes and gender

The attitudes towards women taken in *Nisā'* on the thematic as well as the linguistic levels are of significant interest for this thesis, as they explicitly point out what is 'thinkable', or at least 'sayable', about women among a group of people who have the necessary means to set precedents, the cultural elite. The very existence of a genre of books about women, as a biologically defined group, is symptomatic. Men, on the other hand, are treated as individuals, defined by their activities, mental or other characteristics. *Nisā'* is gendered not only on a structural but also on a thematic level. Several narratives follow a formulaic pattern in comparing the sexes: men are such, while women are such. Furthermore, the book is more straightforwardly directed to men than the women's section in *Ṭabaqāt* and the individual women's lives in *Aghānī*.

   In several adab works, men are divided into different social groups, while women are grouped together as one single, biologically defined group. Malti-Douglas suggests that the organization of the material discloses a twofold gender-bias. Firstly, women are gathered together at the very end of the work. Just as in *Ṭabaqāt*, women 'find themselves near the bottom of the ladder, toward the end of the work'.[3] Secondly, women are fused together with diverse subgroups, defined as marginal and defective by the male-established hegemony.[4] In *'Uyūn al-Akhbār* the physically deficient males are not mere neighbours; they are

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1 These chapters are the first chapter, 'Suitable husbands', 'Motivating marriage', 'The chapter on beauty', 'The chapter on supervision of women', and 'Kissing'.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 92.
3 Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body*, 27.
4 Ibid., 28.

included in the Book on Women itself, together with various physical features: 'Amalgamating and embedding all these various physically circumscribed topics under the heading of 'Women' redefines the nature of woman, as well obviously as the nature of the physical characteristics. The physically normal and healthy female subsumes in her essence the body, including the male body, especially as the latter becomes deficient or abnormal.'[1]

Nevertheless, this tendentious structure is challenged by the anecdotes, where one of the most striking features is that the 'official' power-relationship is turned upside-down, whether man-woman, slave-free, etc. Subversive power-relations are in fact a literary topos here. Scenes are often composed as verbal duels, initiated by the man as speaker or focalizer, but with a surprising turn in which the woman wins, thanks to her eloquence and wit. Eloquence is a gift that characterized the 'female adab character type', according to Malti-Douglas, together with ruse and sexuality.[2] However, she forgot wit, which is probably the most important feature in the anecdotes in *Nisā*. Women in anecdotes are often, like their sisters in storytelling, witty and capable. In Mia Gerhardt's study of the *Thousand and One Nights*, she found that, except in a few stories which are not originally Arabic, 'women nearly always are cast in an admirable role', credited with 'excellent and solid qualities'.[3] Ruse is connected with wit, but it is not a characteristic which is restricted to women; men display ruse as well. The same goes for sexuality – both men and women are treated as sexual beings. Moreover, the female adab type is not predominantly a slave, which Malti-Douglas seems to suggest. Many of the women in the anecdotes appear to be free women, but secluded by their anonymity. Anecdotes thus give women the opportunity to act as subjects when they are unidentified.

The verbal battle between a woman and a man is a common motif in the Book on Women in *'Uyūn al-akhbār* and 'Arīb's biography in *Aghānī*. The woman in 'Arīb's biography is of course 'Arīb herself,

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1 Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Medicines of the Soul: Female Bodies and Sacred Geographies in a Transnational Islam* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 30.
2 Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body*, 31.
3 Mia I. Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of The Thousand and One Nights*. (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 354-55.

while she tends to be anonymous in *'Uyūn*.[1] The setting may be a road, or the pilgrimage to Mecca. Another formulaic setting is the lawsuit, where the conflict between the two antagonists, a man and a woman, brings the constructed gender differences to a head. The verbal battle could also be in the form of a poem.[2] The clash between the two sexes is the dramatic force of the anecdotes in *Nisā'*, irrespectively of whether the two parts in conflict consist of one woman and one man, one woman and several men, several women and one man, or several women and several men.

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1 See Malti-Douglas on anonymous women and named men in adab anecdotes: Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body*, 34-35.
2 See Hammond, 'He Said 'She Said' for an ingenious analysis of the interaction between a woman's verse, presented in a poetic duel between her and a male poet (Nazhūn and al-Makhzūmī, from the twelfth-century Granada) and the anecdotal embedding. In this case, the interaction is compound – between the verses of the male and female poetic antagonists, and between the woman's verse and the narrative context, which has an unmistakeable male domination.

# Chapter 3: Narrative and authority

In this chapter, the biographies of 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr and 'Arīb will presented and thereafter analysed with the help of Genette. The focus here is the narrative techniques used in the biographies. Although the two biographies differ as to themes and contents, they have several formal similarities. They are both composed of akhbār with meticulous isnāds, and both are commenced by extradiegetic, more or less formulaic introductions. The specific narrative character of the khabar is particularly suitable for creating authority. Basically, narrative authority is the general truth claim of the narrative text. More specifically, in the case of 'Ā'isha, it is the truth claim of the historical narrative about the early Muslim umma, which is important for Islamic identity. Moreover, in this specific case, it is the legitimization of a controversial personage, 'Ā'isha, whose legacy is vital for the forming of Sunni Islamic identity. In 'Arīb's biography it is the legacy of a glorious past and a controversial but culturally influential profession that is defended. Several narrative practices might be elaborated on for creating authority, such as narrative situation. Here, Genette's distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator will be used. Bal's concept of hypodiegetic discourse will also be referred to, as well as terms that have to do with the narrative rhythm, summary and scene. These terms have already been described in the first chapter.

   'Arīb's biography consists of roughly as many heterodiegetic as homodiegetic narratives, while homodiegetic narratives, or rather statements, make up less than half of 'Ā'isha's biography. Contrary to 'Ā'isha's biography, where several of the homodiegetic narratives are autodiegetic with 'Ā'isha as the main character in her own narrations, 'Arīb is not the narrator of her own story. The homodiegetic narratives are told by minor characters in the story, witnesses who observe 'Arīb's undertakings. These narratives tend to be what we usually identify as anecdotes. The homodiegetic narratives in 'Ā'isha's biography are often rendered in the form of a dialogue, with a short question followed by a more or less elaborated answer. Sometimes it is only a monologue, as when 'Ā'isha retells what Muḥammad has said to her. Several of the narratives in 'Arīb's biography are relatively long, especially some

narratives in the second part, containing her life-story, where each narrative might depict several episodes. In 'Ā'isha's biography, on the other hand, the akhbār rarely depict more than one episode; often they only contain single statements, or fragments of an episode.

## Narratives on pious women: 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr

'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr is one of the most famous and discussed women in Islam's history.[1] As one of the prophet Muḥammad's wives she is granted a special position by the Qur'ān and sunna. While Muḥammad was to become the principal ideal for many Muslim men, his wives were early regarded as role models for Muslim women.[2] Ā'isha was known for being his favourite wife, a claim which is repeated in her biography. Modern Muslim feminists call attention to 'Ā'isha's close and openhearted relation to the Prophet, to her attested wit and knowledge, as well as her active participation in politics.[3] In the medieval sources, 'Ā'isha's life was exploited, not as much in her own right as for the discussion about sunna and Islamic identity, a discussion conducted by generations of male scholars.[4] The important issues were her and her cowives' adherence to Islamic pillars, such as fasting and giving alms, and her dressing, exemplified in Ibn Sa'd's compilation. Other motives probably functioning as foundations for discussions on sunna are the wives' wedding and funeral arrangements. However, there is no historical documentation as to whether medieval

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1 For 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr in medieval Arabic literature, see Denise A Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of A'isha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and Abbott, Aishah. For modern representations of 'Ā'isha, see Elsadda, 'Discourses'.

2 Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 105-106. There is an extensive modern literature on this subject, which goes quite far in launching the Prophet's wives, not least 'Ā'isha, as modern female ideals and reinterpreting the Prophet's wives potential exemplarity within a modern context.

3 See Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World,* trans. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Press, 1980), 131, Ahmed, *Women*, 51, Magali Morsy, *Les femmes du prophète* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989) and Abbott, *Aishah.* Mernissi claims that both 'Ā'isha and Umm Salama demanded 'the liberation of women', as well as 'liberty and autonomy' for all, slaves and free women: Mernissi, Women and Islam, 186. See also Shaheen Sardar Ali, *Gender and Human Rights in Islam and International Law: Equal Before Allah, Unequal Before Man?* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000), 55-56.

4 Spellberg, *Politics*, 1: 'it is their story not hers, for she is the object not the subject of their written remembrance and evocation' In fact, this could also be said about the portrait of Muḥammad in the hadīths, where 'the compilers' intent and methodology were not to record historical data per se but to institutionalize Muḥammad's exemplary behaviour for the benefit of the community': Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 104. Even Muhammad's first biography, Ibn Isḥāq's sīra, was more ideological than historical, composed as 'an active voice in the polemical debate': Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 2.

Muslim women consented to accept the Prophet's wives as role models and to what degree the narratives about them influenced real women's lives.[1] The discussions about sunna are of course not restricted to the women's biographies; they occur regularly in the men's biographies as well.

Ā'isha is not only the most discussed woman in medieval Arabic literature; she is also the most quoted. She is cited as first narrator of a large body of ḥadīths about the Prophet and the first umma. However, 'Ā'isha in the medieval debate is more or less a fictional woman. Spellberg argues that 'Ā'isha's words were 'attributed to her or created for her'; she was not their real point of origin but used in the course of the medieval formation of Islam.[2] Above all, she has been used in the polemics between Sunni and Shi'a adherents. While the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima eventually became the female role model for Shi'a Muslims, 'Ā'isha's credibility was exceedingly important for Sunni scholars to defend, as she is the first transmitter of numerous reports from the prophet Muḥammad in Sunni tradition.[3] However, neither 'Ā'isha nor Fāṭima are important merely on their own behalf; both are used to enhance the more important men they are connected to, by genealogy or marriage: in 'Ā'isha's case, her father Abū Bakr, the first caliph, in Fāṭima's case, her husband 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and thier sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.[4] 'Ā'isha's active involvement in the opposition to the fourth caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Shi'a predecessor, an opposition that led to the Battle of the Camel, has attained an almost symbolic status in the course of history, involving both the explanation of the intra-Muslim conflicts, and the exclusion of women from politics.[5] The battle is named after 'Ā'isha's camel, on which she sat in the midst of the battlefield in a covered litter.[6] One famous tradition

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1 See Spellberg, *Politics*, 8-9.
2 Ibid., 12.
3 See ibid., 8, 32-37, Ashtiany et al., eds., *'Abbasid Belles-Lettres;* see also Mernissi, *Women's Rebellion* 92-93; for Fāṭima in medieval Shiite sources, see Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fāṭima bint Muḥammad: Metamorphosen einer frühislamischen Frauengestalt* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002).
4 See e.g. Spellberg, *Politics*, 34-35: 'The opposition between 'A'isha and Fatima as conflicting female images was merely an extension of the more overtly political Abu Bakr-'Ali terminological tension.'
5 Ibid., 7 and 106. The prevalent tendency to charge 'Ā'isha's involvement in politics for the age-long sectarian conflicts in Islam is one of Mernissi's incentives for her feminist reinterpretation of early Islamic history: Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, 5ff.
6 For a detailed account building on medieval Arab sources, see Abbott, *Aishah*, 109-76.

claims that the Prophet said: 'A people who place women in charge of their affairs will never prosper'.[1]

The information about 'Ā'isha's political undertakings is found in the history books, such as Ṭabarī's, while the biographical article in *Tabaqāt* merely refers to it implicitly. [2] Apparently, women's involvement in politics is an accepted topic in historical narratives, and it is therefore puzzling that such information is excluded in their biographies. The exclusion of material with the Prophet's wives as political subjects seems to have been part of a conscious organizing principle for biographies of the first Muslim women. Of course, controversial issues have always posed problems for biographers, and one alternative has been to exclude them entirely.[3] On the level of the individual, Ibn Sa'd obviously wants to defend 'Ā'isha; he does not mention the controversial incident, only that 'Ammār defended her honour in one narrative from the Battle of the Camel (1:38[4]), and that she herself was regretful (e.g. 1:144).[5]

The intentional use of the Prophet's wives as role models started already in the ninth century, or possibly earlier.[6] The ninth-century lawyers and theologians derived their legal norms for women from the verses in the Qur'ān directed to the wives, which is most obviously noted in the prescriptions of seclusion and concealment for all free women.[7] Medieval scholars were engaged in constructing a chronology of the verses in the Qur'ān, and the chronology they agreed upon indicates that the decrees were successively more restrictive towards the Prophet's wives.[8] In fact, various themes in the wives' biographies have their *locus classicus* in the Qur'ān, and also belong to the exegetic genre of *asbāb al-nuzūl*.[9] Several verses in the Qur'ān relate to the Prophet's wives, such as 33:6 (the wives are the mothers of the

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1 See Mernissi on this ḥadīth and the battle of the camel: Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, 1ff and 53ff.
2 Ṭabarī, *The History of Ṭabarī*, trans. Adrian Brockett, vol. 16, The Community Divided (State University of New York Press, 1997).
3 See Fedwa Malti-Douglas, 'Controversy and its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī', *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977), 123.
4 The number before the colon refers to the appendix, and the second number is the number of the khabar. The numbering is mine and for the benefit of analysis only.
5 See Spellberg, *Politics*, 119-20.
6 See Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 105-106.
7 Ibid., 92, and 104-18.
8 See Abbott, 'Women and the State 1': 113, and Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 102.
9 See above 52. See also Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 85-103, about the medieval *asbāb al-nuzūl* to verses in the Qur'ān about the Prophet's wives.

believers), 33:53 (the ḥijāb verse), and 33:28-33 (the verses of the choice), which give them an extraordinary position, but also special obligations and restrictions. The prerequisites for the wives' special status have some similarities with the prescriptions for other Muslim women in the Qur'ān, such as obedience towards the husband (4:34) and modesty (24:31 and 33:59). Yet, for women other than the wives, modesty was a matter of respectable clothing and lowering of the gazes (24:31), which was also ordained to believing men (24:30).[1]

The biographies of ʿĀ'isha and her co-wives have a reception history that extends into modern times, which distinguishes them from the other narratives about women analysed in this thesis. Moreover, of the women who were portrayed in the earliest Arabic literature, it is by and large only the Prophet's wives who are remembered today. Very few entries on women have been added in the great biographical compilations in the course of the centuries.[2] The reverse is the case for men; each century numerous biographical entries on men are added in the compilations on significant persons, many of which are still regarded as important today. For women seeking historical role models there have not been many to choose between, and it is not peculiar that the few available have been exploited in various contexts. Yet, in Ibn Saʿd's biography of ʿĀ'isha, this role model status is not unproblematic. While she functions as an obvious exemplar in issues such as women's correct clothing, the religious-political legacy is confounding, exemplified by her own words to a woman who addresses her as 'My mother'. ʿĀ'isha's answer is rejecting: 'I am not your mother, I am the mother of your men' (1:34 and 52). This puzzling commentary could be a product of the attempt to authorise ḥadīths derived from ʿĀ'isha. She is the mother of all Muslim men, just as Mary was the mother of God's son, and she is an authority, not only in marginalised 'women's issues' such as clothing, but also as transmitters of ḥadīths from the Prophet in the sunna tradition. Being a woman, she has to actively transcend her gender to become an authority with universal claim. This commentary also shows that gender is of real

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1 See ibid., 91. She argues that it is obvious that women were required to behave modestly when outdoors, but not to seclude themselves at home.
2 See Roded for the dramatic decrease of women as subjects of biographies after the first century of Islam: Roded, *Women*, 11.

importance in these narratives. Furthermore, ʻĀ'isha transcends her gender without losing her role as an exemplar for women.

## Structure and themes

ʻĀ'isha's biography is arranged more or less chronologically, with more akhbār about her childhood and marriage to the prophet Muḥammad appearing in the beginning, and more about her death in the last part. Still, this chronology is not always strictly maintained; as an example, a few reports from her early life are included at the end (1:142-43). Naturally, chronology could have been altered in transmission; nevertheless, the text gives the impression of a strategy on behalf of the editor/author to demonstrate that a chronological life-story is not the issue. The organizing principle is rather based on theme and transmitters, which is in line with not only classical Arabic tradition but also Greek biography. The author/editor also avoids longer akhbār; he prefers to split up narratives and serve them in portions, as if long narratives would give an impression of story-telling rather than historical truth.

ʻĀ'isha's biography is made up of 144 akhbār, most of them very short, embracing single events or summaries of series of events. The main rhythm of the narratives is either summary, scene with description, or summary followed by scene. As in much medieval literature, there is a predilection for direct speech, in the form of monologues or dialogues. In ʻĀ'isha's biography, the monologues are somewhat more common; dialogues are used in teacher-pupil situations, while a monologue could be inserted in any summary.

Contrary to the main body of biographies in *Ṭabaqāt*, ʻĀ'isha's biography does not have an extensive introduction; instead it is introduced by a few words about the patrilineal genealogy of her father and mother.[1] After the genealogical information, the first twenty-six akhbār are mainly about ʻĀ'isha's marriage and childhood with the Prophet, which form the first part of her biography. The two issues go hand-in-hand, as she supposedly was six years old when they married. There are two categories of narratives about ʻĀ'isha's marriage. The first is a summarized chronology of her life, or at least married life,

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1 Most biographies in *Ṭabaqāt* begin with a formulaic introduction, with information about the woman's genealogy, marriages, children and involvement in the key events in early Islam. See more, Chapter 5.

measured by the life of the Prophet. He is the yardstick of her life chronology, framed by his activities with her. The most important events in her life may well be included in one single khabar, such as the heterodiegetic narrative below:

> The Prophet, GBGS,[1] married 'Ā'isha when she was seven years old, consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, and died when she was eighteen years old.[2] (1:11)

The second category is an account of an event in connection with their marriage. It is less summarized than the chronology; sometimes it is a scene with a dialogue or a monologue, homodiegetic as well as heterodiegetic. This second type is often introduced by a short chronology, followed by, as in the example below (1:4), a more detailed narrative. This type could also, as in 1:130, begin with a more detailed narrative or a scene, and conclude with the chronology. The following narrative is 'Ā'isha's autodiegetic narration about events in connection to her marriage:

> God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was six years old, and came in to me in order to consummate the marriage when I was nine years old. I was playing with dolls together with the girls, as I was prepared for him to come in to me. When he came in, my friends felt embarrassed by his precense and left. Then God's Messenger left instead, because he was glad about them on my behalf.[3] (1:4)

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Several of the narratives about 'Ā'isha's childhood depict the tenderness Muḥammad felt for his child bride; as in the narrative above, he allowed her to play and behave as a child. There is an emotional aspect in 'Ā'isha's biography, especially illustrated by two accounts towards the end, in which Muḥammad defends her against her mother, who hits her in one khabar (130), and her father, who does the same in the second last khabar (143). The last khabar of the first part (1:26) is a fine illustration of the embroidering of a simple chronological notice into a detailed story. It begins with a question: 'When did God's Messenger, GBGS, consummate the marriage with you?' [1] The questioner is anonymous, 'she was asked', and the question functions as a generator of 'Ā'isha's hijra story. 'Ā'isha narrates about her hijra, an important as well as prestigious event in the early Muslim community, and only thereafter does she answer the question.

The emotional aspect is substantiated in the second part of the biography, approximately from khabar 27 to 44. The theme of this part is 'Ā'isha's elevated position, which is often proved by the Prophet's deep love for her; she is the beloved of God's beloved and his wife in Paradise. In some akhbār, 'Ā'isha herself and with good self-confidence narrates about her position: 'I am distinguished as more excellent than the [other] wives of the Prophet, GBGS' (1:29) and 'I was given characteristics which no other woman has been given' (1:36).[2]

The main theme of the third part, which consists more or less of akhbār 45-114, is 'Ā'isha as an example for sunna in Islam, her piety and her clothing. Here we also find narratives about her elevated position. The two go hand-in-hand, as an elevated position with the Prophet makes her a more authoritative example for people; and as an example for right behaviour, she attains a more elevated position in the community. Piety and clothing are also to some extent the same, as correct clothing is a sign of piety. This is emphasized by the narratives about her seclusion; she even secluded herself from a blind man (1:63).

Towards the end of the third part, 'Ā'isha's words on her deathbed are related; these are pious words about her wish to be completely forgotten after her death. Her words at death initiate the fourth and last

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1 أنّها سئلت متى بنى بك رسول الله صلعم

2 App. 1:29, فُضّلت على نساء النبّى . 1:36, أعطيتُ خلالا ما أعطيتْها امرأة

part of the biography, beginning with several akhbār about ʿĀʾisha's funeral, interposed by narratives of her position. The Prophet's love for her is delicately illustrated by akhbār 142-43. In the first, the Prophet blames his wife Ṣafiyya for vilifying ʿĀʾisha's father Abū Bakr in an argument between the two co-wives. He respected Abū Bakr highly, and did not tolerate any bad words about him. Thus, in the next khabar, before Muḥammad gives ʿĀʾisha a reprimand, he asks her father for permission. Instead, Abū Bakr, eager to satisfy the Prophet, punishes his daughter by beating her. In vain, as the Prophet did not have the intention to beat his wife and defends her against her father. The very last khabar is significant, mentioning ʿĀʾisha's political activities in a subtle way. The elderly ʿĀʾisha regrets deeply that she did not obey the command in the Qurʾān to stay indoors. She objects to her own political activities, and asks for forgiveness – a request that again is presented in pious words, such as: 'I wish I had not been created! I wish I were a tree praising God and performing my duty' (1:101), 'I wish I were a tree; I wish I were a stone; I wish I were a clod of soil' (1:103).[1] She also wishes that she was "completely forgotten" (1:99, 1:105 and 1:109).[2] It is as though she asks the reader for forgiveness, or rather, the narrators ask for forgiveness on her behalf, defying her wish to be forgotten. By forgiving her, the reader could accept her sunna as well as all the traditions transmitted in her name from the Prophet. Her elevated position and the Prophet's love for her make her a worthy rival to Fāṭima.

## Statements and narrative levels

Although the narrative material dominates, the reports are sometimes not more than statements which could hardly be labelled narrative.[3] The statements might be commentaries made by narrators on any diegetic

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1

1:103, يا ليتنى كنت شجرة يا ليتنى كنت حجرا يا , 1:101, يا ليتنى لم أخلق يا ليتنى كنت شجرة اسبّح وأقضى ما علىّ
ليتنى كنت مَدَرة

2 كنت نسياً منسياً Here she is apparently quoting Qurʾān 19:23, where Mary says exactly the same.

3 In his structural analysis of Sufi ṭabaqāt, Mojaddedi distinguishes between two utterances and narratives. The utterances in the works studied by him are often contextualized as questions and answers, and is thus not altogether equivalent to 'statement', as used here: Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism. The Ṭabaqāt genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 24.

level commenting upon the narrative situation or the content of the narrative. In khabar 120 for example, we find the author's comment: 'and Ibn 'Umar is among the people one cannot dispute'.[1] Khabar 16 begins with 'Ā'isha's own narration about the time for her wedding, followed by two kinds of comments. First an unknown later narrator comments on the context of her report: 'She used to prefer that her women were brought in Shawwāl'. In fact, this comment is a heterodiegetic narrative that confirms 'Ā'isha's testimony. The concluding comments are made by Abū 'Āṣim, the last narrator, that is, the first name in the isnād:

> Abū 'Āṣim al-Nabīl al-Daḥḥāk ibn Makhlad, and al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn and Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Asadī reported to us, they said: Sufyān related to us, on the authority of Ismā'īl ibn Umayya on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Urwa on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: **'**God's Messenger married me in Shawwāl, and I was brought for him [to consummate the marriage] in Shawwāl, and which of his women were more in favour with him than I?' She used to prefer that her women were brought [to their husbands] in Shawwāl. Abū 'Āṣim said: 'People did not like to go in to women [to consummate their marriages] in Shawwāl due to the plague that occurred in Shawwāl in the earliest time'. Abū 'Āṣim said: 'Sufyān reported this hadīth to us in the year 146 [763-64] in Mecca, in the house of al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb al-Jumahī.'[2] (1:16)

The first of Abū 'Āṣim's comments in the narrative above is a comment on content, an explanation, while the second is a comment on the

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1 وابن عمر فى الناس لا ينكره Ibn 'Umar is Ibn Sa'd's teacher and main informant, al-Wāqidi.

2

اخبرنا ابو عاصم النبيل الضحّاك بن مخلد والفضل بن دكين ومحمد بن عبد الله الأسدى قالوا ثنا سفيان عن اسماعيل بن اميّة عن عبد الله بن عروة عن عائشة قالت: تزوّجنى رسول الله صلعم فى شوّال وأدخلت عليه فى الشوّال فأىّ نسائه كان احظى عنده منّى وكانت تستحبّ ان تُدخل نساؤها فى شوّال وقال ابو عاصم إنما كره الناس أن يدخلوا النساء فى شوّال لطاعون وقع فى شوّال فى الزمن الأوّل قال ابو عاصم وأخبرنا سفيان هذا الحديث سنة ست وأربعين ومائة بمكة فى دار الحسن بن وهب الجمحى

narrative situation. Moreover, this report contains a shift in person, illuminating the complexity of the narrative situation conveyed by the isnād. The first sentence is narrated by ‘Ā’isha; she talks about herself and it is thus autodiegetic. In the following sentence, ‘Ā’isha is suddenly the third person; someone else in the chain of transmitters is talking about her. The report might be divided into three minor reports, each consisting of one or a few sentences: first ‘Ā’isha's homodiegetic utterance, then a heterodiegetic sentence narrated by any of the narrators of the isnād, and finally Abū ‘Āṣim's comments. Although delivered in direct speech, these two comments could not be considered hypodiegetic, as they are inserted in the khabar at a later stage. Abū ‘Āṣim does not operate on the same diegetic level as ‘Ā’isha. It is ‘Ā’isha's utterance about God's Messenger marriage to her that is the core of this khabar. It is a part of the chronology of her marriage with Muḥammad. Meanwhile, as the information given is confirmed, it generates new information. ‘Ā’isha's narration takes place at the lowest diegetic level, the first heterodiegetic statement at a somewhat higher level, unclear which. The two last comments, however, are related at the highest level. All these narrations confirm the accurateness of the information given in the khabar. Abū ‘Āṣim's second comment confirms the correctness of the transmission, while his first comment confirms the logic of the information given. The case of the Prophet's marrying a wife in Shawwāl was a break with tradition; otherwise it would probably not be worth transmitting.[1]

Sometimes, the statements are phrases apparently taken from a longer, main narrative, but with a different isnād. One such example in ‘Ā’isha's biography is the 'repentance-reports', defined as such in khabar 103, the series of utterances made by ‘Ā’isha on her deathbed. Their main narrative could be 1:109, one of the longest narratives in the biography.  The central part of the narrative is a scene in which Ibn ‘Abbās praises ‘Ā’isha on her deathbed, but is rejected with the words: 'She said: "Leave me, Ibn ‘Abbās! By the one who holds my soul in his hand, I wish that I were completely forgotten"'.[2] A shorter version of this scene is previously given in 1:105.

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1 Although all the Prophet's actions and sayings are deemed as worthy of transmission by ḥadīth scholars.

فقالت دعنى منك يأبن عبّاس فوالذى نفسى بيده لوددت انّى كنت نسيا منسيّا 2

79

## Narrative situation

The truthfulness of the akhbār in ‘Ā’isha’s biography is primarily validated on the basis of the names in the isnād. These are the narrators, and their reliability has been evaluated by later ḥadīth scholars. Moreover, the terminology in the isnāds reveals some aspects of the narrative situation.[1] The narrative situation consists among other things of the place and time of the narrating, the narrative level it occurs on and the narrator.[2] The terms used for 'narrating' may reveal something about the narrative situations of the different levels, where each name of the isnād represents a different level. Most often, the isnād consists of nothing more than names and terms for 'narrating', but sometimes more information about the narrative situation is given. According to Sezgin, the terminology in the isnād is carefully considered, reflecting *taḥammul al-‘ilm*, the transmission of knowledge.[3] The terminology used in ‘Ā’isha’s biography is *akhbara*, here translated 'reported', *ḥaddatha*, here translated 'related', *‘an*, which is translated 'on the authority of', and *qāla/qālat*, 'he/she said', all of which refer to the narrative situation. The pronominal suffixes *–nī* and *–nā*, 'he related to me', or 'he related to us', indicate whether the knowledge was transmitted in private or to a group of pupils.[4] The narrative situation referred to by *akhbara* is originally either *qirā’a*, the pupil reading a ḥadīth from the book or by heart, while the teacher listens to him and corrects him, or *munāwala,* the teacher giving his book or a copy of it to the pupil, together with the rights to transmit it.[5] From the second half of the second century AH (from ca. 770), *akhbara* was used both for reading and for listening, *samā‘*, to the teacher who reads by heart or from his book, which formerly had been expressed by *ḥaddatha*.[6] The frequent particle *‘an* might denote an interrupted chain of transmitters, that is, a chain of transmitters which is not logically possible, and therefore obviously lacks one or more names of

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1 See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 215.
2 Ibid.
3 Sezgin, *Geschichte*, bd 1, 56.
4 Ibid., 77.
5 Ibid., 59.
6 Ibid.

informants.[1] It might also denote the situation of *ijāza*, which is when the teacher gives his permission to transmit some of his texts, or all of them.[2] Finally, *qāla/qālat* is also a term for the narrative situation, and can be used, according to Sezgin, in relation to *wijāda*, referring to a book or a ḥadīth by someone who has got possession of the manuscript from the last transmitter.[3] Nevertheless, *qāla/qālat* is certainly most common in its function of opening direct speech and to mark the closure of the isnād and the beginning of the *matn*.

In ʿĀ'isha's biography, *akhbara* is generally used on the highest diegetic level, closest to the extradiegetic narrator, followed by *ḥaddatha* on the next diegetic level. Then follows often a series of *ʿan*, ending with *qāla/qālat*, which introduce the main narrative. This gives the impression of decreasing orality, with the report originally narrated orally (*qāla/qālat*), then conveyed by unknown transmitters and therefore interrupted (*ʿan*), after that narrated (*ḥaddatha*) to a group of pupils, and finally recited from a book (*akhbara*). Moreover, *qāla/qālat* is used when the wording of the isnād is interrupted for one reason or another, for example if there are more than one narrator on the same diegetic level (e.g. 1:22, 55 and 65); but still, the term conveys an impression of orality.

In some cases the alternation between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator seems to convey different aspects of the story. The homodiegetic narrative is a device for creating credability, as it claims that the narrator actually attended an event and saw it with his/her own eyes. The homodiegetic narration might complement and verify the heterodiegetic in order to create authority. An example of this is the two akhbār about ʿĀ'isha's reaction to her niece Ḥafṣa bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's mode of veiling, where one is heterodiegetic (77) while the other is homodiegetic (86). Although the two reports have the same first narrator, they differ as to rhythm and elaboration of the topic. In this case, the heterodiegetic narrative is a summary of an event, which is elaborated in a scene in the homodiegetic narrative.

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1 Ibid., 78.
2 Ibid., 59.
3 Ibid.

Ma'n ibn 'Īsā reported to us, Mālik related to us, on the authority of 'Alqama ibn Abī 'Alqama, on the authority of his mother, she said:

Ḥafṣa bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān came in to 'Ā'isha, Mother of the believers. Ḥafṣa was wearing a thin veil. 'Ā'isha tore it while she was wearing it and dressed her in a thick veil.[1] (1:77)

Khālid ibn Makhlad reported to us, Sulaymān ibn Bilāl related to us, on the authority of 'Alqama ibn Abī 'Alqama, on the authority of his mother, she said:

I saw Ḥafṣa bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr coming in to 'Ā'isha dressed in a thin veil, which did not cover the opening of her garment. 'Ā'isha tore it while she was wearing it, and said: Do you not know what God revealed in the sūra of the light? Then she asked for a veil, and dressed her in it.[2] (1:86)

The narrator in 1:86 is an observer, a homodiegetic narrator who does not take part in the action at all. While the heterodiegetic report only summarizes the main events of the story, the homodiegetic report places it in a wider context and refers to the Qur'ān 24:31, where women are ordered to cover their *jayb*.[3] The heterodiegetic narrator, on the other hand, just remarks that Ḥafṣa wore a thin veil, and 'Ā'isha does not have to refer to the Qur'ān to complain about it; the thin texture of the veil is enough.

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1  اخبرنا معن بن عيسى حدّثنا مالك عن علقمة بن ابى علقمة عن امّه قالت:  دخلتْ حفصة بنت عبد الرحمن على عائشة امّ المؤمنين وعلى حفصة خمار رقيق فشقته عائشة عليها وكستها خمارا كثيفا

اخبرنا معن بن عيسى حدّثنا مالك عن علقمة بن ابى علقمة عن امّه قالت:  دخلتْ حفصة بنت عبد الرحمن على عائشة امّ المؤمنين وعلى حفصة خمار رقيق فشقته عائشة عليها وكستها خمارا كثيفا

2

اجبرنا خالد بن مخلد حدّثنا سليمان بن بلال عن علقمة بن ابى علقمة عن امّه قالت:  رأيت حفصة بنت عبد الرحمن بن ابى بكر دخلت على عائشة وعليها خمار رقيق يشفّ عن جيبها فشقّته عائشة عليها وقالت اما تعلمين ما انزل الله فى سورة النور ثمّ دعت بخمار فكستها

3 The exact meaning of *jayb* was a question for religious scholars, as it was considered important to determine what women had to cover. For a brief explanation, see Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *jyb*. See also the note in Appendix 1, khabar 86.

**Direct speech and witnesses**

Another device for creating authority is direct speech – both the narrator's speech in a homodiegetic narrative, and a character's speech in a hypodiegetic discourse. The intricate system of narrative levels in the khabar, as well as its complex narrative situations, often obstructs the differentiation between narrator and speaker. Bal's notion of hypodiegetic discourse makes this differentiation less crucial. 'Ā'isha might be the homodiegetic narrator of one khabar and the speaking character in another; in both cases she conveys her own words. Hypodiegetic discourse and homodiegetic narratives have a similar function; a monologue by a key character verifies and even authorizes the narrative. 'Ā'isha is the homodiegetic narrator of the following khabar, and the Prophet is a character. His monologue, a short remark in direct speech, confirms the claims of the khabar, namely the young age of 'Ā'isha and the caring and affectionate nature of the Prophet.

> The Prophet, GBGS, married me when I was seven years old and came in to me [to consummate the marriage] when I was nine years old and was playing with dolls with my friends. When he came, they were together with me and the Prophet, GBGS, said to us: 'Stay where you are!'[1] (1:17)

The Prophet's hypodiegetic monologue does not define the narrative; it complements it and verifies it. Thus it is, following Bal, a hypodiegetic discourse rather than a hypodiegetic narrative. This discourse verifies 'Ā'isha's tender age at the time of the marriage, and it also conveys new information, the Prophet's compassion for his child bride. In the following narrative the information is also confirmed in direct speech, by the character who should know most about it. In this example, the direct speech is perhaps not a hypodiegetic discourse, but rather a parallel statement.

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تزوّج بى النبّى صلعم وأنا ابنة سبع سنين ودخل بى وأنا ابنة تسع سنين وكنت ألعب بالبنات مع صواحبى فإذا جاء وهنّ بين أيدينا يقول لنا النبىّ صلعم مكانكنّ

> Aḥmad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Yūnus reported to us…on the authority of 'Urwa, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that: Sawda gave her day to 'Ā'isha. She said: 'My day is 'Ā'isha's.' God's Messenger used to allot to 'Ā'isha her day and Sawda's day. [1] (1:27)

In this khabar the same information is given three times. The first statement is obviously narrated by 'Urwa, whose plain and concise statement is verified in direct speech by Sawda, a narrative technique which renders the narrative a sense of truthfulness. To conclude, the action is transferred from Sawda to God's Messenger, in a heterodiegetic statement by 'Urwa or any other narrator in the isnād. In the end, it is he who allots the days even if Sawda initiated the action and agreed willingly to this denial of her marital rights. The story is thus threefold: the narration of it, its actual taking place and the Prophet's legitimization of it. In a later khabar, the story is confirmed by 'Ā'isha, in a homodiegetic narrative.

> Hishām Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭayālisī reported to us […] on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that: When Sawda got old she gave her day to me. God's Messenger, GBGS, used to allot my day and her day to me.[2] (1:37)

Here 'Ā'isha verifies the event, being an eye-witness of it. The narrative is 'Ā'isha's narration, although it is not introduced by the formula 'she said', which usually introduces direct speech. Just as in the narrative above, Sawda is the first subject in the story; she is the first actor when she willingly gives up her rights. She thus has a subject-position in the story, but this subject-position is finally transferred to God's Messenger. Although his wives have some delimited space where they could act as subjects, ultimately it is he who has to take the formal decision.

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1

اخبرنا احمد بن عبد الله بن يونس... عن عروة عن عائشة أنّ سودة وهبت يومها لعائشة فقالت يومى لعائشة وكان رسول الله صلعم يقسم لعائشة يومها ويوم سودة

اخبرنا هشام ابو الوليد الطيالسى...عن عائشة أنّ سودة لمّا كبرت وهبت يومها لى فكان رسول الله صلعم يقسم لى يومى ويومها    2

Moreover, in both the homodiegetic report and the heterodiegetic narratives, presence is essential for creating authority. The authority of presence could be created both by having seen an event with one's own eyes and by having heard it with one's own ears. In 'Ā'isha's biography, there are several akhbār which are witnesses' testimonies, indicated by the formulas 'I saw' or 'I heard'.[1] The testimonies could be either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic. In the latter case, the formula is not 'I saw', but 'she/he saw'. 'Ā'isha herself is a main witness of the extraordinary events during the Prophet's supremacy, which is the main argument for her later authority. This extra-textual connection between witness and authority influences all levels of the text, thematically and linguistically. The following statements are all introduced by the witness marker 'I saw':

> I saw the eldest of the companions of Muḥammad, GBGS, ask her about religious duties.[2] (1:45)
> I saw her give seventy thousands in alms; she raised the side of her garment.[3] (1:47-8)
> I saw 'Ā'isha wearing a yellow-dyed garment.[4] (1:75)
> I saw 'Ā'isha circulating in her house with veiled face.[5] (1:79)

The basis for the testimony is the presence of the witness at the specific occasion, as in khabar 141: 'I was present at 'Ā'isha's grave, we buried her at night'.[6] Here, the formula 'I saw' seems to give authority both to the narrator, who attended this important happening, and to the narrated information, that 'Ā'isha was buried at night. The importance of orality, the thought that hearing is more reliable than reading, is visible in some isnāds, where the ear-witness status is recorded, with the formula 'I heard' (sami'tu, 1:33, 56, and 69).

Notably the witness-narratives are gendered, the testimonies about 'Ā'isha's clothing are almost exclusively narrated by women, while

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1 Jamal calls these first witnesses 'participant-witness': Jamal J. Elias, 'The Ḥadīth Traditions of 'Ā'isha as Prototypes of Self-Narrative', *Edebiyât* 7 (1997): 215.

2 رأيتُ مشيخة أصحاب محمد صلعم الأكابر يسألونها عن الفرائض

3 رأيتها تصدّق بسبعين الفا وائها لترفع جانب درعها

4 رأيت على عائشة ثوبا معصفرا

5 رأيت عائشة طافت بالبيت وهى منتقبة

6 حضرت قبر عائشة دفناها ليلا

those about her funeral are narrated by men. Fourteen women, most of them named, are witnesses to ʿĀ'isha's clothing, with the focus on permitted colours and material. The testimony quoted above (1:71) is one of the rare exceptions where a man is a witness to ʿĀ'isha's clothing. It is probably the authority entrusted to the witness situation which has enabled the literature on the beginnings of Islam to preserve such a high number of female narrators.

The witness situation is close to the pupil-teacher situation, a common setting in ʿĀ'isha's biography, used as a form more than a theme. Sometimes the pupil-teacher form occurs on the level of the isnād, sometimes on ʿĀ'isha's level, the lowest level in the diegesis. It could be either someone in the umma who asks ʿĀ'isha about something, or ʿĀ'isha who asks God's Messenger. The pupil-teacher topic is formulaic, 'I asked … about' (*sa'altu …'an*) followed by the question in indirect speech, and 'she/he said:' (*qālat/qāla*) followed by the answer in direct speech. The question may be a narrative device initiating a statement or narrative. At the same time, it is an authoritative device, as it confirms the origin of the information given.

> I asked al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, I said: 'Some people maintain that God's Messenger, GBGS, forbade the colours yellow and gold.' He said: 'They lied, by God, I saw ʿĀ'isha dressed in yellow and wearing golden rings.'[1] (1:71)

> I asked Ā'isha about silk. She said: 'In the age of God's Messenger, GBGS, we used to dress in garments called *al-siyarā'*, in which there was some silk.'[2] (1:82)

> I asked the Prophet, GBGS, about jihād. He said: 'Women, your jihād is the pilgrimage.'[3] (1:89)

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1

سألت القاسم ابن محمد قلت إنّ ناسا يزعمون أنّ رسول الله صلعم نهى عن الاحمرين العصفر والذهب فقال كذبوا والله لقد رأيت عائشة تلبس المعصفرات وتلبس خواتم الذهب

2

سألت عائشة عن الحرير قالت قد كنّا نكسى ثيابا على عهد رسول الله صلعم يقال لها السيراء فيها شيء من حرير

3    سألت النبّى عن الجهاد فقال جهادكنّ الحجّ

The question enhances the status of the teacher/informant as an authority. In this situation 'Ā'isha's authority in dialogues with members of the umma and her servants is augmented. Her answers are regarded and recorded for posterity.

## Narratives of female singers: The biography of 'Arīb

'Arīb was, according to her biographer Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, one of the most celebrated and accomplished singers and female poets in ninth-century Baghdad.[1] However, in contrast to 'Ā'isha, she has fallen into oblivion, and her biography has never played any political role. Still, in modern Muslim feminism, the group she belongs to, jawārī, has been perceived as the negative antithesis of the group 'Ā'isha belonged to, the first active Muslim women, and as such it has been used in the reinterpretation of Muslim history and the argumentation for a gender-equal modern Muslim society. While the women of the first Muslim community have been proposed as possible models for modern women, the jawārī continue to be regarded as a threat to women's liberation and real gender-equality (see above, 11-12).

  Like 'Ā'isha, 'Arīb belonged to the elite of her society, but in a completely different context. Still, their biographies were written in the same literary tradition and both are composed of akhbār. Moreover, their subject matters somewhat resemble each other: they are women and authorities within their fields. 'Arīb's environment is the 'Abbāsid cultural elite, which was linked to the centre of power by patronage, personal interest and, in her case, affiliation with the court. Musicians and singers had their own hierarchy, divided in gender in the same way as the pious hierarchy. However, the gender division was possibly not as strict as in the pious one, indicated by the fact that gender is not an organizing principle in *Aghānī*. In 'Arīb's biography, her sex is never an obstacle for possessing authority within her field. In any case, 'Arīb belonged to the top of the hierarchy, based on her standing at the court, her musical talents and education, and also, which is uncommon, her excellent genealogy. She had the qualities of a *nadīm* (boon-

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1 The biography of 'Arīb is found in *Aghānī*, vol. 21:54-87.

companion) which were so important in 'Abbāsid social life.[1] The urbanized 'Abbāsid society was strictly hierarchical; power and status were related to class, genealogy and gender. Still, with the right education and the help of a patron it was possible to move upwards. A slave, or freed slave of the elite circles, could attain a higher position in the hierarchy than many of the caliph's free subjects. In this society there was a sharp division between the elite, the *khāṣṣa*, and the common people, the *'āmma,* a division that did not go alongside the division between slaves and free.[2] In a letter to Isḥāq ibn Kundājiq, 'Arīb displays her contempt for common people:

> In the name of God the Merciful,
> Your barbarian, your fool! Do you think that I am a Turk, the meanest of soldiers, as you send me bread, meat and sweets? May God forgive you, you whom I could have sacrificed myself for! I have dispatched you a gift from my cuisine, and learn that this, and similar deeds, are good manners. Do not use common people's manners as etiquette, as in that case reprimands and blames will overwhelm you, God willing.[3] (2:42)

'Arīb does not consider herself as being one of 'the common people'; she belongs to the elite. This view of 'common people' is already seen in the introduction to her biography. 'Arīb is one of the jawārī who are nourished in the palaces of the caliphs, and thus have qualities that the qiyān of old lack, being brought up in Hijāz with its 'common people,

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1 See Sawa, *Music Performance*, 119. These qualities included knowledge of 'music, literature, poetry, prosody, grammar, history, narration of anecdotes, *Qur'ān*, Hadīth, jurisprudence, astrology, medicine, the art of cooking, preparation of beverages, horse-breeding, backgammon, chess, buffoonery, and magic'.

2 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1996) see ch. 10, 'The Elites'. The belonging to the elite was connected with education and language: 'Education…could be a determining factor, and was of special significance in a society which accorded divine status to its scripture, revered the language in which that scripture was written, and esteemed those who could use it with elegance… While the "general" population used a multiplicity of local languages and dialects, the khāṣṣa was united by a common literary language, a common classical and scriptural tradition, and through them a common set of decencies and conformities – rules of behaviour and politeness.' (181).

3

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. ياعجميّ ياغبيّ، ظننتَ أنّي من الأتراك ووَخش الجُند, فبَعثتَ إلى بخبز ولحم وحَلواء, والله المستعانُ عليك, يافَدتَك نفسى, قد وَجّهتُ إليك زَلّة من حَضرتى, فتعلَّم ذلك من الأخلاق, ونحوه من الأفعال, ولاتستعمل أخلاق العامّة فى الظرف, فيزداد العيبُ والعتبُ عليك, إن شاءَ الله.

rude Arabs and rough characters' (2:1). Mecca and Medina were certainly the cradle of Islam, and probably appreciated as such by at least the religious elite. Nevertheless, the cultural elite in the cosmopolitan metropolis of Baghdad seem not to have objections to depicting the holy places with some condescension.

Like 'Ā'isha's biography, 'Arīb's biography does not follow a simple chronology, although its structure is easier to dissect. 'Arīb's biography is divided into more or less three parts, due to narrative technique and content.[1] The first part, akhbār 1-10, gives critical evaluations of 'Arīb's professional skills. Starting with the editor/critic's eulogising introduction, it mixes critics' appraisals with witnesses' narrations and scenes describing her musical skills. The witnesses' narrations are, naturally, homodiegetic and often in the form of a scene. Critical evaluations and narratives about 'Arīb's musical excellence, a subject that thematically belongs to the first part, recur towards the end of the biography, in akhbār 44-46, 49 and 58. Thus, although not comprehensively, the critique frames the biography. Moreover, the critique is overwhelmingly favourable; one single negative comment in 2:8 is met by the editor's massive defence, supplemented by other authorities' homodiegetic testimonies, such as the scene in 2:3, or the scene in 2:9 where the negative critique is pinpointed to the critic's own shortcomings. In this part, Abū al-Faraj also explains his method, while 'Arīb's way of working is described by herself in the homodiegetic narrative of 2:59, in the third part of the biography. She does research on her way to Mecca: 'On the road I looked for Bedouins so that I could ask them to recite poetry, and I wrote down anecdotes and other things I heard from them.'[2] One of Abū al-Faraj's explicit objects is to entertain; in 2:10 he declares that he has chosen narratives 'that are very rich'. In fact, this objective is clear already in the title: 'The mentioning of appreciated titbits of akhbār about 'Arīb'.[3]

The second part, akhbār 11-29/30, depicts 'Arīb's life-story, from her parents' miserable fate and her birth, passing through her owner's possession of her and training, and her flight from him until the caliph al-Ma'mūn buys her. Most akhbār here are heterodiegetic and the

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1 'Arīb's biography is found in *Aghānī* vol. 21:54-89. However, the last two pages are not about 'Arīb, and thus not translated in Appendix 2 or referred to here.

2 كنت فى طريقى أطلبُ الأعراب فأستنشدهم الأشعار وأكتب عنهم النوادر وسائر ما اسمعه منهم

3 ذكر نتف من أخبار عريب مستحسنة

narrative rhythm almost gives the impression of a narrative flow; but characteristically it is constantly interrupted. Alternative reports about her relation with the caliphs and her lovers are given. These reports usually occur when an issue is decisive; it could be controversial or at least important. The logical connection between the different units here is that most of them are heterodiegetic narratives about 'Arīb's earlier life, until she settles in the caliph al-Ma'mūn's palace, and continues her relationship with her lover Ibn Ḥāmid. But there are narratives that do not fit into this pattern. Khabar 20, for example, belongs formally to the third part, being a homodiegetic anecdote where 'Arīb gets the last word. The only 'logical' reason for its position is the mentioning of a poem which is to be found a few units earlier. In 2:21 the only connection with 'Arīb is that her name is mentioned in a poem.

The third part of the biography, akhbār 30/31-62, consists in its main portion of scenes from 'Arīb's professional and social life in the form of homodiegetic anecdotes. Due to the male orientation of the narration, the social life depicted is overwhelmingly 'Arīb's interactions with men, such as the social gatherings in 2:40-43, 51-52, and 60, and also her relation with the caliph al-Ma'mūn in 2:32-34, and 53-54. The narratives in this part might be labelled anecdotes, and as we have seen, the interaction between men and women is a common motive in anecdotes. Several anecdotes are about her love affairs, with Ibn Ḥāmid (2:30, 37-39, 55, and 62), and others (Abū 'Īsa and Ṣāliḥ al-Mundhirī: 2:34-36). Other narratives in this part are about 'Arīb's professional skill and passion (2:44-46, 49, and 58) and the origin of a song (2:59 and 61). While the second part of the biography is arranged in something resembling a chronology, though interrupted and with variations, the third part is carried forward by associations, resembling a conversation – a conversation about meetings with 'Arīb in different contexts. A narrative may produce another narrative, which in turn becomes the starting point for a new narrative. For example, the narratives in 2:31-33, one homodiegetic and two heterodiegetic, depict 'Arīb's witty rejection of flirting men in the company of the caliph, which leads to the narratives in 2:34-37, two heterodiegetic and two homodiegetic, about her feelings for and relation to men whom she did not reject. After that, we become acquainted with her lovers' quarrels in 2:38-39. The latter is a more sexual variant of the former, which leads us into explicit sexual expressions made by 'Arīb at various occasions

in 2:40-41 witnessed by homodiegetic narrators. As 2:41 is also a proof of ʿArīb's hospitality, she offers cakes to her visitors; we are served homodiegetic stories about other occasions when she has offered food to various narrators in 2:42-43. The story continues to be carried forward by association as if the reader is witnessing a majlis where men are chatting about their experiences with ʿArīb, or what they heard others saying about her. Nonetheless, there is a significant difference between the written word and the spoken. When ʿArīb as a character is endowed with direct speech, it gives the feeling of her presence.

As to the formal aspects of the akhbār, ʿArīb's biography consists predominantly of narratives, compared with ʿĀʾisha's biography, which includes a quite large number of statements, or fragments from narratives. There are some commentaries in ʿArīb's biography, but these are mainly the critic's comments. Commentaries on narration and transmission inform the reader about differences between narrations, such as khabar 19: 'Concerning Ismāʿīl ibn al-Ḥusayn's narration, al-Muʿtaṣim's uncle, it differs here….' The commentary might also be found in the matn instead of the isnād, as in 2:22: 'He mentioned the rest of the report as above. In addition, he said in his report…' Similarly to ʿĀʾisha's biography, the editor generally does not direct the reader towards one single reading; it is up to the reader to decide which narration is most credible. When Abū al-Faraj intervenes, it is in the role of a critic as when he defends ʿArīb against her detractors. He knows more about the origin of a poem than ʿArīb in khabar 16, but he also tries to find a reason for her neglect.

There is a striking example of Abū al-Faraj's way of intervening in another biography of a female singer in *Aghānī*, the Umayyad singer Jamīla.[1] The unusually long narrative (almost twelve pages in the printed version) about her grandiose pilgrimage to Mecca is introduced by several chains of transmitters, as Abū al-Faraj has integrated various narrations, followed by his explanation:

> Jamīla performed the pilgrimage. I have brought together
> their [the narrators mentioned in the isnāds] narrations as

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1 *Aghānī,* vol. 8:208-20.

they are close. However, I consider the whole khabar to be invented, which is apparent in it.[1]

After having given his opinion, he presents the narrations as they were narrated to him, without commenting upon the grounds on which he considered them to be invented.[2] The reader is free to make his/her own estimations. Although Abū al-Faraj considers them to be invented, they obviously have a function in the biography, conveying nostalgia for the status of singing in the past, for its high regard and compatibility with religious duties. Kilpatrick calls it 'an idealised portrayal of the state of singing during the Umayyad period'.[3] It is thus not of crucial importance whether the content of a khabar is historically correct or not, as the issue here is the symbolic role of music, its high regard in the past and its practitioners' passion, rather than the absolute truth.

As in 'Ā'isha's biography, narrative devices are used for creating authority. Heterodiegetic narratives are intertwined with homodiegetic ones in a way that at first glance appears arbitrary. Nevertheless, at a second reading a pattern is visible which, far from consistent, still has a logical arrangement. Whenever crucial information is given in the heterodiegetic narrative, this information apparently has to be ascertained by witnesses or/and trustworthy informants. It is the decisive narrative events that have to be verified, or at least the most controversial claims made in these narratives. Some events are verified by witnesses, homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, and some by repeating variants. In the latter case it is the significance of the episode that is verified, not the exact events. The homodiegetic narrative is in itself a kind of witness testimony, and thus conveys authority. In the case of repetitions, the verification of the event in the narratives is revealed by the significance given to its exactness. In both cases the verification directs the reading as to what should be considered important. In the first and beginning of the second parts of 'Arīb's biography, two claims are made that seem to be controversial, namely 'Arīb's professional excellence and her noble origin. Both these claims have to be confirmed by witnesses.

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إنّ جميلة حجّت وقد جمعت رواياتهم لتقاربها وأحسب الخبر كله مصنوعا وذلك بيّن فيه   1 Ibid., 209.
2 See Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 103, for Abū al-Faraj's technique for announcing the subject in this episode.
3 Ibid., 116.

**Narrative devices for extraordinary claims**

The first part of 'Arīb's biography describes her musical and professional excellence. Her prominence is declared in the introduction, and confirmed by several witnesses; it is further stressed by the critic's defence of her. The weight put on proving her superiority indicates that it was a controversial question, although the superlatives belong to the formulaic introductions to the biographies of 'Abbāsid women singers in *Aghānī*. However, 'Arīb is not only a little bit better, according to Abū al-Faraj; she is the best modern female singer.

In the introduction, 'Arīb belongs to the group of qiyān as well as the jawārī and she is given a special position in the history of music, uniting the best qualities of these two groups. However, as we have seen, the heterodiegetic statements made in the introduction have to be confirmed by homodiegetic witnesses and the rest of the first part of the biography consists of confirmations of these statements. The second khabar presents three witnesses: the master musician Isḥāq and the Grand Judge Yaḥyā ibn Aktham are both authorities in the two fields of music and religion, and both eye- and ear-witnesses. The third witness is Isḥāq's son Ḥammād, who is the ear-witness of the two respected men's judgment, and also holds the important role of questioner. As in 'Ā'isha's biography, the teacher-pupil situation is a common narrative form. The narrator in the narrative situation given is Muḥammad ibn Khalaf Wakī' and not Ḥammād, according to the phrase 'Ḥammād said' inserted in the narrative. Ḥammād is a hypodiegetic speaker in Muḥammad's narration, while Isḥāq is a hypodiegetic speaker in Ḥammad's speech. Still, the dialogic form of the narrative allows each speaker to give his opinion indiscriminately. The narrative begins with Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī`s confirmation of 'Arīb's excellent qualities:

> I have never seen a woman who is a better lute-player than 'Arīb, nor someone with better compositions, a more beautiful face and higher spirit; nor one who is more eloquent, has quicker answers or is a better player of chess and backgammon. In all, I have never seen a woman who combines so many good characteristics as she does.[1] (2:2)

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Here, Isḥāq verifies the information given in the introduction by the extradiegetic narrator, the critic/editor/author Abū al-Faraj. Isḥāq is one of the authorities 'whose witnesses are enough' mentioned in the introduction. Next, Isḥāq's son seeks to verify his father's judgment by asking the Grand Judge Yaḥyā ibn Aktham. His confirmation, though somewhat modest, is especially important, as it confirms not only 'Arīb's outstanding qualities, but also that a pious man such as Yaḥyā was not ashamed to admit that he saw her. In the following homodiegetic narrative (2:3), Isḥāq indirectly confirms that he appreciates 'Arīb. She is 'a skilful woman', who is able to imitate the great ancient songs to the degree that the caliph-to-be, al-Mu'taṣim, uses her for testing Isḥāq`s musical knowledge. Thus the claim made in the introduction is verified in two ways: a teacher-pupil scene where two authorities confirm it and a homodiegetic scene where it is indirectly confirmed by the event taking place and an authority's response to it.

Connected with 'Arīb's excellence is the size of her production, as it is evidently outstanding. In 2:4-7, various narrators confirm that they have counted her songs; accordingly they are eye-witnesses to her production though they say nothing about having listened to her. In connection this, critical voices are allowed to speak though immediately responded to. In khabar 8 and 9, the same critiques are repeated, both by al-Hishāmī, who by quoting a poem insinuates that though her production is large, her songs are all similar, and only one is worth mentioning. The critic/editor immediately defends 'Arīb, and he speaks at length. His critical reasoning and defence of 'Arīb's skill are confirmed by a scene in khabar 9 where Abū Aḥmad witnesses the situation which led to al-Hishāmī's fraudulent critique of her skills. The version we have is narrated by Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir. The first part of the narrative has an unclear narrative situation; the speaker who mentioned al-Hishāmī's accusation is unnamed, which is unusual. Then the narrative takes the form of a pupil/teacher situation; a group of questioners ('we') asks Abū Aḥmad

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ما رأيت امرأة أضرب من عريب ولا أحسن صنعة ولا أحسن وجها ولا أخفّ روحا ولا أحسن خطابا ولا أسرع جوابا ولا ألعب بالشطرنج والنرْد ولا أجمع لخصلة حسنة لم أرَ مثلها فى امرأة غيرها

about al-Hishāmī's opinion of ʿArīb. In Abū Aḥmad's answer, a new scene takes place on a lower diegetic level, when the speaker, Abū Aḥmad, refers to a scene he witnessed. Even here, the speaker does not summarize the event he has witnessed, but conveys the dialogue verbatim. In the conversation taking place, ʿArīb gets the last word, and al-Hishāmi's later defamation of her musical skills is explained as being revenge for his inability to answer her. ʿArīb made him lose his face in front of the audience, not for making them laugh at him, but for making him speechless; a witty answer on his part could have secured his pride and honour.[1] Significantly, the editor/critic's defence of ʿArīb is verified by a witness, and al-Hishāmī's critique of her loses its authority due to its dubious origin.

Another controversial claim is that ʿArīb was the daughter of Jaʿfar ibn Yaḥyā al-Barmakī. He belonged to the powerful Barmakid family, and was one of the most influential men in the ʿAbbāsid Empire, until his family was seized from power and he himself was killed on the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's orders. If this claim is true, ʿArīb has an aristocratic lineage, and could not be a slave; her slavery status should be annulled. Such a controversial statement has to be verified, and consequently witnesses give their testimonies in khabar 14 and, to a certain degree, in 15 and 16. In 2:15 and 16, ʿArīb asserts that the Barmakids are 'her family'. The first is a homodiegetic narrative where a famous ʿArīb pays the narrator her attention because of their kinship. In 2:16, ʿArīb claims to have inside information from the Barmakid family, and to be an authority of Faḍl al-Barmakī's poetry, as he was her uncle. In 2:14, an eye-witness, al-Faḍl ibn Marwān, has seen both her and Jaʿfar's feet and deduced a genetic relationship. His testimony is narrated by Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb who continues by referring to a *kātib* (scribe) who assumes that her eloquence must be inherited. The report has an authoritative function, with the purpose of confirming the claim about ʿArīb's origin. Two authorities speak: an eyewitness and an expert on script. Al-Faḍl gained his authority from the fact that he had actually seen both ʿArīb's and Jaʿfar's feet. The kātib is an authority by virtue of his profession; as an expert on stylistics he can confirm that ʿArīb is Jaʿfar's daughter. Both al-Faḍl's and the scribe's utterances are

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1 In other instances in *Aghānī*, negative critique is described as slander caused by personal skirmishes. The caliph al-Wāthiq, for example, is hostile towards ʿArīb because she composed a better melody than he did to the same poetry in 2:44-45.

rendered in direct speech, verifying a controversial claim, namely ‘Arīb’s aristocratic origin.

> Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb reported to me that he heard al-Faḍl ibn Marwān saying: ‘When I looked at ‘Arīb’s feet, they reminded me of Jaʿfar ibn Yaḥyā’s feet.’ He said: ‘and I heard someone tell that her eloquence in her books was mentioned to a scribe. He said: “What would prevent her from that, when she is daughter of Jaʿfar ibn Yaḥyā?”[1] (2:14)

The first-person expression ‘I looked’ indicates that al-Faḍl ibn Marwān is a homodiegetic narrator, but the following formula ‘he said’ makes the narrative situation more complicated. Apparently, it is the words of Ibn Muʿtazz that we have access to; he renders al-Faḍl’s words in direct speech. Faḍl is then a hypodiegetic speaker. The first ‘he said’ refers to a narrator in the isnād, Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb or perhaps Ibn al-Muʿtazz; the level is unclear here. The second ‘he said’, however, refers to a character in the story, the scribe, who is a hypodiegetic speaker in the second half of the narrative.

A controversial claim may not always be verified by testimonies; the occurrence of several variations is also indicative of its significance. The caliph al-Ma'mūn's purchase of ‘Arīb involved a large sum of money, and both this and his affections for her seem to be controversial as the story has three variants. The author/editor, who interfered in the first part of the biography in defence of ‘Arīb, does not give any hint about the trustworthiness of the various reports here. Either it is up to the reader’s critical judgment, or it is not considered important. The overall impression is, in any case, that ‘Arīb was valued highly by the caliph, and that she was courageous and resolute, following her own heart whenever she could.

In one version (2:22), the caliph disregards her owner and buys her for fifty thousand dirhams. In a second (2:25), he pays her owner fifty thousand dinars, two ruby rings worth two thousand dinars and valuable robes of honour. The owner dies from grief forty days later. In a third

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قال ابن المعتّز وأخبرنى يوسف بن يعقوب أنه سمع الفضل بن مروان يقول:  كنت إذا نظرت إلى قدمى عريب شبّهتها بقدمى جعفر بن يحيى. قال: وسمعت من يحكى أنّ بلاغتها فى كتبها ذُكرت لبعض الكتّاب فقال فما يمنعها من ذلك وهى بنت جعفر بن يحيى

(2:26), al-Ma'mūn buys her for one hundred thousand dirhams, and an extra hundred thousand dirhams to Isḥāq, who told him about her and helped him to buy her. The dirham is a silver coin and the dinar is a gold coin; the sums mentioned here are all enormous, and must have impressed the readers of *Aghānī*. These sums add to the irony of 'Arīb's life story. Her owner the caliph valued her vastly, measurable in money – still, she does not hesitate to cheat him in several anecdotes.

Other controversies were 'Arīb's flights, with three versions, and al-Amīn's possession of her, with two versions. In one version about her flight (2:17-8), she runs away from al-Marākibī to Ḥātim ibn 'Adī, then she runs away from Ḥātim. Later, when al-Amīn is killed after having got possession of her, she escapes from his castle to Marākibī. In a second version (2:19), she runs away from al-Marākibī to Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid and in a third (2:24), she runs away from al-Amīn's castle, after he has been killed, to Ḥātim. The facts in this episode are confirmed by 2:27 – according to which al-Amīn was the one who deflowered her, and thus not Ḥātim ibn 'Adī. As to the caliph al-Amīn's possession of her, he is prepared to behead 'Arīb's owner to get her in his possession, according to khabar 18. He confiscates her together with other servants of her owner. In khabar 22, al-Amīn bargains about her with her owner; he agrees to pay 100,000 dinar but is killed before he pays. The first khabar about al-Amīn and 'Arīb is not flattering to the caliph. Probably this information should be seen in light of the rivalry between the two brothers, al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn.

The undertakings of her owner the caliph al-Ma'mūn, as he gets to know about her affair with Ibn Ḥāmid, are narrated in two versions. In khabar 28, 'Arīb meets with Ibn Ḥāmid secretly after she had settled in al-Ma'mūn's palace. She gets pregnant and gives birth to a girl. When al-Ma'mūn finds out the affair, he marries him to her. However, in a version in the subsequent khabar, the caliph detains her for a month in a dark shed, after he finds out her secret and illegal affair. She gets only bread, salt and water to eat and drink. When she notwithstanding does not forget about him, he marries her to him. In this case, 2:29 might not necessarily be a variant of 2:28; instead it could fill in a gap in it. The first khabar, 28, is more summarized than 29, which in turn is more embellished. We are not told how long it took before the news about 'Arīb's pregnancy reached al-Ma'mūn and his arrangement of marriage between her and her lover, and we do not actually know what happened

in between. Possibly the story in khabar 29 aims at filling in these gaps, as well as elaborating upon the theme of the song in it, the separation between lovers.

## The heterodiegetic flow – narrative starting points

'Arīb's life story in the second part of her biography is told in something that could be described as a narrative flow, more or less chronological from the events preceding her birth until the caliph's possession of her. Characteristically for this literature, the flow is constantly interrupted, not only by introducing a number of narrators, but also by variations and anachronisms. All variations in this part are heterodiegetic; their rhythm is overwhelmingly summary, interlaced with a few scenes, monologues and dialogues, in addition to a few poems. Apparently, a narrative flow requires heterodiegetic narrators. Nevertheless, even in the midst of a narrative flow, we are brought to mind that this is narrated. The heterodiegetic narrative situation itself is intertwined in the narration by means of the formula 'he said', occasionally 'she said'.

The narratives in 2:11 and 12 are the narrative starting points for 'Arīb's life story, they generate the rest of her story, being the prerequisite for her destiny, as well as the irony in it. The first khabar (11), is a formulaic narrative starting point for a slave story: ''Arīb belonged to 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl, master of al-Rashīd's horses. He is the one who trained her, educated her and taught her singing'.[1] This phrase generalizes 'Arīb as one among others in the anonymous group of singing slaves. The second khabar (12), however, makes her stand out. It contains a controversial claim and a starting point for 'Arīb's resistance: 'She was the daughter of Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā. When the Barmakids were seized, she was stolen as a child'.[2]

The two claims are contradictory, the starting points for an extraordinary life-story. The contradiction is characteristic of 'Arīb's biography; although belonging to the group of jawārī she always stands out from them.

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كانت عريب لعبد الله بن إسماعيل صاحب مراكب الرشيد وهوالذى ربّاها وأدّبها وعلمها الغناء 1

أنّها بنت جعفر بن يحيى وأنّ البرامكة لما انتبوا سرقت وهى صغيرة 2

**Creating authority in narrative**

In this chapter, formal characteristics in two biographies on completely different subjects have been treated and to a certain degree compared. The biography of ʿĀʾisha involves the pious foundation of Islam, and the history of the Muslim community. The biography of ʿArīb, on the other hand, concerns the profane environment of the ʿAbbāsid court musical life. In ʿĀʾisha's biography truth is important, while it is not in ʿArīb's biography, as confirmed by the author Abū al-Faraj. Yet the texts in the two biographies have more things in common than not. In both texts, there is a central claim, a comprehensive claim on the extradiegetic level of the author, which has to be verified, followed by 'smaller' claims on the diegetic levels. The claims are verified in similar formal ways in the two biographies, with the help of narrative technique entwined with thematic. In the case of ʿĀʾisha, it is her trustworthiness as a source for sunna that has to be verified first, and it is verified by means of accounts of her favourable position. Subsequently, various aspects of her example are given, and verified by narrative tools, such as homodiegetic testimonies, whether diegetic or hypodiegetic, and heterodiegetic narratives by a wide range of narrators. ʿĀʾisha's authority is often performed in pupil/tutor scenes, where the pupils' questions function as initiators, triggering ʿĀʾisha's answer which is the point of the narrative. Much of ʿĀʾisha's authority consists of her role as an example for women in issues such as clothing and pious behaviour. In the case of ʿArīb, it is the excellence of music and its practitioners that has to be verified first, and in the individual biography it is verified by the proficiency and brilliance of one of its practitioners. The only occasion when ʿArīb's example is in focus is when her slave Tuḥfa describes how she used to daub her hair with musk and amber when she had a headache (2:50). However, more than functioning as an example, this narrative pictures her luxurious lifestyle. Instead, ʿArīb's authority involves her proficiency in her profession, music and singing, as well as in etiquette and eloquence. The value the caliphs attached to ʿArīb, as well as her own superior qualities, such as wit, eloquence and independence, gives credit to the whole profession.

# Chapter 4: The Book on Women

The former chapter presented a narratological analysis of the biographies of ‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr and ‘Arīb, based primarily on Genette’s, and some aspect of Bal’s, narratologies. The authors/editors of these biographies died in 230/845 (Ibn Sa‘d) and probably 362/972-73 (Abū al-Faraj). The space of time between their lives is considerable, as considerable as the difference between the subjects of their works, *Ṭabaqāt* and *Aghānī*. The only link between them is their living and working in Baghdad during the ‘Abbāsid era, although Abū al-Faraj lived through its decline and political fall. Furthermore, in their literary production, they both, for different reasons, reconstructed individual women’s life stories. Obviously, however, the women they portrayed belong to opposite poles of historical tradition and the question is whether it is possible to compare them at all. Nevertheless, the comparison between them is included in both the prerequisite and the aim of this thesis; and the intention of this chapter is to provide a bridging foundation for it. The most basic qualifications for comparison have already been treated. The textual, narrative similarities between the two biographies are striking (see Ch. 3). They are both composed of akhbār, and both have the purpose of conveying the glory of the Arab past to an age which needed material for its self-representation and formation. However, in the case of ‘Ā’isha, the akhbār may often be labelled ḥadīths, while in the case of ‘Arīb, they tend to be anecdotes. This chapter will examine the work where these two groups of women meet, Ibn Qutayba’s Book on Women, *Kitāb al-nisā’*. The contents of the book are multifaceted; it illustrates women’s societal roles with the help of a broad spectrum of sources, and is useful for studying gender ideologies.[1]

This chapter will not use Genette’s more structural narratology, but rather Bal’s narratological theory of agents (see above, 29-32). The reason is that a structural analysis following Genette would be too extensive, and probably not meaningful for the aim of this thesis. Instead, this chapter will describe and analyse the various positions

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1 See El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse', 193.

open for women in Ibn Qutayba's work and women's possibilities to act as subjects on the various levels of the narratives, in accordance with the model suggested by Bal. Such an analysis will enable an examination of gender roles, which is one of the aims of this thesis. It will also function as a basis for and reference to the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6, where subject positions in the corpuses of women's biographies in *Ṭabaqāt* and *Aghānī* will be examined.  The positions will be illuminated with the help of close reading of examples, and these examples will be organized according to the degree of power women have in these narratives (roughly subject or object), and to the content. Contrary to 'Ā'isha's and 'Arīb's biographies, the entire text *Kitāb al-nisā'* is not translated in this thesis, as it is too extensive. Instead, translations of some chosen narratives are included in this chapter, as well as a summary of the content of *Nisā'*. Hopefully the outcome of the analyses will be interesting in itself, saying something about adab literature in general, and the representations of women in it in particular.

## Themes in *Kitāb al-nisā'*

In the following summary of *Nisā'*, each chapter will be abridged under a separate title, which is also the title of the chapter in Ibn Qutayba's work. The summary will consider themes, literary forms and women's positions and possibilities in the narratives. I choose to summarize each chapter separately, as the specific subject matter in it might affect its content. Actually, there are discrepancies in the representations of women between the various chapters, due to their subject matter, as well as discrepancies within each chapter, which might be of interest for further analysis.

   The length of the chapters in *Nisā'* varies considerably, which is evident in the descriptions below, some of which are very brief.

### 'The Book on Women, their moral qualities, physical attributes, what is to be preferred and what is disliked'
The first chapter in *Nisā'* has a special position and task; its title is overtly normative and aims to give a general picture of how to discern good and bad women. The description of women's moral and especially physical characteristics was a popular literary motif already in pre-

Islamic times.[1]  The most obvious literary feature in this chapter is the use of normative statements. It opens with a hierarchic list of traditions and sayings, beginning with the prophet Muḥammad, followed by ʿĀʾisha, an Arab proverb transmitted by al-Aṣmāʿī, a tradition from ʿAlī, and an Arab proverb related by ʿUrwa, illustrated by poetry. All these narratives, except for the poetry, are quoted and analysed below. Actually, the great majority of literary units in the first chapter are normative statements, derived from significant persons from the first Muslim community, or from popular wisdom among the Arabs (proverbs and poetry).  In some of the statements, the use of a formula seems to be more important than the actual content. For example, five statements (anonymous) begin with: 'Seek for me a woman who…' followed by a poetical enumeration of the desired qualities. Another literary formula is the enumeration of three or sometimes four things (women's qualities, types of women, etc.), often beginning with the formula: 'Women are three…'[2]

Most of the units in this chapter have the character of wisdom literature, and do not include a proper story; the poetry here is also mostly a kind of wisdom poetry. In addition, there are a few narratives that could be regarded as anecdotes. Predictably, it is one of these anecdotes which contains the only instance where a woman is talking, acting and even focalizing independently in this first chapter (see below, 155).

### 'Suitable husbands'

The second chapter is diverse, with more anecdotes and fewer normative sayings than the first chapter. One third of the units contain women's hypodiegetic discourse – they speak in one way or another; but there is only one woman narrator and one poem by a woman.[3] Women have the right to speak about husbands-to-be or sons-in-laws. Further, in one third of the units, men negotiate on marriage with the wife-to-be present as an object, named or not. In four of these units a man defends a woman who risks being brought into, or already has

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1 Abbott, *Papyri* 3, 75.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 2-4.
3 The narrator is the wife of the prophet, Umm Ḥabība, who puts a question to her husband (p. 10). The poem is by an anonymous qurayshite woman: ibid., 12.

been brought into, a bad marriage.[1] Finally, in one third of the units there is no woman present or mentioned; the negotiation is strictly between men, and marriage is an affair between the husband and the father. In fact, the non-existing woman is projected already in the first narrative of the chapter, which, being a ḥadīth from the Prophet, should be regarded as normative.

> On the authority of Abu Hurayra, who said: The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'If someone, whose physical constitution and moral character please you, comes to you, then marry (your daughter) to him. If you do not do that, there will be great disruption and corruption in the world.'[2]

There are a few occurrences of women as grammatical subjects of the verb 'marry' ('get married') in this chapter, Bint al-Khuss who is asked: 'Will you not marry?' and Umm al-Dardā', who answers Mu'āwiya's proposal to her: 'I will not be married after Abu al-Dardā' so that I may marry him in heaven'.[3] However, it is noticeable here that the woman is grammatical subject in her own speech, or in a speech directed to her, not about her.

The second chapter is not as overwhelmingly normative as the first chapter. While the main intention of the first chapter is identifying the ideal wife, the second chapter is less idealistic and more concrete. The chapter on suitable husbands also displays a certain directive to men for securing the welfare of their women, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb's instruction to fathers. In the following saying 'Umar concerns himself with the happiness of young girls.

> On the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of his father, he said: 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may God be

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1 A father defends his daughter in two akhbār (ibid., 12) and a poet pleads a woman's case (Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 16.) In these three cases the bad marriage consists in marrying below one's rank.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 10.

عن أبى هُرَيرة قال قال النبىّ صلى الله عليه وسلم: إذا جاءكم مَن تَرْضَوْن خَلْقه وخُلْقه فزَوِّجوه إنكم إلا تَفعلوه تكن فتنة فى الأرض وفسادٌ عريض

فلست بمتزوِّجة بعد ابى الدرداء حتى اتزوّجه فى الجنة .11 .Ibid 3

As we will see in the language used for marriage in *Ṭabaqāt* (ch. 5), this is a quite unusual grammatical feature.

pleased with him, said: Do not give your girls against their will to ugly men for they like what you like.[1]

Fathers are jealous for their daughters' welfare, and protect their interests in some instances.[2] For example, 'Aqīl ibn 'Ullafa is *ghayūr*, very jealous, and refuses to marry his daughter to a half-Arab.[3]

### 'Motivating marriage and condemning celibacy'

This chapter consists of no more than five narratives. It is introduced by a prophet's hadīth with precisely the content proposed by the title, an exhortation to marry directed to men:

> On the authority of 'Akkāf ibn Wadā'a al-Hilālī: The Prophet, GBGS, said to him: ''Akkāf, do you have a woman?' He said: 'No.' He said: 'Thus you are one of the devil's brothers. If you are one of the Christians' monks, join them, but if you are one of us, our custom [sunna] is to marry!''[4]

The subsequent Prophet's hadīth makes clear that the condemnation of continence includes Muslim men and women alike: 'there is no continence...in Islam'.[5] The case of avoiding a woman's continence is watched over by a woman's husband, in a narrative about the dying 'Alqama aspiring to safeguard his wife's future marital life.[6]

### 'The chapter on beauty' (*al-husn wa-l-jamāl*)

In the chapter on beauty both women's and men's beauty is treated, men's slightly more than women's. It is introduced by the Prophet's

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1 Ibid.

عن هشام بن عروة عن أبيه قال: قال عمر بن الخطاب رضى الله عنه: لا تكرهوا فتياتكم على الرجل القبيح فإنهن يحببن ما تحبون

2 Ibid., 12.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.,18

عن عكاف بن وَداعةَ الهلالى: أنّ النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال له: يا عكاف ألك امرأة؟ قال: لا, قال: فأنت إذاً من إخوان الشَّياطين إن كنتَ من رُهبان النصارى فالحَقْ بهم وإن كنتَ منا فمن سُنتنا النكاح

5 Ibid. لا تبتّل...فى الإسلام
6 Ibid., 19.

ḥadīth, intending to demonstrate his knowledge of women's beauty, but simultaneously offering an example of how to inspect a possible future wife – sending a present wife – and demonstrating the Prophet's closeness to his wife Ā'isha as well as her jealousy. There are two conflicting notions about beauty, one which connects beauty with God's favours and one which does not give beauty such inner virtues. On the contrary, according to this last view, beauty might divert the mind from less favourable qualities. As to the first notion, beauty is not only an external characteristic, it is connected with inner qualities such as goodness and piety, and it is God's blessing. This conception is attributed to Greek thinkers in the early Arabic wisdom literature.[1] This kind of beauty is mostly associated with men, as in the following examples, first a proverb and then a saying from 'Ā'isha:

> On the authority of 'Awn ibn 'Abdallāh, he said: It used to be said: He who has a beautiful figure, a rank that does not disfigure him, and who has been bestowed with wealth, he is specially favoured by God [khāliṣat allāh].[2]

> On the authority of 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, she said: 'He who is the best reciter of God's Scripture should lead the people in prayer. If they are equal reciters, choose him with the most beautiful face.'[3]

In addition, there are five anecdotes about eloquently and sometimes subversively speaking women, as well as three of the nine poems attributed to women. Possibly, it is their beauty that allows them to talk subversively. Women are also authorities on men's beauty, which they may evaluate and praise. Women's attraction to beautiful men is

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1 Franz Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 16. See Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Beautifying the Ugly and Uglifying the Beautiful: The Paradox in Classical Arabic Literature', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 48, no. 2 (2003): 'ḥasan and qabīḥ have, besides an aesthetical denotation ("beautiful/ugly"), a strong ethical component ("good/bad"); it is in fact impossible to say which of the two sides is the "original" one. The concepts of "good" and "bad" are themselves ambiguous, for they may refer not only to ethics but to pragmatics: there is a difference between morally good and pragmatically sound or good. All three aspects are present in the word *ḥasan*.'

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 20.

عن عون بن عبد الله قال: كان يقال: من كان فى صورة حسنة ومنصب لا يشينه ووسع عليه في الرزق كان من خالصة الله

عن عائشة رضى الله عنها قالت: يؤم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله فإن كانوا فى القراءة سواءً فأصبحهم وجها    3 Ibid.

accepted, as when the famous Umayyad poet Jamīl al-'Udhrī says in one khabar: 'When I see Muṣ'ab swaggering in Balāt, I always guard Buthayna jealously, even if it is three days' journey between them.'[1] Men's attractiveness might be expressed by women, as in the following lines by an anonymous woman: 'Is there no access to wine, so that I might drink it? / or is there access to Nasr ibn Ḥajjāj?'[2] She apparently expected to find the same intoxication in wine and in this particular man. The beautiful Naṣr was sent to Basra by 'Umar, where he flirted with Shumayla, who immediately responded, although they were in the presence of her husband, the governor of Basra.

Beauty is gendered in *Nisā'*; the beauty of men is thus distinguished from the beauty of women. For women and men alike, beauty often lies in their physical constitution, but significantly, as in the following saying, men's beauty is connected with their ability while women's beauty is related to their body:

> Ibn Shubruma said: I have never seen a more decorative garb on a man than eloquence, and I have never seen a more decorative garb on a woman than fat.[3]

Even so, eloquence is an advantageous characteristic for women as well. Two possible positions for women are juxtaposed here; the first is exemplified by the hidden 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa, whose physical beauty enhances her husband's honour, but who herself is an absolute object (see below, 160-62). The other position is the woman whose beauty is admired, but whose verbal ability proves to work more effectively to her favour (see below, 138-43).

### 'The chapter on ugliness' (*al-qubh wa-l-damāma*)

Following the conceptual pattern according to which beauty is a moral, godly given quality, ugliness may logically be condemned as a moral defect, for men as well as women, illustrated by the following anecdote:

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1 Ibid., 21.   ما رأيتُ مُصعباً يختالُ بالبلاط إلا غرتُ على بُثَينة وبينهما ثلاثةُ أيام

2 Ibid., 23-24.

ألا سبيلَ الى خَمْر فأشْرَبَها أم هل سبيلٌ الى نصر بن حَجاج

3 Ibid., 30.

وقال ابن شُبْرُمة: ما رأيتُ لباساً على رجل أزينَ من فَصاحة ولا رأيتُ لباسا على امرأة أزينَ من شح

> One teacher used to seat the sons of the prosperous and those with beautiful faces in the shade, while he seated the other in the sun, saying: 'You people of Paradise, spit in the faces of the people of Hell!'[1]

Yet there is a slight gender difference in the view of ugliness, since while men's ugliness is mostly pathetic but possible to recompense, women's ugliness is generally more of a moral defect. Thematically, men's ugliness is treated more than women's, but while both are taunted for ugliness, it is possible for men to speak about their own ugliness, and even make fun of it, in an almost pompous manner. On the other hand, women are not allowed to speak eloquently or subversively in the chapter on ugliness, because their ugliness prevents them. Women's ugliness is condemned already in its first literary unit, a lawsuit setting in which a husband accuses his wife for her ugliness, which gives her no right to be treated gently.[2] Her eloquence, *lisān*, is of no help to her. The wife's ugliness turns her into a *zālim*, an *offender*. Because of her eloquence, the judge first takes sides with her, but when he sees her face, he condemns her.

> One of the old men in Baṣra related to us that a man and his woman applied to one of the governors in Iraq for the decision of their cause. The woman was beautiful when she veiled her face, but ugly unveiled. However, she was a good speaker [*kāna lahā lisān*] and the governor seemed to take sides with her. He said: 'One of you seeks a respectable woman and marries her, and then he acts wrongly towards her.' Then the husband stretched out his hand and removed the veil from her face. The governor said: 'May you be damned! The words of an offended one, but the face of an offender!'[3]

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1 Ibid., 39.

كان بعض المعلمين يقعد أبناء المياسير والحسان الوجوه فى الظل ويقعد الآخرين فى الشمس ويقول: يا أهل الجنة ابزقوا فى وجوه أهل النار

2 The lawsuit motif opens Chapter 7 and 22 as well.
3 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 32.

Judged by women, ugly men are not attractive, but for these men, *lisān* and other attributes could definitively be to their advantage, as in the following anecdote:

> Al-Mughīra ibn Shuʿba was ugly and one-eyed. He proposed to a woman but she refused to marry him. Then he sent a message to her: 'If you marry me, I will fill your house with wealth [*khayran*] and your vagina with penis [*ayran*]!'[1] Hence she was married to him. A woman whom he had divorced was asked about him, and she said: 'He is like Yemeni honey in a defective vessel!'[2]

A man's other attributes might thus easily counterbalance an ugly appearance. Noticeably, in the anecdote above, it is not only the man's 'wealth' and 'penis' that convince the woman to accept him as husband, but also his ability to communicate it.

### 'The chapter on blackness'
In this chapter, men and women with 'black' skin are distinguished from and compared with men and women with 'white' skin. The few narratives are everything from praising to genuinely racist, although the material is not ample enough to discern a
ny specific tendencies. However, women's positions here are as objects, whether dark-skinned or fair-skinned. In the opening khabar, the dark-skinned women are not even objects – they are referred to as a colour:

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أخبرنا بعض أشياخ البصرة أن رجلا وامرأته اختصما إلى أمير من أمراء العراق وكانت المرأة حسنة المنتقب قبيحة المسفر وكان لها لسان فكأن العامل مال معها فقال: يعمد أحدكم إلى المرأة الكريمة فيزوجها فيزيء اليها ثم يسيء اليها الزوج فألقى النقاب عن وجهها فقال العامل: عليك اللعنة كلام مظلوم ووجه ظالم

1 A similar proposal was given by ʿUmar ibn ʿUbaydallāh to ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa, as related in *Aghānī*, vol. 11:184, a proposal she too accepted:

إنْ تَزَوَجتُ بك ملأتُ بيتك خيرًا وحركِ أيرًا

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 37.

كان المغيرة بن شُعبة قبيحا أعورَ فخطب امرأة فأبت أن تتزوجه فبعث إليها: إن تزوجتيني ملأتُ بيتك خيرا ورَحمَك أيرا فتزوجت به وسئلت عنه امرأة طلقها فقالت: عسل يمانية في ظرف سوء

> Al-Aṣmaʿī said: It was said to a townsman: 'How is your
> desire for blackness?' He said: 'If we found a white
> woman we would mount her'.[1]

The townsman in this saying finds white women more attractive than
black women, who are here dehumanized to a colour, which might be
insignificant but still noticeable. Yet he has only access to the latter; the
conjunction 'if' is here the hypothetical *law*, probably because there
were more black female slaves than white.

### 'The chapter on old women and old men'
In this chapter on old age, there is a small majority of literary units on
women. The advantages and/or shortcomings of old people are
discussed in terms that are everything from praising to utterly
disgracing. As to old women, though, the descriptions and statements
are most often not flattering. Women are more scorned than men for
their old age, just as they are scorned for ugliness. There is only one
poet who eulogizes an old woman,[2] while there are several poems
which disparage old women. In fact, there are negative opinions about
old men, but they are expressed mostly in relation to their marriage to
young, beautiful women.

The chapter on old women and old men is introduced by a scene
similar to the introductory narrative in the chapter on ugliness. The
setting is a lawsuit, where a woman is accused for her old age, which is
the reason for her husband's wish to divorce her, just as the husband in
the chapter of ugliness wanted to divorce his wife because of her
ugliness. Yet the judge's position differs between the two narratives; he
is forgiving towards the old woman, while not opposed to the
husband's characterization of the woman's last half.

> Al-Aṣmaʿī said: A man applied to Ziyād for the decision of
> a case against his woman, but Ziyād treated him strictly.[3]
> The man said: 'May God bring good luck to the governor!
> The best half of the man's life is the last, when his

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1 Ibid., 40. الأصمعي قال: قيل لمدني: ما رَغْبَتُكم في السَواد؟ قال: لو وجدنا بيضاء لسَفدناها

2 Ibid., 44.

3 Ziyād is Ziyād ibn Abīhi (d. 53/673), governor of Iraq, who often appears in these anecdotes.

ignorance is gone, his wisdom has returned to him, and his opinion become in its full state. The worst half of the woman's life is the last, when her character has gone evil, her tongue [*lisān*] gone sharp and her womb gone barren.' He said: 'Take her hand!'[1]

**'The chapter on dowry'**
The chapter on dowry contains nine units, which mainly exemplify the size and species of dowries among early Muslims. The earliest Muslim personalities are used as exemplars of humility and moderation. Although the chapter is too short to provide any specific observations, there is obviously a censure against excessive dowries, as in a poem recited by a Bedouin: 'They say marriage but I bear witness that / it is a purchase…'[2]

**'Time for marriage'**
In this short chapter, a few authorities give advices about the most suitable time for marriage, for example which day, month, daytime or night.

**'Speeches of requests to marry'**
This chapter contains examples of eloquent or curious speeches made by proposing men. The proposed women in question are mostly not mentioned, since the speeches are made by men and directed to men, according to the same pattern as the Prophet's ḥadīth in the chapter on suitable husbands. Only in one of the eleven speeches is the name of the proposed woman mentioned, while she is a pronominal object in a few, and non-existent in others. The intent of this chapter is to provide samples of eloquence, seen as an important characteristic in a future son-in-law.

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 43.

الأصمعيّ قال: خاصم رجل امرأته الى زياد فكأن زيادا شدّد عليه فقال الرجل: أصلح الله الأمير إنّ خير نصفي الرجل اخرهما يذهب جهله ويثوب حلمه ويجتمع رأيه وإنّ شرّ نصفي المرأة اخرهما يسوء خلقها ويحد لسانها وتعقم رحمها فقال: اسفع بيدها

يقولون تزويج واشهد أنّه / هو البيعُ 2 Ibid., 72.

**'Guardians' instructions to women when bringing them to the bridegrooms'**

Instruction literature is a very old genre in the Middle East, as manifested in ancient Egyptian literature as well as the Old Testament. Five instructions to daughters are recorded in this chapter, four of them from fathers to daughters and one from a mother to a daughter. The fathers' instructions are mainly about pleasing and attractive behaviour towards the husband. In this view, it is the wife's task to make the marriage lustful and agreeable, by means of agreeing to her husband's desires, obeying him, and maintaining a clean and attractive appearance.[1] The husband's task is ensuring that his wife fulfils her duties, and preventing her from surpassing the limits of her gender. The mother's instruction aims at testing the husband's ability to discipline his wife (see below). The wife's capacity to be the dominant party of the matrimony is recognized, but it should be used only to test the husband's ability.

**'The chapter on supervision of women and social interaction with them'**

'Supervision of women' is a translation of the Arabic title *Siyāsat al-nisā'; siyāsa* means 'managing a thing in such a way as to put it in a right, or proper, state' as well as 'rule, government or governance', and women could be both subjects and objects of this genitive construction.[2] Yet, as is evident from the context of the following narratives, the title here denotes that women are something that has to be managed and supervised. It not only regularizes a hierarchic power relationship, but one of necessary dominance and subordination, that is, *all* men should be dominant and *all* women should be subordinated to maintain the proper order. This chapter is one of the openly misogynist in *Nisā'*, which is accentuated by the introductory Prophet's ḥadīth about the woman as a crooked rib (see below, 162-63). The first half of the chapter gives advice on treatment of wives, built on fear, respect

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1 This power relationship is dominant in similar literature, El Cheikh concludes in her analysis of the sections on women in '*Uyūn al-akhbār* and *al-'Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi: 'The core of the behavioural requirements focus on women. It is women who must adapt and accept what is demanded by their husbands. Men are not the objects of specific injunctions concerning particular forms of behaviour to enhance the potential for a happy relationship in marriage.' El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse': 194.

2 Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *sws*.

and shame, quoted below (see below, 165-68). The second half contains various complaints about the plight of maintaining a family. The multitude of women to choose between could create an attitude of bored arrogance.

> Al-Aṣmaʿī on the authority of Jaʿfar ibn Sulaymān, he said: 'Often, my knowledge of women prevented me from them. I have slept with a thousand women and even if God had permitted a man's daughter to him, she would be of no use for him until she makes him a bachelor.'[1]

According to the saying above, not even a man's daughter is good enough for him. However, this is not the only attitude. In the following anecdote al- Ḥajjāj stands for a more emotional and playful male authority.

> Abū al-Ḥasan said: It was said to al-Ḥajjāj: 'Does your highness joke with your wives?'[2] He said: 'Do you think I am nothing but a devil? By God, many times I have kissed the arch of one of them!'[3]

Kissing the arch of the foot is a symbol of subservience which this well-known man might play with without losing in authority. This anecdote could also, of course, be a derogatory description of the Umayyad official al- Ḥajjāj as being unmanly, which would be favoured by several ʿAbbāsid transmitters. Likewise, the caliph al-Maʾmūn is said to have kissed ʿArīb's foot, which is not necessarily to his favour (see 2:23).

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 80.

الأصمعيّ عن جعفر بن سليمان قال: مَنَعَني علمى بالنساء كثيراً منهنّ فقد غشيتُ ألفَ امرأة وإن الله لو أحل لرجل ابنتَه لم تنفَعه أو تُعزبه

The manuscript has تغرقه, but the editor prefers تُعزبه. (Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 80, n. 2). An alternative translation is 'she would be of no use to him unless she makes him a bachelor'. That is, the best, or even the only good, marriage is the dissolved marriage, whether by the wife's death or divorce.

2 Yūsuf al-Ḥajjāj (d. 95/714), Umayyad official, one of the most famous figures from the Umayyad era.

3 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 80.

أبو الحسن قال: قيل للحجّاج: أيمازحُ الاميرُ أهلَه؟ قال: ما تَرونى إلا شيطاناً؟ والله لربما قبلتُ أخْمَصَ إحداهنّ

**'Women's talk'**

In conflict with the norm stating that women should not raise their voices, this chapter is composed of poems praising the voices of the beloved women. The women are talking, and their voices are like pouring rain or pearls falling from a necklace, or heat which could roast meat. The metaphors are important here; what the women actually said we are not informed of.

**'The chapter on gaze'**

Gazes are connected with sexuality and lowering one's gaze is equivalent to modesty and chastity. Thus it is treated in a verse in the Qur'ān, although this chapter is introduced by a saying of another prophet, Christ. This saying connects the sexual organs with the eyes, and is directed to men.

> Christ, may peace be upon him, said: Your sexual organ
> does not commit sin as long as you lower your gaze.[1]

Men's gazes are forceful and potent and are connected with their being the active party. In a proverb, men are juxtaposed with gazes, rain and words (here: khabar), while women are associated with eyes, earth and ears.

> It used to be said: There are four things which never have
> enough of four things: The eye of looking, the female of
> the male, the earth of the rain and the ear of the khabar.[2]

Men's gazes attack women, who have to defend themselves against them, as does successfully the witty Bedouin woman quoted below (140-42).[3] Women's gazes may also be dangerous, but for themselves, at least in the narrative below, in which a man prevents his jāriya from

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1 Ibid., 84.

قال المسيحُ عليه السلام: لا يزْنى فَرجُك ما غَضضْتَ بصرك

2 Ibid., 87.

كان يقال: أربعٌ لا يَشْبَعْنَ من أربع: عين من نظر وأنثى من ذكر وأرض من مطر وأذن من خَبَر

3 Ibid., 85.

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seeing instead of preventing men from seeing her. This narrative, however, is comical and not typical.

> Isḥāq ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Nahīk related to me, he said: I saw a man on the road to Mecca with a girl behind him in the camel litter. He had blindfolded her and raised the curtain. I asked him about it, he said: 'I fear her own eyes for herself, not other people's eyes'.[1]

The common practice would be to protect the girl from men's gazes, and to pull down the cover. In both cases, of course, the woman is an object, and it is the man's task to guard her. There is also another tendency in this chapter expressed in poetry and connected with the non-hierarchic notion of romantic love. According to this notion, the gazes of both the parties in a romantic love affair may betray their love and therefore be risky.

### 'The chapter on qiyān, lutes and singing'

This chapter is composed of poems and narratives about love to female singers, music and the lute. There are also some narratives about well-known male singers. One woman is mentioned by her name, Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn, ʿAlī's granddaughter who was a famous intellectual and protégée for musicians and poets in Medina.

### 'Kissing'

This short chapter consists of mostly positive remarks about kissing. The chapter is introduced by a ḥadīth which states that Muḥammad used to kiss his wives, which is therefore recommended. In the subsequent narrative the respectable caliph's wife Umm al-Banīn exhorts the singer ʿAzza to kiss the poet Kuthayyir when he asks about it in a poem. In the chapter's poetry the man and the woman are equally active in secret love meetings, according to the rules of romantic love.

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1 Ibid., 87.

حدّثني إسحاق بن أحمد بن نَهيك قال: رأيتُ رجلا في طريق مكة وعديلُه جاريةٌ في المحمل وقد شَد عينَيها وكشف الغطاءَ

فقلتُ له في ذلك فقال: إنما أخاف عليها عينيها لا عيونَ الناس

See also Appendix 1:63, where ʿĀʾisha secludes herself from a blind man with the words: 'Even though you cannot see me, I can see you'

In a poem by Abu Nuwās, two lovers imagine that they kiss each other when they kiss the black stone of the Ka'ba.[1]

### 'To go in to women and sexual intercourse'

This chapter opens with a khabar with a poem which condemns *mut'a* marriage, alluding to its closeness to prostitution.[2] One series of sayings, anecdotes and poetry in this chapter deals with potency, with descriptions of men's and, to a lesser degree, women's desires together with various pieces of advice, such as the following saying:

> Al-Aḥnaf said: If you want success with women, you should use obscene language when you have intercourse, and refine your moral character.[3]

This short saying could give one explanation of the seemingly ambiguous character of much adab literature, which may combine rude speech with appreciations of moral virtues. Possibly, the issue is that there are different codes of behaviour and speech for different occasions, which should be used appropriately. Thus obscene language does not prevent a high moral, when used for the pleasure of one's sexual partner. Likewise, al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba's proposal in the chapter on ugliness was successful ('If you marry me, I will fill your house with wealth and your vagina with penis'). The important thing here is that women's desires are considered, and that men have to exert themselves in order to gain success, *ḥuzwa*, with women. In another series of anecdotes in this chapter, women estimate well-known men's attractiveness; these are quoted below (147).

However, while women's desires are taken into account, according to the dominant paradigm their sexuality is directed to the husband and sexual experience is condemned. For men, sexual experience is equated with nobility, as when a woman notices that a captive is a king, due to his vast sexual experience (quoted below, 149).[4] In contrast, Hind bint

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1 Ibid., 94.
2 Ibid., 95.
3 Ibid., 96.　　قال الأحنف: إذا أردتم الحُظوةَ عند النساء فأفحشوا فى النكاح وحَسِّنوا الأخلاق
4 Ibid., 96-97.

Asmā's future marriage is ruined when an enemy of her father declaims a provocative poem about her alleged promiscuity.[1]

**'The chapter on procuring'**
This short chapter begins with a saying by 'Ā'isha about women who extend their hair. She declares that women may lengthen their hair if they are hairless. However, if a woman who was a prostitute when she was young lengthens her hair, she is a procuress. The mentioning of a procuress occasions two anecdotes and five poems.

**'The chapter on adultery and sin'**
This chapter is introduced by an anecdote in which a man keeps his woman because she is beautiful and the mother of his children, in spite of her adultery.[2] This introduction marks the whole chapter, a joking and indulgent approach to adultery. Especially men may make fun of their own sinfulness, as in the following anecdote:

> 'Amr ibn Bahr (al-Jāḥiz) said: A reciter of the Qur'ān read from 'The Governor's wife said, 'Now the truth is at last discovered'' until '''That, so that he may know I betrayed him not secretly''' [*Qur'ān* 12:51-52]. [3] Ismā'īl ibn Ghazwān said: 'By God, I have not heard of someone more enticing than this adulteress!' He heard about her many attempts to seduce Joseph, and Ismā'īl said: 'By God, she has excited me!'[4]

A few more didactic anecdotes deal with adulterous women, such as the poem about the woman who betrayed her husband with the camel

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1 Ibid., 97-98.
2 Ibid., 106.
3 Arberry's translation, the whole verses 12:51-52: 'What was your business, women,' he said, 'when you solicited Joseph?' 'God save us!' they said. 'We know no evil against him.' The Governor's wife said, 'Now the truth is at last discovered; I solicited him; he is a truthful man.' / 'That, so that he may know I betrayed him not secretly, and that God guides not the guile of the treacherous.'
4 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 108. Literally, Ismāʿīl's last sentence is 'Hasn't she, by God, rubbed herself against me! .

وقال عمرُو بن بحر: قرأ قارئ: {قالت امرأة العزيز الآن حَصْحَصَ الحق} الى قوله تعالى: {ذلك ليعلم أنى لم أخُنه بالغيب}
قال اسماعيلُ بنُ غَزوان: لا والله ما سمعتُ بأغزل من هذه الفاسقة وسمع بكثرة مراودتها يوسف عنها فقال إسماعيل: أما والله
بى تمرست

driver on the way to Mecca.[1] In another tragic anecdote, the father's decision not to let his daughter marry made the woman into an adulteress:

> A basket woven of canes with a baby boy was thrown in Yahyā market in Baghdad. He was lying on pieces of silk cloth. At his head there was a pocket with one hundred dinārs. There was also a piece of paper, with the words: This is the miserable son of a miserable woman, the son of *sikbāj* and *qaliyya*[2], the son of the drinking-cup and the tankard. May God be merciful towards him who buys a jāriya to him for this gold, who may bring him up. In the end of the paper, it was written: This is the repayment for him who prevented his daughter from marrying.[3]

The woman who gives away her son in this anecdote is not to blame; she is 'a miserable woman'. She does not only live in sin, drinking and fornicating, she also lives under quite simple conditions.[4] Her situation, however, is a natural outcome of her father's decision not to let her marry.

### 'The chapter on women's depravity'

This is the chapter with the most unambiguously negative representations of women. The fact that women are depraved is taken for granted, as well as that this depravity is harmful for men, and hence for the society as a whole. The dominant notion is that women are *actively* contributing to the ruin of men and society. Men's role is to prevent them from doing so, and see to it that they keep to the rules which regulate the depravity of their gender, a notion part of which will be discussed below. This chapter contains some longer legends, such as a legend which is referred to as coming from *Siyar al-ʿajam*, about the

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1 Ibn Qutayba, '*Nisā'*, 110.
2 According to the editor *qaliyya* is a broth made of meat and offal: Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 110, n. 7.
3 Ibid., 110.

رُمى ببغداد فى سوق يحيى قَمطرة فيها صبى وتحته مُضرّبات حرير وعند رأسه كيس فيه مائة دينار ورقعة فيها هذا الشقىّ

ابن الشقيّة ابن السكباج والقليّة ابن القدح والرطلية رحم الله من اشترى له بهذا الذهب جارية تربيه وفى آخر الرقعة هذا جزاء

من عضل ابنته

4 *Sikbāj* was simple folk's food; see Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'sikbādj,' in EI[2], vol. 9.

princess who fell in love with the Persian king Ardashīr, and helped him to conquer al-Ḥaḍr (Hatra), betraying her father, king of Mesopotamia and her people.[1] She marries Ardashīr, but after she has been sleepless one night because of a myrtle leaf under her mattress, he finds out about the protective upbringing her father had granted her. In consequence, he punishes her with death for betraying such a caring father. She is killed in an extremely brutal way; her braids are tied to the tail of a running horse. There is an obvious double standard in this story. Ardashīr conquers the town and kills the old king, for no other reason, it seems, than the wish to expand, and possibly to become a hero. Still, he respects the old king for his virtues. He behaves correctly; his aggression and mortal assault are not blamed. It is the daughter, whose action is incited by immediate passion, who is punished for not respecting her father, even though her husband would never have gained power without her. Another legend is about a woman who tries to seduce her brother-in-law.[2] When he refuses, she accuses him of trying to seduce her. The husband trusts her, but then gets a sign from his brother's grave after he has died. He understands that his brother was guiltless, and stays at his grave until his own death. The woman as divider between brothers is a motif in other instances of *Nisā',* treated in different ways.

**'The chapter on childbirth and children'**
This chapter contains only nine units. Some of them are about paternity; the son looks like his father, and if he does not, the paternity is questioned. Sons are desired, and a blessing from God:

> I heard from al-Ziyādī, he said: I had many daughters, and it was said to me: Ask God for forgiveness when you have sexual intercourse. After that more than ten boys were born to me.[3]

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 119-20. *Siyar al-a'jam* is *siyar al-mulūk al-'ajam*, the life stories of Persian kings. Hatra was probably conquered in 241 by Ardashīr and his son and successor, king Shapur. This story is found in many variants and is rendered in Europe as *The Princess on the Pea*.
2 Ibid., 120-21.
3 Ibid., 123. بلغني عن الزيادي قال: كنت مئناثا فقيل لي: استغفر اذا جامعتَ فولد لي بضعة عشر ذكرا

### 'The chapter on divorce'

The chapter is introduced by a ḥadīth, condemning divorce, although not prohibiting it. Several of the anecdotes and poems in the chapter follow this pattern; there are examples of men who divorce their wives too hastily, and then change their minds. But there are also examples of men who do not have second thoughts about divorcing.

> Khālid ibn Ṣafwān [1] said: I have never spent a more agreeable night than the night when I had divorced my women. When I returned, the curtain was ripped apart, and the household utensils were moved. One of them sent my daughter with a basket to me; in it was my food. Another of them sent me a mattress I could sleep upon. [2]

Khālid divorces all his wives at the same time, and feels relief; the house is empty but possibly quiet. Of course, his agreeable night is attained with the assistance of his former wives, who send him food and a mattress.

### 'The chapter on lovers, except for the lovers among the poets'

This chapter contains the longest tale in the whole book, about a romantic love with a tragic end, a tale from the *'udhrī* genre, i.e. tragic love between two equals, preferably Bedouins. [3] The setting of this tale is an unexpected meeting on the road. The road is the source for tales, and consequently the caliph questions the travelling narrator: 'Have you seen something on your way?' [4] The narrator is on his way from Medina to the caliph in Damascus, when he meets an old woman with her sick and fatigued son at her side. She tells the travelling narrator about her son's tragic love; he is passionately in love with his cousin, but her father married her to someone else. The son dies on the road, after he

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1 Khālid ibn Ṣafwān al-Tamīmī from Baṣra (d. 135/752) was known for his eloquence. He worked for the late Umayyad caliph Hishām and the first 'Abbasid caliph Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ. He is attributed varied opinions about women, especially about women's physical attractions, in anecdotes in '*Uyūn* and elsewhere, see Abbott, *Papyri* 3, 73-74. He reappears below in this chapter (129 and 139).
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 127.

قال خالد بن صفوان: ما بتُ ليلة أحب إلى من ليلة طلقت فيها نسائي فأرجع والستور قد هتكت ومتاع البيت قد نقلت فتبعث
إلى إحداهن بسلسلة مع بنتي فيها طعامي وتبعث لى الأخرى بفراش أنام عليه

3 Ibid., 128-30.
4 Ibid., 130.

has recited an elegy about his longing for his beloved, who does not come and visit him when he is ill.[1] The old woman sends the narrator to her people, to inform them about the death of her son. When he comes there, he sees the young man's beloved, a woman with unfolded hair. After hearing about the death of her beloved, she recites a poem in which she blames her relatives for preventing her from seeing him. Then she follows the narrator back to his dead body, and she helps in washing him and burying him. After that, she throws herself down on his grave and stays there for three days, when she dies. This is a story about true romantic love: both the woman and man are young, passionately in love with each other but prevented from marrying. They are equally active; neither of them is subjugated to the other, and, tragically, they die in the end.

## Analysis: Women's positions in *Kitāb al-nisā'*

In *Nisā'*, reports and sayings where women are excluded or objectified interact with others where women are active subjects. The following analysis is inspired by Bal's theory of agents (see above, 29-31). I have identified three main positions for women in the narratives, each of which may appear in various metamorphoses on the levels of language, vision and actions. These positions are literary; they do not necessarily refer to the extra-textual reality. However, they might reveal something about the interpretations of reality, which may have had actual consequences for this reality. First, we have the subject and object, which are the basis for the text's subjectivity. Most narrative activities, narration, focalization and acting, require a subject as well as an object. Subject-, and object-positions in narrative are the instances when a character is either the subject or the object of narration (and speaking), acting and focalization, both on the linguistic and the thematic level. The relationship between them is not static; an object might be transformed into a subject and vice versa. A character which has no power at all, that is, no subject-position on the levels outlined above, is an absolute object, although it might still have an important role in the narrative. Beside these obvious positions, I have identified a third, which is basically a movement between the two first positions. I will

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1 The hero's declamation of a poem while he or she is dying is also recurrent in the stories in *Thousand and One Night*, see van Gelder, 'Poetry and the Arabian Nights,' 15.

refer to this movement as ideological objectification. Below, the positions will be identified, described, and exemplified. Yet this chapter will only provide a sketch which will serve as a foundation for the further analyses of the biographies of ʿĀʾisha and ʿArīb. A more thorough study of *Nisāʾ* would have to be undertaken in order to fully understand the interactions, confrontations and hierarchies of these positions and their transformations in the narratives' network of subjects in this work.

As to being the subject who does the narrating, there are only two women narrators in *Nisāʾ*, both of them wives of the prophet Muḥammad: ʿĀʾisha [1] (three accounts) and Umm Ḥabība (one account).[2] In the whole corpus, with its large amount of poetry, there are only nine poems attributed to women, and eight of them are anonymous.[3] On the other hand, women are allowed to speak, especially in the anecdotes where a woman's witty answer may be the dramatic peak. Even though Bal between clear that narration does not necessarily involve focalization, I suggest that direct speech, or hypodiegetic narration, in these medieval narratives, may also signify a shift in focalization (see above, 28). The predilection for scenes with dialogues in direct speech gives each speaker an opportunity to provide his/her focalization of an event. When a woman gives her version of an event, in her own words (although fictional) she also focalizes the event. Accordingly, the focalizer is often identifiable with the narrator, especially if the narrator is homodiegetic. As the normative material consists of advice and norms about women directed to men and formulated by men, men are also the focalizers of theses texts. To avoid women's vision and focalization is even a thematic in several narratives; women should be secluded and avoid looking, and men should function as their intermediaries. As to the level of actions, women tend to be acted upon more often than acting. Yet the book is in no way homogeneous; women act on all levels and in all parts of the book, sometimes in overtly conflicting narratives.

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 1, 19, and 20.
2 Ibid., 10.
3 The poet is ʿĀtika bint Zayd who wrote an elegy for her late husband ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr in ibid., 114-15.

**Ideological objectification**

The first khabar in *Nisā'* is a ḥadīth and thus essentially normative. The desirable wife in the second half of this opening ḥadīth is established as a woman who is able to transform herself into an object. Actually, the statement initiates a tendency in the first chapter, a chapter which is explicitly normative, describing an ideal reality, the ideal wife in men's view. Notably, meaning interacts with language in a process in which the woman is objectified, or rather, the woman objectifies herself. Women may be subjects of action, and to a lesser degree of speech, but, thematically, the ideal woman endeavours to control her subjectivity and direct it towards her husband or her family so as to be the object of their interests. In consequence, there is a movement of positions; the ideal woman uses her subject-position in order to transform herself into an object.

   This movement of positions, normatively and ideologically motivated, is identified in this thesis as 'ideological objectification'. Ideological objectification includes a mental transformation; the woman has to integrate the object-position into her inner desires and beliefs – that is, ideological objectification presupposes the woman's willingness. The notion of ideological objectification, I suggest, includes a process of objectification attempting to change reality, to change women's real subject-positions into object-positions in certain spheres: marriage, sexuality, family, and tribe.

   As ideological objectification is so strongly represented in the texts, it supposedly agrees with the normative hegemony of the societies in which the narratives are created. Ideological objectification may operate both in language (semantics and grammar) and in the story. Concretely, ideology is constructed in the texts by help of grammar, semantics of the words, choice of narrator, etc. For example, it is more effective to let 'Ā'isha speak about herself as an object, than to let a male narrator do the same. It is also more effective to let the woman repent for surpassing the spatial limits of her gender, than to simply command her and punish her. The ideological objectification is probably intentional, while the instances of women's subject-positions in conflicting narratives point to the gaps in this ideological construction. Thus ideological objectification is more common in the normative material than in the anecdotes, where it is more or less

absent. In 'Arīb's biography, for example, there is no trace of it. Ideological objectification can certainly be found in literature on women from the same period. El Cheikh notices the phenomenon in *al-'Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi (d. 328/940)*, summarizing advice from a mother to her daughter, called Umm Iyās.

> The views concerning the ideal wife are captured by the words of Umm Iyās [sic], who advises her daughter, on the eve of her marriage, about the ten characteristics, *khiṣāl*, that she needs to keep if she is to be happy in her married life: Be submissive and obedient to him. Always mind how you are going to look and smell so that he will see nothing ugly of you and smell only sweet smells; pay attention to his sleep and food, for hunger will provoke his hostility and disturbed sleep is a cause of anger; care for his money and guard his honor and family: the secret of managing money is to have good judgment while the caring for the family requires fine management; do not disobey him and do not betray his secrets: if you disobey him he will hold a grudge and if you were to betray his secrets, you will not be safe from his treachery; do not be happy if he is sad and do not show sadness if he is happy…Not only does she [the wife] have to care for his well-being both practically and emotionally; in the process she is asked to internalize, even efface, her own needs as well as her own feelings of sadness and unhappiness.[1]

The ideological object is distinguished from the absolute object, as it includes a deliberate transformation from subject to object, while the absolute object is a static position. For the notion of the absolute object, on the other hand, it is not relevant whether the object-position is readily accepted by the woman or not; it is an outer state, and accomplished by outer force. Below, examples are given of the process of ideological objectification operating on the various levels of the narratives, sometimes only in language, and sometimes hardly noticeable.

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1 El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse': 186-87.

## Living for her husband and her people

As mentioned above, the first chapter in *Nisā'* is predominantly normative – its subject is the ideal woman. The first narratives in the chapter belong to the wisdom genre; there are ḥadīths from the prophet Muḥammad, sayings by the religious authorities 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, as well as proverbs from the Arabs. Like several of the other chapters in *Nisā'*, this chapter begins with a ḥadīth. The combination of being first and being the Prophet's words gives it the status of a model, which the rest of the book, or at least the first chapter, is relating to in one way or another. In this ḥadīth, God's Messenger speaks about the ideal woman for a Muslim man. The narrative is divided in two parts. In the first, the implied reader, the 'you' in the narrative, is a man, and the object of the narration is 'a woman among us'. The woman does not marry; she is married, although one of the characteristics that make her a suitable wife depends on her own activity, namely piety. The focalizer has a male point of view; the qualities that matter are the qualities that could suit a man, which, of course, agrees with the objective of *Nisā'*.

> On the authority of Mujāhid, Yaḥyā said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said:  A woman is married for her religion [*dīn*], nobility and beauty. You should choose one with religion, may your hands be dirty![1] Then he said: A man could not benefit from anything better after Islam than a pious woman who pleases him when he looks at her, who obeys him when he gives her an order, and who preserves herself and his belongings when he is absent.[2]

The second part of the narrative has the same theme, but with the woman as active subject of the verbs describing the events. The language has been modified from the first part of the narrative to the

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1 I.e. 'May you become poor!' This is a good-natured curse, which should not be understood literally.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 1.

عن مجاهد عن يحيى بن جعدة قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: تُنكَح المرأة لدينها وحسبها وحسنها فعليك بذات الدين تربت يداك, ثم قال: ما أفاد رجل بعد الإسلام خيرا من امرأة ذات دين تسره اذا نظر اليها وتطيعه اذا أَمرها وتحفظه فى نفسها وماله اذا غاب عنها

second. While 'woman' is the passive subject of 'marry' in the first part, 'woman' is the active subject of the verbs in the second; she pleases, she obeys and she preserves. But the nature of the verbs reverses the subject into an object. She is active, but the kind of action she makes transforms her into the object of the husband's interests. This narrative thus illustrates the transformation which takes place in ideological objectification, as outlined above. The last of the qualities of an ideal woman, the preservation of the husband and his property in her heart when he is absent, also indicates the necessity of the woman's own motivation, which is required for the act of ideological objectification.

The second narrative in *Nisā'* is attributed to 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr and it is one of the few units with a female narrator in *Nisā'*.

> On the authority of 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, she said: The woman should not be brought to her husband (to consummate the marriage with her) before the age of ten years. 'Ā'isha said: But I was brought to God's Messenger, GBGS, when I was a girl of nine.[1]

'Ā'isha narrates about herself, but she speaks about herself as the passive subject of the event taking place in the narration, she is brought in to her husband (for the consummation of the marriage). The narrator 'Ā'isha is the subject of narration, but her speech is a narration about 'Ā'isha, and the woman in general, as the passive subject, who does not act, but is acted upon.

The third narrative in *Nisā'* is an Arab proverb, an important normative source. It is also one of the many gendered narratives in *Nisā'*, where the male gender is compared to the female gender. In this proverb, the ideal woman transforms herself into an object of her people's interest. In a tribal setting this is an appreciated quality for both women and men in that the community comes before the individual. The best of women and the best of men share some basic

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1 Ibid.

وعن عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت: لا تُدخَل المرأة على زوجها فى أقلَّ من عشر سنين. قالت عائشة: وأُدخِلتُ على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأنا بنت تسع سنين

For the term used here for consummating the marriage, 'brought in to her husband', see App. 1, 257-58,

qualities; they are modest, tender, and chaste Muslims. Nevertheless, this proverb displays a gendered dichotomy regarding the meaning of being a Muslim; men are subjects and women are (ideological) objects.

> Al-Aṣmāʿī said: An elder man from the ʿAnbar clan informed me,[1] he said: It used to be said: There are three kinds of women; one is modest, tender and chaste, a Muslim who aids her family against life and not life against her family. The second is a receptacle for children and the third is a lousy leather collar[2] which God places on the neck of whoever he wants and unchains from whoever he wants. There are three kinds of men; one is modest, tender and chaste, a Muslim who knows the ways of betaking himself to affairs and knows the ways of withdrawing himself from them.[3] The second (is stupid but) ends up adopting the opinion of an intelligent and discerning person, so that he keeps to his command and eventually adopts his view. The third is confused and unsuccessful, and neither takes counsel of proper conduct, nor obeys a judicious person.[4]

Religion unites the good woman and the good man; to be a Muslim is preceded by the same attributes for both. However, the implication of these attributes is gendered. The best man acts independently, and if he cannot act in accordance with his own good judgment, he should at least take advice from other, wiser men. The good woman acts too; she is the grammatical subject of the verb defining her, 'aids'. Yet her action consists in putting her family's interests before her own. The second best woman is the child bearer, but in the wording of this

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1 The ʿAnbar clan was part of the Tamīm tribe, which flourished in Najd. They converted to Christianity quite early, and accepted Islam a few years after the hijra.

2 غُلّ قمل

3 Or: of commencing them and completing them.

4 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 2.

الأصمعيّ قال: أخبرنا شيخ من بنى العنبر قال: كان يقال: النساء ثلاث فهيّنة ليّنة عفيفة مسلمة تعين أهلها على العيش ولا تعين العيش على أهلها وأخرى وعاء للولد وأخرى غل قمل يضعها الله في عُنق من يشاء ويفكه عمن يشاء والرجال ثلاثة فهيّن ليّن عفيف مسلم يصدر الأمور مصادرها ويوردها مواردها وآخر ينتهى إلى رأى ذى اللبّ والمقدرة فيأخذ بأمره وينتهى الى قوله وآخر حائر بائر لايأتمر لرُشد ولا يطيع مرشدا

proverb, she does not even give birth, she is only the receptacle. The worst woman is an absolute object, a lousy iron collar, placed on men's neck by God himself. The woman in this proverb is thus valued in accordance with her positive or negative dependence on men, as a benefit or a burden; independence is not correct for her.[1]

The woman as provider of sons is the sole interest of several wisdoms in the first chapter, some of which provide concrete advice on how to estimate a woman's qualities in this respect.[2] The woman's roles as ideological object and as provider of sons are connected in the following Bedouin saying, where the process of ideological objectification is not evident, but which has the same motif as the former narrative:

> Al-Aṣmaʿī said: Jumayʿ ibn Abī Ghāḍira narrated to me concerning women; he was an old man among the Bedouins and one of al-Zibriqān's descendants, he said: al-Zibriqān used to say: The most beloved of my daughters-in-law is the one who is humble concerning herself, but proud concerning her people, who is intelligent and bashful, abstains from what is unlawful, and with a boy in her belly and a boy following her. The most hated of my daughters-in-law is the one who comes forth at one time and conceals herself at another, who walks swiftly and sits cross-legged, who is humble concerning her people, but proud concerning herself, and with a girl in her belly and a girl following her.[3]

A modest appearance and a gendered fertility are connected with the desired ability of a woman to set her people's interest before her own in this saying. The ideal daughter-in-law should be altogether bashful and

الأصمعيّ قال: حدّثني جميع بن أبى غاضرة ــ وكان شيخا مُسنّا من أهل البادية من ولد الزبرقان بن بدر من قِبل النساء ــ قال: كان الزبرقان يقول: أحبّ كنائني إليّ الذليلة فى نفسها العزيزة فى رهطها البرزة الحيّية التى فى بطنها غلام ويتبعها غلام. وأبغض كنائني إليّ الطلعة الخبأة التى تمشى الدِفقى وتجلس الهَبَنْقَعة الذليلة فى رهطها العزيزة فى نفسها التى فى بطنها جارية وتتبعها جارية

provide boys to the clan. The detested daughter-in-law is presumptuous; she sees to her interests before the clan's and provides them with girls. In this example, 'humble' and 'proud' are contrasted; both are good qualities for a woman if they are directed to the right purposes. Subsequently, 'boy' and 'girl' are contrasted; in this dichotomy, providing boys is a good quality, while providing girls is not. In between, the abstract normative 'intelligent and bashful', and abstaining 'from what is unlawful', are contrasted to the concrete walking 'swiftly' and sitting 'cross-legged', which makes it easy to discern the bad woman.

In the fourth unit in *Nisā'*, a saying by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, which, considering his religious authority, should be regarded as at least as normative as 'Ā'isha's utterance, the ideal wife should direct her sexual subjectivity towards her husband.

> On the authority of Ja'far ibn Muḥammad, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may peace be upon him, he said: The best of your women is she who is chaste with her vagina, but lustful to her husband.[1]

In accordance with the concept of the ideological object, the best woman is the one who is able to use her subject-position in sexuality for her husband's sake, and she should do it enthusiastically, so as to show her willingness. In the saying above, the wife does not transform her subject-position to an object-position, as required by ideological objectification; she directs it towards her husband, which is the 'first step'. In a later saying by Khālid ibn Ṣafwān, the same exhortation is integrated with the ideal wife's submission to her people, as in the examples above.

> It reached me that Khālid ibn Ṣafwān said: He who marries a woman, should marry someone who is proud concerning her people, but humble concerning herself, whom wealth has taught good manners, but poorness has humbled, who

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عن جعفر بن محمد عن أبيه عن عليّ بن أبى طالب عليه السلام قال خير نسائكم العفيفة فى فرجها الغلمة لزوجها.2, .Ibid 1

is chaste towards her neighbour, but lustful towards her husband.[1]

In one of the anecdotes in the first chapter the ideal woman's internalization of the husband's needs and desires is expressed, but also questioned. This anecdote is structured according to the question-answer model. Unlike this model in 'Ā'isha's biography, its purpose is here not to enhance the answerer's authority, but to illustrate two contrasting views of women's roles. In the answerer's view, the attractive woman is the one who complies with the man's desire, whatever it is.

> Mu'āwiya said to 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib: 'Which woman is attractive?' He said: 'The one who complies with that which you desire.' He said: 'And which woman is repellent?' He said: 'The one who shuns that which you approve.' Mu'āwiya said: 'By God, that is a hasty criticism!' 'Aqīl said: 'But a just one.'[2]

This dialogue delineates in a few words the two extremes in the medieval male discourse on women. Mu'āwiya and 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib are political opponents, and in this anecdote they represent two different views on women.[3] According to 'Aqīl, women have one important task and that is to submit to their husbands' desires, and this submission is what makes them attractive. The caliph Mu'āwiya on the other hand, criticizes this hasty observation. 'Aqīl gets the last word in this dialogue, but Mu'āwiya's position is still strong, in his capacity as caliph. However, he is the first Umayyad caliph, and as such an enemy in the 'Abbāsid rhetoric. Thus, this anecdote could have a different connotation in the 'Abbāsid context; perhaps Mu'āwiya's high regard

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1 Ibid., 4. بلغني عن خالد بن صفوان أنه قال: من تزوج إمرأة فليتزوجها عزيزة في قومها ذليلة في نفسها أدّبها الغنى وأذلها الفقر حصانا من جارها ماجنة على زوجها

2 Ibid., 10.
وقال معاوية لعقيل بن أبى طالب: أيّ النساء أشهى؟ قال: المؤاتية لما تهوَى, قال: فأيّ النساء أسوأ؟ قال المجانبة لما ترضَى قال معاوية: هذا والله النقد العاجل قال عقيل: بالميزان العادل
The last statement and answer are quoted from Abbott's translation. Abbott, *Papyri* 3, 69.
3 Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph; 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib is brother of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

for women was a negative characteristics. Abbott quotes the above anecdote from Ibn Abī Rabbihi's *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*. Muʿāwiya's opponent there is Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān, who was, like ʿAqīl, a supporter of ʿAlī.[1]

## Executing the husband's order

In the wisdom narratives above, the ideal women should act as objects for the well-being of their people or husbands. Some anecdotes deal with women who more or less successfully try to integrate their husbands' or fathers' wishes. A motif in accordance with this notion is the husband or father who orders a woman to do something, an order that she has to obey, according to the normative power relationship.

This motif is present in the following narrative, where ʿAlqama marries off his daughter to the old al-Ḥārith. He requires her to marry him willingly. The introduction is symptomatic, but confusing for a modern reader; al-Ḥārith proposes to ʿAlqama, a proposal that does not involve a woman. However, in the subsequent statement, it is understood that the woman is ʿAlqama's daughter. ʿAlqama's wife is referred to as his daughter's mother, a semantic feature that we will see further in the next chapter. ʿAlqama commands the girl's mother to make the girl agree to marrying al-Ḥārith. The mother succeeds in convincing her, using her rhetorical ability, but fails in making her doing it with her whole heart.

> Al-Ḥārith ibn Salīl al-Asadī proposed to ʿAlqama ibn Khaṣfa al- Ṭāʾī when he was an old man. He said to the girl's mother: 'Incite her to want it herself!' She said: 'My daughter, which man do you like most, a man of distinction, at the height of his life, bestowing gifts, or a young man with a beautiful face, neglectful and vehemently desirous?' She said: 'Mother, A young woman loves a young man / just as the shepherds love the pleasing pasture.' She said: 'My daughter, young men are rigorously enforcing seclusion and multiply their reprimands.' She said: 'Mother, I fear from the old man

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1 Abbott, *Papyri* 3, 69. Abbott refers to more instances in which Muʿāwiya defends and speaks approvingly about women. In a passage in *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, for example, he says that '[w]omen surpass men in nobility and are surpassed in ignobility': Abbott, *Papyri* 3, 69-70.

that he will stain my dress and wear out my youth, and will make my girlfriends rejoice at my bad luck.' However, she did not cease until she had made her change her mind. Thus al-Ḥārith married her, after which he travelled with her to his people. One day he was sitting in the yard outside his tent while she was sitting next to him. Wrestling young men from the Asad clan approached whereupon she sighed and started to cry. He said to her: 'What makes you cry?' She said: 'What do I have to do with old men who rise like young birds!'[1] He said: 'May your mother be bereft of you! A free woman will hunger and will not eat the hire of her breasts.[2] That is how she became! By your father, for all the raids I have attended, all the captive women I have made to ride behind me on the same beasts, all the wine I have drunk, go and join your family! I have no need for you!'[3]

While all persons in the network of subjects above are acting, the distribution of power is to the favour of the men. The men are named and they give orders. The women are unnamed, one is the girl's mother, and the other is the girl. The marriage is an affair between the two men. Obviously 'Alqama agrees to al-Ḥārith's proposal, but he realises the importance of the girl's compliance. In one way, the implication of this anecdote follows the logic of the ideological objectification; the woman has to actively and willingly transform herself into an object. In this case, the girl has to follow the father's order, through the intermediation of the mother, and she has to do it willingly. The wife has to follow her

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1 I.e. fluttering their wings when they endeavour to fly.
2 A proverb which, according to Lane, 'is applied in relation to a man's preserving himself from ignoble means of acquiring wealth', that is, letting his wife work as a wet-nurse: Lane, *Lexicon,* s.v. *ṭdy.*
3 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā',* 47-48.

خطب الحارث بن سليل الأسديّ الى علقمة بن خصفة الطائيّ وكان شيخا فقال لأمّ الجارية: أريدى ابنتك على نفسها فقالت: أى بنيّة أيّ الرجال أحبّ اليك: الكهل الحجحاج الواصل المنّاح أم الفتى الوضّاح الذهول الطمّاح؟ قالت: ياأمّتاه إنّ الفتاة تحبّ الفتى/كحبّ الرعاء أنيق الكلا فقالت: يابنيّة إن الشباب شديد الحجاب كثير العتاب قالت: ياأمّتاه أخشى من الشيخ أن يُدنّس ثيابى ويُبلىَ شبابى ويُشمتَ بى أترابى فلم تزل بها حتى غلبتها على رأيها فتزوّج بها الحارث ثم رحل بها الى قومه فإنه الجالس ذات اليوم بفناء مظلته وهى الى جانبه إذ أقبل شباب من بنى أسد يعتلجون فتنفست ثم بكت فقال لها: ما تبكيك؟ قالت: مالى والشيوخ الناهضين كالفروخ! فقال: تكلتك أمّك تجوع الحرّة ولا تأكل بثديها فذهبت مثلا أما وأبيك لربّ غارة شهدتها وسبيّة أردفتها وخمرة شربتها فآلحقى بأهلك لا حاجة لى فيك

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husband's order, altought she did not fulfil her duty to her husband, to make the girl marry willingly. Yet the women in this narrative do not fully delegate their subject-positions to the favour of men. Certainly, the mother executes her husband's order without arguing, but she possesses an eloquence that her daughter has inherited. And her daughter is surely persuaded, but she is persuaded by the logic of her mother's arguments, not because she believes that she has to submit herself to her father's wish. It is possible to read this narrative as a moral example of the errors of marrying young women to old men. The girl discloses her emotions with a youthful frankness, and, contrary to the elder woman, honesty is more important for her than money. Her poem both reveals her desire and generalizes it.[1] In her poem, the young woman is a shepherd who desires the pleasing pasture. The young man is an object of her desire, just as the young wrestlers are objects of her observation, when they are performing in front of her and her husband.

  In an anecdote about the first occurrence of *khul'* divorce among the Arabs,[2] it is again the mother who advises the daughter on the husband's command. The imperative is not as decisive here and the daughter returns to her father's house, just as above, but with her father's full agreement. Still, this anecdote is more normative than the one above, although implicitly.

> Al-'Utbī said: Ibrāhīm al-'Āmirī related to me, he said: 'Āmir ibn al-Zarib married his daughter to his nephew. When he wanted to transfer her, he said to her mother: 'Command your daughter not to descend to a desert without taking water with her, for it makes the upper part (of the body) bright and it cleans the lowest part. And she should not sleep with him too much, for when the body gets bored, the heart does as well. But she should not resist his desire, because favour lies in consenting.' Yet it took no more than one month before she came to him with an injured head. He said to his nephew: 'My son, raise your

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1  In Abu Lughod's study of modern Bedouin women's poetry, she found that poems were one of the few ways for these women to speak about their romantic and erotic feelings: Lila Abu Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
2 *khul'* is a divorce on the initiative of the wife, or her family. The husband does not have to pay the alimony agreed upon in the contract.

stick from your young she-camel. If she turns away without having been chased away, that is an illness for which there is no medicine.  If there is no harmony between you, *khul'* is better than an ordinary divorce, so that you do not have to leave your money with your wife.' He gave him back the bride gift, and he divorced her according to *khul'*. He was the first who undertook a *khul'* divorce among the Arabs.[1]

As a matter of fact, the women in this anecdote have no subject-positions in the narrative; they do not speak, focalize or act. The father commands the mother of his daughter to instruct her, but the words of the instruction are the father's. Obviously, the instruction is unsuccessful; the daughter does not succeed in her marriage. The first instruction is practical advice in the desert setting. The second, not to bore him, and the third, to agree to his wishes, both imply that she should use her subject-position to please the husband. We do not know whether the marriage was a failure because the daughter did not follow the instructions, or because the husband ignored her endeavours. Yet the father's subsequent words give us an indication. In the beginning of the narrative, he speaks to the mother about the daughter; she is her daughter, not his. In the end of the narrative he speaks to the husband, his nephew is his son. The daughter is naturally affiliated with the mother, while the nephew is affiliated with the uncle, who is more familiar and understanding towards his nephew than his own daughter. He speaks directly to the nephew, while he uses the mother as intermediate when he speaks to the daughter. In both cases, he speaks in imperative, but the implications of his orders are different for the daughter and the nephew. The daughter is responsible for the success of the marriage, which is equivalent to the husband's happiness, whereas the husband is responsible for instructing and disciplining the wife, but

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 76.

العُتَبِيّ قال: حدّثنا إبراهيم العامريّ قال: زوّج عامر بن الظرب من ابن أخيه فلما أراد تحويلها قال لأمّها: مُرى ابنتك ألا تنزل مفازة إلا ومعها ماء فإنه للأعلى جلاء وللأسفل نقاء ولا تكثر مضاجعته فإنه إذا مل البدن مل القلب ولا تمنعه شهوته فإن الحظوة فى الموافقة فلم تلبث إلا شهرا حتى جاءته مشجوجة فقال لابن أخيه: يا بُنيّ ارفع عصاك عن بكرتك فإن كانت نفرت من غير أن تُنفر فذلك الداء الذى ليس له دواء وإن لم يكن بينكما وفاق ففراق الخلع أحسن من الطلاق ولن تترك مالك وأهلك فردّ عليه صداقه وخلعها فهو أوّل من خلع من العرب

in some cases there is nothing he can do.[1] The daughter is likened to a young camel which has to be domesticated; her husband is the camel trainer and the stick is his taming tool, or the medicine that could cure the camel's disease, probably its disobedience. The nephew is not blamed for severely injuring the girl, although she returned to her father *mashjūja*, which means 'with a broken head', indicating quite severe violence on the part of the husband. Instead, the father advises him not to use his stick, as his wife apparently is incurable, and gives him a favourable offer. The reason for the *khul'* divorce is apparently avoidance of the alimony.

## Orders and pragmatic obedience

In the first narrative of the chapter on beauty, Ā'isha is both subject of narration and action, but the action she executes is on the Prophet's order and for his pleasure. However, in this case the order does not require an ideological object, as 'Ā'isha does not try to internalize her husband's wishes, instead, she lies to him.

> On the authority of 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, proposed to a woman from the Kalb tribe. He sent me to look at her, and he said to me: 'What did you see?' I said: 'I did not see anything valuable.' He said: 'You did see a beauty spot on her cheek which made every single hair of youtremble!' She said: 'There are no secrets for you!'[2]

'Ā'isha is sent on her husband's errand and for his exclusive pleasure, and she is obviously not overjoyed about getting a new co-wife. She executes the order of God's Messenger, and inspects the possible wife, but then she tries to lie to him about the woman's beauty. She does not internalize her husband's wishes. Her obedience is pragmatic, that is, she does what she has to do so as to give the image of obedience, but then, when she thinks she is safe, she disobeys. She does not answer

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1 For this motif in *Nisā'* and *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, see El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse': 186ff.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 19.

عن عائشة رضى الله عنها قالت: خطب رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم امرأة من كلب فبعثنى أنظر اليها فقال لى: كيف

رأيت فقلت: ما رأيت طائلا فقال: لقد رأيت خالا بخدّها اقشعرّ كل شعرة منك على حدة فقالت: من دونك سرّ

truthfully to her husband's question: 'What did you see?' Nevertheless, the Prophet does not let himself be duped, and her attempt is unsuccessful. In narratological terminology, 'Ā'isha as a character tries to focalize the event but fails. Still, this does not seem to matter; 'Ā'isha is not punished, as the point of the narrative is not to put forward a norm, but to illustrate the Prophet's capacity. 'Ā'isha's lie has a role in the narrative – it demonstrates God's Messenger's extraordinary abilities.

The following, relatively long narrative includes both ideological objectification and pragmatic obedience. The woman in this narrative, 'Ātika bint Zayd, overcame her first husband and ignored the wishes of her third. However, in the end she had to repent for it, by willingly secluding herself and being confined to her house, so as to restore the order.

> Abū 'Alī l-Umawī said: 'Ātika bint Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl stayed with [i.e. was married to] 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq [the trustworthy],[1] may God be pleased with him. She had overcome him in many affairs, and thus his father [Abū Bakr] said to him: Divorce her! He divorced her and recited:
>
> 'She has an easy disposition, beauty and rank / a well-proportioned figure, which cannot be blamed, as well as eloquence.'
>
> He was hit by an arrow at the battle of al-Ṭā'if. When he died, she recited an elegy for him:
>
> 'I swear that my eye will remain hot from tears
> for your sake, and my skin will remain dusty
> By God, no eye has seen a young man like him
> prouder, hotter in rage and more enduring
> When the spear-heads were pointed at him, he plunged into them / to death until he left the lance red'

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1 'Abdallāh is the brother of 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr.

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Later 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb proposed to her. When he held his wedding banquet, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr said:[1] 'Oh, Commander of the believers, let me have a look at 'Ātika?' He said: 'Yes. 'Ātika, cover yourself!' He put his head through the curtain and said: 'I swear that my eye will remain taking pleasure/ due to you, and my skin will remain pale [from love-sickness].'

'Ātika begun to cry loudly, and 'Umar said: 'What did you want with this? All women behave in this way! May God forgive you!' Later al-Zubayr married her after 'Umar; the greater part of her life had then passed. She used to go out at night to the mosque and she had a large posterior. Al-Zubayr said to her: 'Do not go out!' She said: 'I will not stop going out unless you prevent me.' He did not like to prevent her, because of the saying of God's Messenger, GBGS: 'Do not prevent God's servants from going to God's mosques'. Then al-Zubayr lay in wait for her disguised in the darkness of the night. When she passed him, he pinched her posteriors. After that, she did not go out again. He said to her: 'Why do you not go out?' She said: 'I used to go out, but people are people. People have become bad and my house is large enough for me.'[2]

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1 'Abd al-Raḥmān is the brother of 'Ātika's late husband 'Abdallāh.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 114-15.

ابو عليّ الأموى قال: كانت عاتكة بنت زيد بن عمرو بن نُفَيل عند عبد الله بن أبى بكر الصدّيق رضى الله عنه وكانت قد غلبته فى كثير من أمره فقال له أبوه: طَلِّقها فطلقها وأنشا يقول:

لها خُلُقٌ سهلٌ وحُسنٌ ومَنصب / وخَلقٌ سَوىَّ ما يُعاب ومَنطق .فرُمِىَ يوم الطائف بسهم فلما مات قالت تَرثيه:

وآلبتُ لا تنفك عينى سخينة / عليكَ ولا ينفك جلدىَ أغبرَا .فاش عينٌ ما رأتْ مثلّه فتىَ / أعزّ وأحمىَ فى الهياج وأصبرَا

ا ذا شرَعتْ فيه الأسنّة خاضنَها / الى الموت حتى يتركَ الرُمحَ أحمرا .ثم خطبها عمر بن الخطاب فلما أولَمَ قال عبد الرحمن بن أبى بكر: يا أَمير المؤمنين أتأذنُ لى أن أُدخل رأسى على عاتكة؟ قال: نعم, يا عاتكة استرى فأدخل رأسَه فقال:

وآلبتُ لا تنفك عينى قَريرة / عليكَ ولا ينفك جلدىَ أصفرا .فَنَشِجَتْ نَشِجاً عالياً فقال عمر: ما أردتَ الى هذا! كلُ النساء يفعلن هذا! غفر الله لك. ثم تزوّجها الزبير بعد عمر وقد خلا من سنّها فكانت تخرُج بالليل الى المسجد ولها عجيزة ضخمة فقال لها الزبير: لا تخرجى فقالت: لا أزالُ أخرج أو تمنعنى وكان يكره أن يمنعَها لقول النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تمنعوا إماءَ الله مساجدَ الله فقعد لها الزبير متنكرا فى ظُلمة الليل فلما مرّتْ به قرَص عجيزتَها فكانت لا تخرج بعد ذلك فقال لها: مالك لا تخرجين؟ فقالت: كنتُ أخرج والناس ناس وقد فسد الناس فبيتى أوسع لى

This anecdote is not included in 'Ātika bint Zayd's biography in *Ṭabaqāt*, according to which 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Bakr gives her a portion of his property on the condition that she does not marry after him. There are several variants of how 'Umar marries her. In one, she marries 'Umar and gives back the

'Ātika overcame her husband, and he was forced to divorce her because of that. His father's order had to be obeyed: 'divorce her! He divorced her'. Linguistically, the order is obeyed exactly as it is uttered by the father, a phenomenon that will be discussed in the analysis of 'Arīb's biography. It is enough here to state that this construction alludes to the obligation to obey an authority. Nevertheless, it reveals a somewhat pragmatic view of obedience. The order is obeyed verbatim, although not necessarily willingly, and does not call for an inner change. 'Abdallāh follows his father's command and divorces his wife, but he still loves and admires her, as expressed in his poem about her. He has to obey his father, but does not have to deny his feelings for his former wife. The fact that his feelings are reciprocated, revealed by 'Ātika in her elegy for him at his death as a war-hero, makes their relationship a romantic love-affair. Actually, their tragic love-story is accentuated when she is remained on her wedding-night and in the presence of her new husband. It is acceptable for 'Abdallāh to divorce 'Ātika in spite of his love for her, if his father demands it. She, in turn, should be faithful to him after his death. In marrying 'Umar, she breaks the vow she made in the elegy to her late husband. Her new husband has a more cynical view of romantic love; women are not able to entertain such subtle feelings. Men have to accept them as they are, without expecting too much from them. If her first marriage is characterized by its romantic love, the second is in line with the hadīth by the Prophet: 'The woman is created from a crooked rib. If you take pains in straightening her out, you will break her' (see below, 162-63). In her third marriage, in turn, the right place of the woman is her house. 'Ātika is tested by al-Zubayr, and passes. In doing so, she is both repenting for breaking the romantic pact of the first marriage, and demonstrating women's honour and piety within the limits of their incomplete nature according to the second marriage. The story about her last marriage also includes a humoristic point, al-Zubayr, who, in disguise, pinches the posterior of his wife. The humour of this passage is in line with much humour in anecdotes – the successful liar. This notion is close to pragmatic obedience, as trickery here is an accepted tool for changing the state of things.

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property. In another she does not return the property to 'Abdallāh's family, which makes 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr recite a variant of the poem in this anecdote: Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 193-95.

## Subject-positions

Of the subject-positions identified here, some is indisputably favourable towards women, in particular the witty women who win verbal battles. The sympathy for these women lies in their ability to reverse their subordinated role with the help of their witty words. Eloquence and wit might excuse the challenge to hierarchies between men and women, masters and slaves, superiors and subordinates. In various anecdotes in *Nisā'* women act and speak. Mostly, the setting is a meeting between a man and a woman; on some occasions in the form of a lawsuit. The setting could also be the road, or another part of a journey. Women often give their opinions about men, negative judgments as well as expression of attractions to a certain man. Other subject-positions are not that favourable, especially the one which endows women with evil characteristics. According to this position, which is often generalizing, women's action may cause evil.

## Verbal battles and witty women

A group of anecdotes, structured as verbal battles, challenges the normative power relationship. The most eloquent individual gets the last word and wins the verbal battles, and in our example, the most eloquent is often a woman, who is contested by a man. The man, in turn, often initiates the battle, verbally or with his gaze, but soon loses control over it. In the anecdote below, the woman complies with the order; she is humble and uses the formulas of pious and polite subservience, while the man is proud and arrogant. Yet, with a few words, she succeeds in puncturing his pride and getting the last word.

> Khālid ibn Ṣafwān asked for the hand of a woman, he said: 'I am Khālid ibn Ṣafwān, you already know my rank and you have heard about my great wealth. I have some characteristics which I will make clear for you; after that you might dare to engage yourself to me, or let be.' She said: 'Which are they?' He said: 'When a free woman [i.e. wife not concubine] comes near me she bores me, and when she is absent she afflicts me.[1] There is no way to my

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1 This sentence means that if a woman loves him and wants to be close to him and shows affection to him, she bores him and irritates him. If, on the contrary, a woman does not show him affection and

dirhams or my dinārs. If a moment of boredom comes over me, I would throw away my head if I had it in my hand.' She said: 'We have understood what you said, and comprehended what you mentioned. You have, thanks to God, characteristics that we would not wish for Satan's daughters. So go away, may God have mercy on you!'[1]

In this narrative, consisting of a dialogue, the man is famous, and the woman anonymous. Khālid initiates the dialogue and the woman is compliant; she asks the question he expects from her. Answering it, he shows off his superior position and arrogance. The woman's first reaction is one of subservience. The phrase 'We have understood what you said and comprehended what you mentioned' is a correct and polite answer uttered by a subordinate to her/his master, in a setting where polite rhetorical phrases are of utmost importance. After that, she encloses an entirely disapproving remark with pious expressions. Both the remark 'you have…characteristics that we would not wish for Satan's daughters', and the imperative 'go away', reveal a total disrespect, which contrasts with both the linguistic code she uses, her first compliant question and the pious expressions, and the social code, whereby he is a famous and rich man, and she a nameless woman. The woman's answer in this dialogue demonstrates a quite refined eloquence; she is able to tell Khālid off and reveal his arrogance, without breaking the code of politeness. Her eloquence is contrasted to Khālid's arrogance, and the whole event is focalized to her favour.

  The battle might be fought with words and gazes. In the anecdote below, a woman defends herself verbally against a man's intruding gaze. It deals with vision on a thematic level, about who has the right to define and focalize and the word wins over the gaze. A man is on his way to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, when he meets a woman on

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neglects him, her behaviour makes him want her to the point that he gets sick: personal communication with ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Turkmānī.
1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 14.

خطب خالدٌ بن صفوان آمرأةً فقال أنا جالد بن صفوان فالحسب على ما قد علمتيه وكثرة المال على ما قد بلغك وفيَّ خصال سأبيّتها لك فتقدمين عليّ أو تدعين, قالت وما هي, قال إنّ الحرّة إذا دنت منّى أمَلْتنى وإذا تباعدتْ عنى أعلَّتنى ولا سبيل الى درهمى ودينارى ويأتى علىّ ساعةٌ من الملال لو أنّ رأسى فى يدى نبدتُه, فقالت قد فهمنا مقالتك ووعَينا ما ذكرت, وفيك بحمد اللّه خصال لا نرضاها لبنات إبليس فآنصرفْ رحمك اللّه

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the way. The encounter turns into a verbal battle between the jāriya and the narrator together with a group of men, referred to as 'we'. The men attack the girl verbally and visually, but she is not short of an answer.

> Abū al-Ghuṣn, the Bedouin, said: I went out to perform the pilgrimage. When I passed Qubāʾ its inhabitants called to each other, they said: 'The shiny one! The shiny one!' I looked, and there was a girl [jāriya] with a face as if it were a shiny sword. When we threw our gazes on her, she dropped her veil over her face. We said: 'We are travellers and there is reward for us,[1] so let us enjoy your face!' She turned her heels, and I could discern the laugh on her face when she said: You were, when you sent your glance as a seeker / for your heart, [in such a way that] what you saw exhausted you / You saw something whose entirety you have not power over / and whose part you cannot withhold yourself from patiently[2]

When the men are looking at the girl in this narrative, they also try to take control by means of focalizing. They see a girl with a face as if it were a shining sword. The allusion to a weapon is symptomatic here; it turns out that it is her words that are her sword, not her face. Nevertheless, the girl first secures herself from the men's glances, as required by the rules of chastity, by covering her face with the veil. After that, she takes control of the situation by rejecting them with a poem and thus getting the last word. The battle consists of several moves: first, to glance is to try to control, but instead the object of the glances takes control. Secondly, the poet admits that the looking men would, if they wanted, be able to take control of a part of her, but – and this is important – not all. That which they would not be able to master

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1 I.e. they have made the ḥajj, so they should be recompensed.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 22.

أبو الغصن الأعرابيّ قال خرجت حاجًّا فلمّا مررت بقباء تداعى أهله وقالوا الصقيل الصقيل! فنظرت وإذا جارية كأنّ وجها

سيف صقيل فلمّا رميناها بالحدق ألقت البرقع على وجهها فقلنا إنّا سفر وفينا أجر فأمتعينا بوجهك فانصاعت وأنا أعرف

الضحك فى وجهها وهى تقول: وكنتَ متى أرسلتَ طرفك رائدا  /   لَقلبك يوما أتعبتْك المناظرُ

رأيتَ الذى لا كله أنتَ قادرٌ / عليه ولا عن بعضه أنتَ صابرُ

Thanks to Jordi Ferrer who helped me with this difficult poem.

gives her the power to keep up her pride, which is closely related to her eloquence.

In another anecdote, a Bedouin woman shows a command of both the Qur'ān and poetry by the Umayyad poet Jarīr, which she is able to use in order to rebuff admirers. They try to control her by means of their gazes, but her eloquence and wit embarrass them and make them speechless. Their eyes have nothing to set up against her tongue.

> A Bedouin woman passed a group of men from the Numayr clan, and they remained staring at her. She said: 'People from Numayr, by God, you have not adopted any of these two, neither God's saying "Tell the believing men to lower their gazes [*Qur'ān* 24:30]", nor Jarīr's poem: "Lower your eye, you are from banū Numayr / You are not worth as much as Ka'b nor Kilāb."'
> The people felt embarrassed by her words and bowed their heads in silence.[1]

The Bedouin woman gives the men an order, to lower their gazes. Yet her order is not a simple imperative, which can easily be circumvented. Her order is much more compelling – it consists of her superior command of the verbal situation, to which the men have to surrender. Thus, they feel shame and lower their gazes. Malti-Douglas comments the woman's compelling eloquence and its connection to her body:

> This nameless protagonist turns attention away from her body, both textually and literally, through her eloquence. To fight off the male gaze, she has recourse to two highly esteemed (one sacred) traditions, the *Qur'ān* and poetry. The religious and the secular are brought together by the woman to shame the gazers. Woman turns from observed and passive object to active subject. It is only her ability to

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1 Ibid., 85.

مرّت أعرابيّة بقوم من بنى نمير فأداموا النظر إليها فقالت: يا بنى نمير والله ما أخذتم بواحدة من اثنتين: لا بقول الله ﴿قُل للمُؤمنينَ يَغُضّوا من أبصارهم﴾ ولا بقول جرير :فغضّ الطرف إنك من نمير / فلا كعبًا بلفتَ ولا كلابا

فاستحيا القوم من كلامها رأطرقوا

seize discourse that has effected this drastic change in her anecdotal status.[1]

In the anecdote quoted below, the gazing man is wandering about when he catches sight of a beautiful girl and stares at her, but is immediately rebuffed by an old woman in the neighbourhood. She is followed by the girl herself, who in a poem seemingly defends and pities the man, though in effect she ridicules him.

> A man passed a Bedouin region and saw the most beautiful young girl. He stopped and looked at her. An old woman from the region said to him: 'What makes you excited about the Najdi gazelle, when you have no chance with her?' The girl said: 'Auntie, he is thinking like what Dhu Rumma said: Even if it is only a moment's short distraction / its shortness would be beneficial for me.'[2]

In this case the man is anonymous. He initiates the action, not by talking but by staring, but the perspective is the women's. They speak and make the reader perceive the man through their eloquent words and verse, and thus focalize the narrative.

The lawsuit is a suitable setting for the verbal battle. In the following anecdote, the wife gains victory over her husband by means of her eloquence and the logic of her argument. The lawsuit is about the custody of a son after a divorce. When the father justifies his reason for keeping the boy to the governor Ziyād, his former wife eloquently uses his argumentation to her own favour, and succeeds in convincing the judge.

> Umm 'Awf, Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī's woman, litigated against Abū al-Aswad at Ziyād's court about her son from

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1 Malti-Douglas, Woma*n's Body*, 44.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 22.

مرّ رجل بناحية البادية فإذا فتاة كأحسن ما تكون فوقف ينظر إليها فقالت له عجوز من ناحية: ما يقيمك على الغزال النجدى

ولا حظ لك فيه فقالت الجارية: يا عمّتاه يظنّ كما قال ذو الرمّة:

وإن لا يكن إلا تعلل ساعة  /  قليلا فإنّى نافع لى قليلها

him.[1] Abū al-Aswad said:' I have more right to the son
than she. I carried him before she did and brought him
forth before she did.' Umm 'Awf said: 'You brought him
forth in pleasure, I did under compulsion. You carried him
when he was light; I did when he was heavy.' Ziyād said:
'You tell the truth, you have more right to him.'
Accordingly he turned him over to her.[2]

The argumentation used by Abū al-Aswad is based on the belief that
the father carries the child first, as a sperm, and that he brings him forth
in ejaculation. Yet it is not enough for Ziyād, who is more convinced by
the empirical fact that the mother plays a more noticeable and painful
part in the birth of a child. Or, at least, this particular woman was able
to convince him by the wit of her words.

The verbal battle is not always antagonistic; in the anecdote below it
is rather a friendly and cheerful game. Al-Ḥakam ibn Ṣakhr goes for
pilgrimage and meets two women; he is the homodiegetic narrator of
the episode. He describes the women in eulogizing terms: 'I have never
seen anyone with a more beautiful face, or more quick-witted, nor with
more knowledge and education'.[3] After one of them invites him to
marry her, he initiates a poetic duel with her, which she easily wins.
The two women are called *jāriyatān* and they have the attributes
connected with the 'slave-girls', such as beauty, wit, education, etc. But
other signs indicate that these women are not slaves: they belong to a
tribe ('Uqayl), and one of them is married to a cousin. In fact, many of
the witty women in *Nisā'* seem to be free women, but in the texts they
are secluded by their anonymity.

Al-Ḥakam ibn Ṣakhr al-Thaqafī said: I went out to perform
the pilgrimage disguised. When I was on a road, two girls

1 Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī was a companion of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ziyād is Ziyād ibn Abīhi (d. 53/673) to
whom hostility towards Alīds is ascribed, and thus this lawsuit may also indicate a political motif.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 122.

خاصمت أُمّ عوف امرأةُ أبى الاسود الدؤلىّ أبا الأسود الى زياد فى ولدها منه, قال أبو الأسود: أنا أحقّ بالولد منها حملته قبل

أن تحمله ووضعته قبل أن تضعه فقالت أمّ عوف: وضعته شهوة ووضعتُه كرهاً وحملتَه خفّاً وحملتُه ثقلاً فقال زياد: صدقت

أنت أحقّ به فدفعه اليها

لم أر أحسن منهن وجوها ولا أظرف ألسنة ولا أكثر علما وأدب    3

from the 'Uqayl tribe came towards me. I had never seen anyone with a more beautiful face than theirs, or anyone more eloquent, more learned and with better manners. I shortened my day in their company and praised them with poetry.[1] A next-coming year, I made the pilgrimage with my family. I had been ill, and my hair dye had bleached because of it. When I came to that place I met one of them. She came in to me, and asked me a question as if she did not know me. I said: 'So-and-so!' She said: 'Could I but sacrifice my father and mother for you! You know me but I do not know you!' I said: 'I am al-Ḥakam ibn Ṣakhr.' She said: 'I saw you last year as a young, common man. This year I see you as a king and an old man, and, before that, a man did not know his friend!'[2] I said: 'What has your sister done?' She said: 'A cousin of hers married her, and he went out with her to Najd, following the poem: "When we have returned to Najd and its people / the returning to Najd is enough for me in this world."' I said: 'If I had reached her, I would have married her.' She said: 'What bars you from her sister in nobility, and equal in beauty?' She meant herself. I said: 'That which Kuthayyir said bars me: "If love arrives to put an end for us / we deny it and say: Al-Hājibiyya ('Azza) is first."' She said: 'Hence Kuthayyir separates us two; is it not he who said: "Is not a reunion with 'Azza a reunion with a pretty girl / whose reunion has a substitute in the reunion with any pretty girl?"' I remained silent, incapable of answering her.[3]

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1 فكسوتهما is commonly translated 'I gave them clothes to wear', but I have chosen the second meaning, to praise so in poetry.

2 She probably means that al-Ḥakam did not tell her his true identity the first time they met. According to the sources, this is a saying invented by this woman. In *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍdāḍ*, she said: 'And before that, a woman did not deny her fried.' وفى وقت دون ذلك ما تنكر المرأة صاحبها : ps.-Jāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍdāḍ*, ed. G. van Vloten (Leiden: Brill, 1898), 211. See also Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-amthāl*, vol. 2 (Cairo: 1978), 458-59.

3 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 28-29.

الحكم بن صخر الثقفيّ قال: خرجت حاجًا مختفيا فلمّا كنت ببعض الطريق أتتنى جاريتان من بنى عقيل لم أر أحسن منهما

وجوها ولا أظرف ألسنة وللأكثر علما وأدبا فقصّرت بهما يومى فكسوتهما ثم حججت من قابل ومعى اهلى وقد أصابتنى علة

فنصل لها خضابى فلمّا صرت إلى ذلك الموضع فإذا أنا بإحداهما فدخلت عليّ فسألت مسألة منكر فقلت: فلانة! قالت: فدى لك

The dialogue between al-Ḥakam and the girl appears not to have the prerequisites to be a true dialogue, a dialogue between equals. Al-Ḥakam is a king, the girl is anonymous. Yet, as he was disguised at their first meeting, they met on fairly equal terms. Even when she finds out his true identity, she does not lose her courage, and even proposes that he marry her. Their dialogue is on friendly, equal and joking terms; it is a playful competition in wit and poetic knowledge. As we see, the girl wins the competition – she outwits the king, and after having asked him to marry her she uses his argumentation in her own favour. Al-Hakam is the homodiegetic narrator of this narrative, and he gladly narrates about his own shortcomings, not without admiration for this witty woman.

Sometimes, their beauty gives the women licence to blaspheme, as in the following anecdote from the early Islamic period:

> Abū Ḥāzim al-Madanī said: When I was throwing stones[1] I saw an unveiled woman with the most beautiful face, throwing stones. I said: 'God's servant, do you not fear God! How can you unveil in this place and seduce the people!' She said: 'By God, old man, I am one of the women about whom the poet said: "One of those who do not make the pilgrimage seeking a reward in the world to come / but to kill the innocent and easily duped."' I said: Verily, I ask God not to punish this beautiful face with the fire![2]

---

أبى وأمى! تعرفنى وأنكرك؟ قلت: أنا الحكم بن صخر قالت: إنى رأيتك عاما أوّل شابّا سوقة وأراك العام ملكا شيخا وفى دون هذا ينكر المرء صاحبه قلت: ما فعلت أختك؟ قالت: تزوّجها ابن عمّ لها وخرج بها الى نجد فذلك حيث يقول:

إذا ما قفلنا نحو نجد وأهله / فحسبى من الدنيا قفول إلى نجد

فقلت: لو أدركتها لتزوّجتها فقالت: ما يمنعك من شقيقتها فى حسبها ونظيرتها فى جمالها؟ تعنى نفسها قلت: يمنعنى من ذلك ما قال كثيّر :إذا وصلتنا خلة كى تزيلنا / أبينا وقلنا الحاجبيّة أوّل

فقالت: فكثيّر بينى وبينك أليس هو القائل:هل وصل عزّة إلا وصل غانية / فى وصل غانية من وصلها خلف

فسكت عيّا عن جوابها

1 I.e. during the pilgrimage ritual in Minā.
2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 29.

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By quoting the poem, she pretends that she is not a true believer; she does not perform the pilgrimage for God's sake, but for seducing men. Moreover, she does not let the narrator define the situation. She has a better answer, and she chooses to quote a poem which insinuates that she not only seduces people, but she destroys them. The woman is accused of a minor shamelessness and she admits gladly to it, although according to her version, the shamelessness is even bigger. This motif recurs in 'Arīb's biography. In these cases, the woman refuses to be defined; she refuses the male focalization. She regains the definition of her acting, and her focalization, which makes it possible for her to maintain her pride.

## Women's desires and male virtues

In the normative narratives and sayings in the chapter on suitable husbands, men evaluate the possible future son-in-law. In numerous anecdotes, on the other hand, women are allowed to make the evaluation themselves. Several instances in *Nisā'* depict women's opinions about men, either as repulsive or attractive. When women make these evaluations, they are both speakers and focalizers in the narratives, which gives an impression of their active participation in society and that their opinions were taken into account and respected. However, we should not forget that this is a *literary* motif, whatever its connection is with the extratextual reality. Moreover, I suggest that this literary motif functions as a 'guardian' of the genders; just as (textual) men uphold the limits of the female gender, (textual) women uphold the limits of the male gender. This motif could also be a device for disparaging or praising a certain personality. A woman may give her judgment in connection with a proposal, as in the case of Khālid ibn Ṣafwān and the anonymous woman above.

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قال أبو حازم المدنيّ: بينا أنا أرمى الجمار رأيتُ امرأة سافرة من أحسن الناس وجها ترمى الجمار فقلت: يا أمة الله أما تتّقين الله تسفرين فى هذا الموضع فتفتنين الناس قالت أنا والله ياشيخ من اللواتي قال فيهنّ الشاعر:من اللاء لم يحججن يبغين حسنة / ولكن ليقتلن البرىء المغفّلا

قلت فإنّى أسأل الله ألا يُعذّب هذا الوجه بالنار

Some of the male virtues which are defined by women in narratives have to do with men's sexual potency and appearance. In the following anecdote, it is the lack of sexual potency that is rebuffed.

> A man married a Bedouin woman but he was impotent and this was said to her. She said: 'We have clefts in smooth stones; an impotent man has no luck with us!'[1]

The famous poet Imru' al-qays is thrown out by a woman who is disappointed at his lack of sexual endurance.

> Al-Haytham said: Imru' al-qays was detested by women. One day when he was with a woman, she said to him: 'Get up, you the best of young men, it is morning!' He did not rise up and thus she went on urging him. Finally, he rose up and found that it was still night. He returned to her and said: 'Why did you do that?' She said: 'Because you have a heavy chest and a light backside, and are quick in coming.'[2]

This topic is common in narratives about the earliest Muslims. The men are often three, or occasionally four, and may be suitors, but also, as in the narrative below, only looked upon by a woman. Mostly, when using this motif, three prominent men are compared, of whom the third is found to be the superior. The woman in the narrative below, as well as the location and occasion of her observation, is unknown, while the men are some of the most famous early Muslim heroes.

> A woman saw Ibn al-Zubayr, she said: 'Who is this one who looks like a snake licking his lips?' She saw 'Alī and said: 'Who is this one who looks like he has been broken

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1 Ibid., 101. تزوج رجل أعرابية فعجز عنها فقيل لها في ذلك فقالت: نحن لنا صدوع في صفاً ليس لعاجز فينا حظ.

2 Ibn Qutayba, Nisā', 97. قال الهيثم: كان امرؤ القيس مُفرّكاً فبينما هو يوما مع امرأة قالت له: قم يا خير الفتيان قد أصبحتَ. فلم يقم فكرّرت عليه فقام فوجد الليل بحاله فرجع اليها فقال لها: ما حملك على ما صنعت؟ قالت: حملني عليه أنك ثقيل الصدر خفيف العجز سريع الإراقة

and then set again?' She saw Ṭalḥa and said: 'Who is this one who looks like Herakleios' dinār?'[1]

Certainly, the woman in the narrative above is both the speaker and the focalizer. Still, her power is severely restricted in the historical context, as she is anonymous and the men are well-known. It is this position that gives her licence to speak frankly about these men, and grants her forgiveness.

In another anecdote, Umm Abān bint ʿUtba makes her choice of husband and compares her suitors, four of the most prominent men in the first Muslim community. Three of them were evaluated above: al-Zubayr ibn alʿAwwām, Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ṭalḥa ibn ʿUbaydallāh.[2] She makes her choice on the basis of the proposing men's characters, not their appearances.

> Abū Yaqzān said: ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb proposed to Umm Abān bint ʿUtba ibn Rabīʿa after her husband Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān died. She said: 'No, he would always enter frowning, and depart frowning. He locks his doors and is little generous.' Then al-Zubayr proposed to her, and she said: 'He would have one hand on my locks and one on the whip.' Then ʿAlī proposed to her, she said: 'Women do not gain from him, except that he spends some time between their arms and legs; they do not get anything else.' Then Ṭalḥa proposed to her, she responded and he married her. Later ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib came into her and said: 'You rejected the ones among us whom you rejected, and then you married the son of al-Ḥaḍramī's daughter!' She said: 'By fate and divine decree.' He said: 'Indeed,

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1 Ibid., 25.

رأت إمرأة الزبيرَ فقالت: من هذا الذى هو أرقم يتلمّظ؟ ورأت عليًا فقالت: من هو الـذى كأنه كسر ثم برّ؟ ورأت طلحة

فقالت: من هذا الذى كأنه دينار هرقمى؟

Herakleios (d. 641) was the Byzantine emperor who lost a great part of his empire to the Arabs. The denarius was golden and considered beautiful.

2 In this anecdote al-Zubayr is rejected for his alleged mistreatment of women; in Chapter 5, he will reappear treating his wife Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr badly (201).

you married the one of us who is most beautiful, most generous, and most liberal towards his family!'[1]

If a woman is needed as witness of the greatness of a certain man, she may even be allowed to look at a man's penis, as in the following anecdote from the pre-Islamic lore.

> Al-Madā'inī said: 'Anaza captured al-Ḥārith ibn Zālim. A woman among them passed by him and saw a penis with a black head. She said: 'Be careful with your captive, for he is a king and the friend of kings.' They said: 'How do you know that?' [She said:] 'I saw a glans that was black from women's *furūm* [pl.].' *Farm* [s.] is what women use to contract their vulva, made of *rāmik*[2] or raisin pits or something else.[3]

The fact that al-Ḥārith ibn Zālim obviously had extensive sexual experience added to his manliness and nobility; he simply had to be a king. In the following anecdote, the Prophet's companion Abu 'Ubayda wants to know why women dislike him, and asks his *jāriya*. She gives her judgment on his command.

> Abu 'Ubayda said to a *jāriya* he had: 'Tell me sincerely what women dislike about me.' She said: 'They dislike that when you are sweating, you smell like a dog.' He said:

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1  Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 17.

قال أبو اليقظان: خطب عمر بن الخطّاب أمّ أبان بنت عتبة بن ربيعة بعد أن مات عنها يزيد بن أبى سفيان فقالت: لا يدخل إلا عابسا ولايخرج إلا عابسا يغلق أبوابه ويقلّ خيره ثم خطبها الزبير فقالت: يد له على قرونى ويد له فى السوط وخطبها علىّ فقالت: ليس للنساء منه حظ إلا أن يقعد بين شعبهن الأربع لا يصبن منه غيره وخطبها طلحة فأجابت فتزوجها فدخل عليها علىّ بن أبى طالب فقال لها: رددت من ردّنا وتزوّجت ابن بنت الحضرميّ فقالت: القضاء والقدر فقال: أما إنك تزوّجت أجملنا مرآة وأجودما كفا وأكثرنا خيرا على أهله

2 Lane on *rāmik*: 'certain thing, black…that is mixed with musk': Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *rmk*.

3 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 96.

المدائنىّ قال: أسرت عنزة الحارث بن ظالم فمرّت به امرأة منهم فرأت كمرة سوداء فقالت: احتفظوا بأسيركم فإنه ملك وخدن ملك, قالوا: وكيف عرفت ذلك؟ (قالت) رأيت حشفة سوداء من فروم النساء. والفرم: ما تُضيّق المرأة به رحمها من رامك أو عجم زبيب أو غيره

You told me the truth. 'My family used to nurse me with milk from a dog.'[1]

As in the anonymous woman's judgment above of the three Muslim heroes, the truth-teller here is a marginalized woman. Possibly, this is due to the jāriya's condition as having a subservient position in society, and thus her words do not threaten its order.

  There are other male virtues that could be upheld by women, virtues that even restrict women's life spaces. In the following examples, the male virtues that have to be kept to are aggression, dominance, jealousy, and men's ability to control their women.  In the first example below, a mother instructs her daughter before marriage in her own words – no father is involved as initiator and commander, as in the example above (133). Here, the woman does not only give judgment on a man; she tests him actively and even aggressively.

> Abū al-Ḥasan: A woman said to her daughter before she was sent to her husband's house: 'Tear out the iron[2] of his lance. If he consents, then tear out the spearhead. If he consents, then break the bones [of a camel] with his sword. If he consents, cut the meat on his shield.[3] If he consents, put the donkey saddle on his back, for in that case, he is a donkey!'[4]

The good man, according to the mother's saying, is a warrior, and he should remain a warrior in marriage. When 'Ātika bint Zayd mourned her husband 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Bakr, she recited an elegy in which she

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1 Ibid., 97.

قال أبو عبيدة لجارية له: اصدقينى عمّا تكره النساء منّى. قالت: يكرهن منك (أنك) اذا عرقت فُحتَ بريح كلب. قال: أنت صدقتينى إن أهلى كانوا أرضعونى بلبن كلبة

2 زجّ is 'the iron which is fixed upon the lower extremity of a spear, and with which the spear is stuck into the ground': Lane, Lexicon s.v. *zjj*.
3 Slaughtering camels was men's job among the pre-Islamic Arabs. Slaughtering began with cutting the ankle joints with a sword. George Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1897), 89-90. The cutting of the meat on a shield probably degrades the shield's symbolic value of defence, warfare and manliness.

أبو الحسن: قالت امرأة لابنتها عند هدائها: اقلعى زجّ رمحه فإن أقرّ فاقلعى سنانه فإن أقرّ 4 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 77.

فاكسرى العظام بسيفه فإن أقرّ فاقطعى اللحم على ترسه فإن أقرّ فضعى الإكاف على ظهره فإنما هو حمار

praised his warrior qualities (see above, 135-36). In the narrative quoted here, the wife is exhorted to test whether he allows her to degrade his symbols of warfare and strength. Doing this, she is obviously allowed to behave aggressively. If he consents to her conduct, he is not a worthy man. Probably his greatest fault was that he was overcome by a woman, and that he could not control his wife. However, the man's behaviour and ability to control his wife's behaviour are considered as important for the man and the woman alike. Ultimately, they should both control each other.

Following this notion, a man who does not consider women's behaviour in terms of shame and honour is even worse than a woman who does not behave according to these rules. This is expressed in the following anecdote, where a girl's honour is connected with her gaze. The man who does not understand that a staring woman is a bad wife, as she does not restrict herself to the rules of her gender, is even worse than the staring woman, as his task is to watch over his wife's behaviour.

> A man proposed to Ibn 'Abbās about an orphan girl of his. Ibn 'Abbās said: 'She is not good enough for you.' He said: 'Why, when she is brought up in your care and protection?' He said: 'Because she stares and looks.' He said: 'So what?' Then Ibn 'Abbās said: 'Now you are not good enough for her!'[1]

This notion is elaborated upon in a poem attributed to the pre-Islamic poet al-Shanfarā, where the man urges his wife to see to it that he follows his manly duties, consisting of controlling her and censuring her if she has tried to resist his control.

> Al-Shanfarā said: If I come in the morning between the mountains of Qaww/ and Bayḍān al-Qurā when you are not on your guard against me/ either you pay me my right and guard/your [pl.] faithfulness or you are unfaithful / If

1 Ibid., 16.

خطب رجل الى ابن عبّاس يتيمة له فقال ابن عباس: لا أرضاها لك. قال: ولم وفى حجرك نشأت؟ قال لأنها تتشرّف وتنظر.

قال: وما هذا! فقال ابن عبّاس: الان لا أرضاك لها

> you have done something that I have forbidden you / and I
> do not censure you, then divorce me / because that day you
> will be the master [*ba'l*], so take / your whip – damned
> you[1] – and hit me.[2]

The power relationship between husband and wife is straightforward in
this poem: the husband should be the *ba'l*, master, a role which both of
them have an interest in preserving. He has the authority to hit in order
to discipline his wife. If the wife does something he does not like, and
that he has forbidden her to do, then he is the one who is to blame – he
has not performed his manly duties. Matrimony is an utterly
hierarchical relationship: one is the ba'l with the whip and one is the
whipped. The husband relies on his manly authority; if he gives his
wife too much space to act freely, he will lose that authority. Moreover,
both the man and the woman are active parties in preserving this power
relationship.

## Women's desires

Matrimony is not only a battlefield in *Nisā'* or a place to secure
normative hierarchies. It is also an institution where men and women
satisfy each other's sexual desires in accordance with the law.
Women's right to sexual satisfaction is acknowledged by men and
women alike. In anecdotes, the sexual act often represents the area
where men and women can meet as equals, where the woman's desire
is considered at least as important as the man's desire.[3] The sexual act

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1 Literally: May you not have a father!

2 Ibid., 79-80.

<div dir="rtl">

وقال الشنفرى:

إذا أصبحتُ بين جبال قوّ / وبيضان القرى لم تحذريني / وإمّا أن تؤدّيني وترعى / أمانتكم وإما أن تخوني

إذا ما جئت ما أنهاك عنه / ولم أنكر عليك فطلقيني / فأنت البعل يومئذ فقومي بسوطك لا أبالك فاضربيني

</div>

3 That women's erotic desires were considered as at least as important as men's desires has ample
examples in 'Abbāsid literature. Meisami quotes an anecdote in *Aghānī* about Bashshār ibn Burd,
whose erotic poetry was so popular among 'women and youths of Basra', that the caliph al-Mahdī
forbade him to mention women in his poems. His earned this popularity, according to the narrator Abū
'Ubayda, because he 'approaches women in such a way that what he says and what he means are
not hidden from them. And what chaste woman can hear Bashshār's words without her heart being
affected by them? To say nothing of flirtatious women, and girls who are only interested in men!': Julie
Scott Meisami, 'Arabic Mujūn Poetry: The Literary Dimension,' in *Verse and The Fair Sex*, ed.,
Frederick de Jong (Utrecht: M. Th. Houtsma Stichting, 1993), 20.

can be a means of reconciliation, as in the following anecdote, where the penis is the negotiator.

> A Bedouin had a woman who was constantly quarrelling with him. He had grown old and abstained from sexual intercourse. A man said to him: 'Will the two of you never reconcile?' He said: 'The one who could have reconciled us has died.' He meant his penis.[1]

The same idea is expressed in another anecdote, but this time spoken by the woman.

> Al-Aṣmaʿī said: A woman was angry at her husband, but then he jumped upon her and slept with her. She said: 'May God curse you! Each time something evil comes between us, you come to me with a negotiator whom I cannot resist!'[2]

Taking this view to its extreme, women are seen as mainly sexual beings, and the man's duty is to satisfy them. In the following poem, the man is likened to an animal trainer, and his wives are consequently animals that he has to tame.

> And Ayman ibn Khuraym said:
> I have found wonders from beautiful women /If only the virgins could have me in my youth! / Collecting[3] beautiful virgins / is a severe distress when a man has grown old

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 50.

كانت لبعض الأعراب امرأة لا تزال تشاره وقد كان أسن وامتنع من النكاح فقال له رجل: ما يصلح بينكم أبداً؟ فقال: لا إنه قد مات الذى كان يصلح بيننا (يعنى ذكره)

2 Ibid., 97.

قال الأصمعيّ: غاضبت امرأة زوجَها فجال عليها يجامعها فقالت: لعنك الله! كلما وقع بينى وبينك شرّ جئتنى بشفيع لا أقدر على ردّه!

3 جَمْع Form 3 of the verb is the common word for having sexual intercourse, and of course that is what is intended in this poem. However, it could also denote having several cowives, or concubines, cf. below, 191.

They are tamed by any trainer's stick / but every morning they become intractable /Why are they putting kohl on their eyes /and constantly renewing the hair dye / and showing themselves only for that which you know / Do not deny beautiful women covering [1] / When they are not subjected to sexual intercourse / as much as possible, they will become arrogant and angry / Sexual intercourse with women causes reproaches to die / while abstinence of sex revives the reproaches[2]

Of course, the man is the active subject in this poem, but the women are not entirely objects. They make efforts in order to get what they want, namely sex, without which they will become 'arrogant and angry'. At the same time, the women are likened to wild animals, which have to be tamed. The man is the tamer and his penis is his stick. His task is to tame the women, a task that is deemed to be unsuccessful, as it has to be constantly renewed.

**The evil actions of women**

The acting women are not always favourably described, as are the witty and eloquent women in the anecdotes above. In one of the few longer narratives with scenes in the first chapter, a woman serves as a negative example contrasted to the chapter's ideological object-position, a position she refuses – instead she frankly exposes her self-assurance. The setting is the man looking at a possible bride. In contrast to the anecdote about ʿĀʾisha looking at a woman on behalf of her husband Muḥammad (see above, 134), here it is the man who visits the woman. She is active while he is passive. Yet the last comment of the narrative

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1 ضِراب maṣdar of ضارب is used specifically for camels, according to Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *ḍrb*, which makes it in line with the other metaphors in this poem.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 102.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　وقال أيمن بن خريم:

لقيت من الغانيات العُجابا/ لو ادرك مني العذارى الشبابا/ولكنّ جمع العذارى الحسان　　　عناء شديد إذا المرء شابا

يرضن بكلّ عصا رائضٍ/ ويصبحن كلّ غداة صعابا/ علام يكحّلن حور العيون/ ويحدثن تعد الخضاب الخضابا

ويبرزن إلا لما تعلمون/ فلا تحرموا الغانيات الضراب/اذا لم يُخالطن كلّ الخلاط 　/أصبحن مخرنطمات غضابا

يُميت العتاب خلاطُ النساء/ ويحيى اجتنابُ الخِلاط العتاب

makes clear that this woman exemplifies a bad woman, who is not suitable as a wife.

> On the authority of Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā', he said: I proposed to a woman from the Asad [lion] tribe and came to look at her with a thin drapery between me and her. She called for a bowl full with soup topped with meat and ate it to the dregs. Then she brought a pitcher filled with milk or wine. She drank all of it and turned it up-side-down. Then she said: 'Girl, raise the curtain!' There she was sitting on a lion hide, and she was a beautiful young woman. She said: 'God's slave, I am a lioness from the lion clan, sitting on a lion hide. This is my place of eating and drinking. If you want to advance, do it.' I said: 'I will ask God for advice and think about it.' Then I walked away and never returned.[1]

Khālid is allowed to look at the woman he is to propose to, but only through a thin fabric, so that he might discern without seeing any details, thus following the rules of chastity. As homodiegetic narrator, he is the focalizer of the situation, and the woman is supposed to be the object of his gaze. However, she does not in any way try to transform herself into an object. While Khālid is sitting there looking at her, the lion woman acts in her own interest. She is not by any means trying to restrain her actions to please him. She satiates her hunger and thirst, without pretending modesty. Refusing to be an object, she takes control of the situation. She gives an order to raise the curtain and becomes visible. She addresses the visitor and presents herself in her own words, and in accordance with her own focalization: 'I am a lioness from the lion clan, sitting on a lion hide.' She even invites him to come and sit with her and calls him by his name, which demonstrates her reluctance to subordination. Yet according to the narrator's focalization, which is

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1 Ibid., 7-8.

وعن خالد الحذاء قال خطبت آمرأة من بنى أسد فجئت لأنظر إليها وبينى وبينها رواق يشفّ فدعت بجفنة مملوءة ثؤيدا مكللة بللحم فأتت على أخرها وأتت بإناء مملوء لبنا أو نبيذا فشربته حتى كفأته على وجهها ثم قالت ياجارية آرفعى السجف فإذا هى جالسة على جلد أسد وإذا شابة جميلة فقالت يا عبد الله أنا أسدة من بنى أسد على جلد أسد وهذا مطعمى ومشربى فإن أحببت أن تتقدّم فآفعل فقلت: أستخير الله وأنظر فخرجت ولم أعد

hinted at in the last sentence, the possible bride does not behave seemingly – she eats and drinks in a voracious way, she displays herself and speaks to the man in an unsuitable manner. The narrator's morals, on the other hand, are unblemished; he avoids an argument with the scandalous woman, and he simply leaves the scene with a pious comment.

While the lion woman's wickedness makes her unsuitable as a wife, other women's wickedness threatens the tribe and the whole society. The fifth statement in *Nisā'* is attributed to 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, a well-known transmitter of narratives from the first community, especially those attributed to 'Ā'isha, as he was her nephew. In this narrative, both the good woman and the bad woman act. However, the ideological framework of this narrative belongs to the misogynist sphere that will be discussed later, the woman as a lousy collar and crooked rib.

> On the authority of 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, he said: 'Nobody has raised himself higher, apart from by believing in God, as by a good wife, and nobody has lowered himself as much, apart from by unbelief in God, as by a bad wife.' Then he said: 'May God curse a woman who finds a clan to be white, and then turns them black and short.'[1]

According to this saying, women's negative strength is so effective that they may turn the men they associate with bad. However, this wisdom should probably be read literally, about biology and physiology rather than morals. It is followed and confirmed by a wisdom from the tribal tradition, here in the form of a poem. This poem only stresses women's wicked nature, not their ability to raise themselves.

> A poet from the Asad clan said:
> Water goes bad first of all by the badness of the soil
> a tribe goes bad first of all by bad women[2]

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1 Ibid., 2.

وعن عروة بن الزبير قال ما رفع أحد نفسه بعد الإيمان بالله بمثل منكح صدق ولا وضع نفسه بعد الكفر بالله بمثل منكح سوء. ثم قال لعن الله فلانة ألفت بني فلان بيضا طوالا فقلبتهم سودا قصارا

2 Ibid.

قال بعض شعراء بني أسد:  وأوّل خبث الماء خبث ترابها  /  وأوّل خبث القوم خبث المناكح

One near-related motif is the woman who gives rise to hostility between men. [1] In the most misogynous part of *Nisāʾ* women are always violating regulations, whenever they have the possibility, with sayings such as: 'It used to be said: A woman always disobeys if she is prohibited from doing something'. [2] In the following saying, women are connected with *fitna*, which might be translated as chaos, disorder, or civil war. [3]

> On the authority of Rajāʾ ibn Ḥaywa, he said: Muʿādh said: Verily, you have been afflicted by the fitna of hardship and you endured. Now I fear for your sake the fitna of prosperity. The most serious of it, according to me, are women. When they adorn themselves with gold and dress themselves in wraps from Damascus and garments from Yemen, they weary the wealthy and charge the poor with what they have not earned. [4]

According to this saying, the fitna of women is worse than the fitna of civil war, as women threaten the order of society in their desire of luxury.

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1 E.g. ibid., 109-10.

2 Ibid., 113.  وكان يقال: ما نُهيت امرأة قط عن شيء إلا أتته

3 Lane quotes the well-known ḥadīth: There is no فتنة more harmful to men than women, i.e. the desire for women awakened by their bodies, or by their evil nature: Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *ftn*. Fitna used as a notion for misogyny is explored by e.g. Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (New York: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1975), and El Saadawi, *Face of Eve*. The proposition that fitna could be interpreted in this way (i.e. as a notion of misogyny) is questioned by Meisami: 'Writing Medieval Women,' 66-67.

4 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 113-14.

عن رَجاء بن حيوة قال: قال معاذ: إنكم ابتُليتم بفتنة الضرّاء فصبرتم وإنى أخاف عليكم فتنة السرّاء وإن من أشدّ من ذلكم عندى النساء إذا تحلّين الذهب ولبسنَ رَيْطَ الشام وعَصْبَ ايمن فأتعبن الغنيّ وكلفن الفقير ما لا يَجد

The editor gives us a variant of this saying, derived from the Prophet, in which he says: 'I fear most for you women's fitna.' They said: 'How, God's Messenger?' He said: 'When they dress in wraps from Damascus, garments from Iraq and garments from Yemen, they will lean as camels' humps. If they do that they will commission the poor with what he has not. Take refuge with God from the evils of women! Be on your guard against even the best of them.'

أخوف ما أخاف عليكم فتنة النساء قالوا: كيف يا رسول الله؟ قال: اذا لبسن ريط الشام وحلل العراق وعصت اليمن وملن كما تميل أسنمة البخت فاذا فعلن ذلك كلفن المعسر ما ليس عنده استعيذوا بالله من شرّ النساء وكانوا من خيارهن على حذر

## Object-positions

In many narratives in *Nisā'*, women occur only as a name or a pronoun. They do not speak or act, but still they are the focus of the narrative. Among the object-positions offered to women in *Nisā'*, there are protective as well as misogynist motives. One of the minor themes that occur in various narratives is a man's moral duty to see to his women's interest, whether they are his daughters, his wife or other female dependants. A man is obliged to protect the women he is affiliated with, as a part of his gender role and possibly out of affection. In some narratives about this topic, the women are naturally objects, as the narratives are directed towards men. Their object positions in this aspect are ultimately 'good' for them, as the purpose is the protection of their well-being. Still, in this concept, men always know what is best for women, who do not have much to say. Ultimately, men do not only protect women, they also control them. In the second chapter, there are some narratives about Arab fathers who refuse to marry their daughters to unworthy husbands, such as non-Arabs. One example is the poem below, where a man turns down a suitor's proposal for his daughter:

> Say to them who seek to attain her softness[1] / Hunger will never make me reduce the value of Umm Kulthum / Death is better for her than a faulty husband / to whom a camel with big hump has carried her father.[2]

A faulty husband in this concept is a husband with an unknown or unrecognized genealogy, regardless of his other qualities. Possibly, Umm Kulthum agrees with her father that death is better for her than a husband with wrong ancestors, but it is of no importance here. Her marriage is ultimately her father's choice and decision. In the following

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1 رخصة here seems to be a word play, vocalized as *rakhṣa*, which is the editor's choice; according to Lane 'applied to a woman, it signifies soft, or tender, and delicate, or thin, in her external skin: and applied to a woman's fingers, soft, or tender, while vocalized as *rukhṣa*, it is connected to the verb in the second hemistich, and signifies 'permit': Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *rxṣ*. In the second hemistich, form 2 of the verb is used, signifying 'to grant' and 'give permission', while form 1 is more explicitly about price, 'it becomes cheap', and form 4, 'to make it cheap'. Notice the word for husband in the second line, ba'l, which also signifies 'master'.

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 12.

قل للذين سعوا يبغون رخصتها/ ما رخّص الجوع عندى أمّ كلثوم/ الموت خير لها من بعل منقصة/ ساقت اليه أباها جلة كوم

narrative, it is the husband who cares for his wife's future marriage after his own death.

> On the authority of Ibrāhīm, he said: [the dying] 'Alqama said to his wife: Put on your best adornment and sit here by my head. Hopefully God will bless you with one of the visitors to my sickbed.[1]

In this narrative, 'Alqama is a man who sees to his wife's interest, as one of his duties. It is he who decides that his wife should remarry after his death, and moreover, he can control the choice of future groom.

   Women might be objects of the levels of narration, focalization and story. Yet the object-position is variable, that is, in the network of the narrative the woman in question might be object and subject. The absolute object, on the other hand, is never a subject on any level. She is the one who is spoken about, looked at and acted upon, without any possibility to give her view or even to proceed in a single action. In the narratives on marriage negotiations, she is often only a pronominal suffix, or even absent. In a more elaborate narrative about a man who falls in love with his brother's wife, the absolute objectivity of the woman is hidden behind a sentimental tale of passion and brotherhood.[2] When the happily married man realizes that his brother is in love with his wife, he wants to divorce her and give her to him. The gesture of offering his wife to a brother is taken as the ultimate proof of self-sacrifice; the wife's standpoint is evidently not asked for. This narrative is positioned in the chapter on lovers, and it bears a resemblance to the tales of romantic love. Nevertheless, the romantic love includes two suffering subjects, which is not the case here.

**The secluded beauty and veiled ghoul**
Long before Western Orientalists' exploitation of harems and veils as eroticized symbols of the mystic other, the covered woman and the segregation aroused male imaginations and mystification. Deep inside the palace, behind lavish textiles, the most stunning beauty could be

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1 Ibid., 19.

عن إبراهيم قال: قال علقمة لامرأته: خُذي أَحسنَ زِينتك ثم اجلسى عند رأسى لعل الله أن يرزُقَك من بعض عُوّادى خَيرا

2 Ibid., 131-33.

hidden. The secluded beauty, secured behind layers of walls and textiles, is a common motif. The following anecdote has similarities with the anecdotes about the lion woman and the woman with the beauty spot. Nevertheless, while the observed lion woman took control of the situation, and ʿĀʾisha was the observer of the woman with the beauty spot, no woman has a subject-position in this anecdote, ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa is here the absolute object.

> On the authority of al-Shaʿbī: He said: I came into the mosque early and there was Muṣʿab ibn al-Zubayr[1] with people around him. When I wanted to go out again, he said to me: 'Come closer!' I came so close to him that I could put my hand on the pillow he leaned against, and he said: 'When I stand up, follow me!' He sat for a while, then he got up and betook himself to Mūsā ibn Ṭalḥa's house. I followed him. When he had walked into the house, he turned to me and said: Enter, and I entered [with him and he walked towards his room and I followed him.][2] There was a curtained vaulted alcove. He threw a cushion to me and I sat on it. Then he raised the curtain of the alcove and there was the most beautiful face I had ever seen. He said: Shaʿbī, do you know who this is? I said. Yes, this is the first lady among all women in the world, ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa. Then he said: This is Layla, whereupon he recited: I have been devoted to Layla since my moustache first appeared / until today, concealing an old feud and courting her / feeling a secret hatred towards people because of her / while much hatred is felt towards me because of her. Then he said: If you want, Shaʿbī, [then stand up]. I went out [and when it was evening, I went] to the mosque. There was Muṣʿab at his place, he said to me: Come closer! And I came closer. He said to me: Have you ever seen such a person before? I said: No. He said: Do you know why I let you in? I said: No. He said: So that you may

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1 Muṣʿab ibn Zubayr is the son of Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām, with whom we became acquainted earlier in this chapter. Musʿab is known for his beauty, see above, 106. His wife, ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa, is the daughter of Ṭalḥa ibn ʿUbaydallāh, whom we have also met. Besides, she is the niece of ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr.
2 The text between the square brackets is supplemented by the editor of Ibn Qutayba's text, derived from the version in *Aghānī*, vol. 2:379

speak about what you have seen. Then ['Abdallāh ibn] Abī
Farwa turned towards me, and said: Give him ten thousand
dirham and thirty garments. Nobody departed that day as I
did: with ten thousand [dirham], with a bundle of clothes like
that of a laundry-man, and having seen ʿĀʾisha.[1]

In the narrative above, Muṣʿab is the absolute authority; his words have
to be obeyed, which is also evident from the typical formula, an
imperative followed by the same verb in imperfect: 'Come closer! And
I came closer' (see below, 223-25). Muṣʿab commands Shaʿbī to follow
him; Shaʿbī has to obey him, but the command gives him certain
benefits. He is chosen in that he is put in a very special position, to see
ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa, and then to convey her beauty to the world, and thus
use his subject-position in the service of Muṣʿab ibn al-Zubayr. ʿĀʾisha
bint Ṭalḥa is the absolute object in this narrative in that she has no
power at all. She is a beautiful face, which enhances her husband's
pride and honour, but she is not even capable of assisting him in this
issue herself – the situation needs a mediator randomly chosen from the
visitors at the mosque. In a wider perspective, she surely gains from
making her beauty public, but that is an extra-textual feature; in the
narrative she is an absolute object.

   Whereas the dazzling beauties are reserved for the mightiest men, the
common man may not know what to find when he lifts the veil from his
new bride's face. As an antithesis of the secluded beauty, the wretched
woman behind the veil breaks men's expectations of a pleasant
wedding night in several poems in the chapter on ugliness. In one

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 21-22.

عن الشعبيّ قال: دخلت المسجد باكرا وإذا بمصعب بن الزبير والناس حوله فلما أردت الانصراف قال لى: ادن فدنوت منه
حتى وضعت يدى على مرفقته فقال: إذا قمت فاتبعنى وجلس قليلا ثم نهض فتوجّه نحو دار موسى ابن طلحة فتتبّعته فلما
أمعن فى الدار التفت إليّ وقال: ادخل فدخلت [معه ومضى نحو حجرته وتبعته فالتفت الى فقال: ادخل فدخلت معه] فإذا حجلة
فطرحت لى وسادة فجلست عليها ورفع سجف القبّة فإذا أجمل وجه رأيته قط فقال: ياشعبيّ هل تعرف هذه؟ قلت نعم هذه سيّدة
نساء العالمين عائشة بنت طلحة فقال هذه ليلى ثم تمثّل:وما زلت من ليلى لدن طرّ شاربى  /  الى اليوم أخفى إحنة وأداجن
وأحمل فى ليلى لقوم ضغينة  /  وتُحمل فى ليلى علىّ الضغائن / ثم قال: إذا شئت يا شعبيّ [قم] فخرجت [قلما كانت العشى
رحت] الى المسجد فإذا مصعب بمكانه فقال لى: ادن فدنوت فقال لى: هل رأيت مثل ذلك إنسان [قط]؟ قلت: لا قال: أتدرى لم
أدخلناك؟ قلت: لا قال: لتحدّث بما رأيت ثم التفت الى [عبد الله بن] أبى فروة فقال: أعطه عشرة الاف درهم وثلاثين ثوبا فما
انصرف يومئذ أحد بمثل ما انصرت به: بعشرة الاف [درهم] وبمثل كارة القصّار ونظرى الى عائشة

narrative a man gets disappointed at his wedding night and only wants to leave, but is forced to stay with the ugly bride for seven days, which makes him recite a scornful poem.[1] In the worst scenario, a Bedouin believes a woman to be beautiful, but when she unveils she turns out to be a ghoul.[2] A poet curses the face veil as it prevents the man from distinguishing the beautiful woman from the ugly.[3] The old woman is equated with the ugly in other anecdotes in which men are fooled into marriage. In the anecdote below, the man takes the right to severely scorn the woman, as if she is to blame for the trick upon him.

> Al-Asmaʿī said: A man married a woman in Medina after they had said to him: She is really a fresh young woman, she is this and that. Instead, they fooled upon him an old woman. When he came in to her, he took off his sandal, and they thought he would beat her. But he hung them upon her neck as a necklace, and said: 'At your service, God, at your service! Here is a sacrificial animal!'[4] Then they calmed him down and ransomed him.[5]

**The lousy leather collar and the crooked rib**

There is a sheer misogynist vein in *Nisāʾ*, most obvious in Chapter 13, about supervision of women and social interaction with them. The chapter is introduced by a ḥadīth attributed to the prophet Muḥammad, where he provides the Old Testament narrative about the creation of woman with a moral dimension. This ḥadīth is evidently influenced by the Jewish and Christian tradition, as the rib is not mentioned in the Qurʾān.

> ʿĪsā ibn Yūnus said: One of our old men related to us, he said: I heard Samura ibn Jundab saying on Baṣra's pulpit:

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1 Ibid., 32-33.
2 Ibid., 34.
3 Ibid., 38.
4 According to the editor, it was the custom to hang sandals or the like around the neck of a camel, cow or bull which was brought to Mecca to be sacrificed.
5 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 47.

الأصمعيّ قال: تزوّج رجل امرأة بالمدينة فقالوا له: إنها شابّة طريّة من أمرها ومن أمرها ويدلسون له عجوزا فلما دخل بها

نزع نعليه وهم يظنّون أنه يضربها فقلدها إياهما وقال: لبّيك اللهم لبّيك هذه بدنة فأسكتوه وافتدوا منه

God's Messenger, GBGS, said: The woman was created from a crooked rib. If you take pains in straightening her out, you will break her so be gentle with her so that you will have a pleasant life with her.[1]

The theme set by the ḥadīth is elaborated in the chapter and verified by various sources, the woman is defective, and the man should not hope for her recovery. If he tries to straighten her, she will break; therefore the only thing he can do is to accept her with her defects. Immediately after this opening ḥadīth there is a poem about a woman as a crooked rib, but who still has a strange power over the young man. The title of the chapter promises advice on how to treat women, and the power relationship is taken for granted; men are the supervisors or managers of women. The crooked rib is connected with the metaphor for the worst woman mentioned above; she is a lousy leather collar. In the saying below attributed to Wahb ibn Munabbih, the fact that women do not have the same rights and obligations as men have according to the Qur'ān is actually a punishment from God.

On the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, he said: God punished the woman with four characteristics: difficult labour, menstruation, impurity in her womb and her pudendum. In addition, he made two women's inheritance equal with one man, and two women's testimony equal with one man. He made her less intelligent and religious, as she does not pray the days of her menstruation. You do not greet women by saying: *salām ʿalaykum*. Friday prayer and community are no obligations for them. There has been no prophet among them and they do not travel without a guardian.[2]

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1 Ibid., 77.     عيسى بن يونس قال حدثنا شيخ لنا قال: سمعت سمرة بن جندب يقول على منبر البصرة: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إنما المرأة خلقت من ضلع عوجاء فإن تحرص على إقامتها تكسرها فدارها تعش بها

2 Ibid., 113.     عن وهب بن مُنَبِّه قال: عاقب الله المرأة بعشر خصال: شِدّة النفاس وبالحيض وبالنجاسة فى بطنها وفرجها وجعل ميراث امرأتين ميراث رجل واحد وشهادة امرأتين كشهادة رجل وجعلها ناقصة العقل والدين لا تصلى أيّام حيضها ولا يُسلَّم على النساء وليس عليهنّ جمعة ولا جماعة ولا يكون منهنّ نبيّ ولا يُسافر إلا بولىّ

Woman is punished by God in accordance with the Biblical narration of the Fall and her menstrual blood is impure, also stated in the Old Testament. In fact, the idea expressed here is curious in a Muslim context, as according to the Qur'ān it was the man and the woman together who occasioned the Fall.[1] Yet the Islamic tradition adopted the Jewish and Christian alternative and condemns Eve exclusively.[2] The allegation of being less religious is proved by the fact that women are not allowed to pray when they have menstruation, but the allegation of less intelligence remains unproved, as if the narrator finds it obvious. This claim has a parallel in the Christian tradition, where many scholars have found its verification in Aristotle's theory about women's and men's different contributions to procreation; men provide the form and women the matter.[3]

According to several sayings, women's weakness is the ground for the need to seclude them.

> On the authority of al-Ḥasan, he said: 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may God be pleased with him, said: Women are *'awra*, so seclude her in the houses, and treat their weakness with silence.[4]

The word *'awra* signifies the parts of the body deemed indecent to expose. Firstly, it is the genitals. Moreover, for a woman, according to medieval religious scholars, it is everything except the face, feet, and hands, with some variations.[5] The major part of a woman's body is thus 'awra. In the saying above, 'awra is juxtaposed with weakness, and seclusion is a consequence of 'awra, while silence is a consequence of women's weakness, both make up a complete isolation from the world. Here it is the men who seclude women, they do not seclude themselves. Women's 'awra is a corporeal defect that is at the same time moral.

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1 Qur'ān 2:35-36, 7:19-24, 20:116-123.

2 Abbott, *Papyri* 1, 41.

3 See Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 28.

4 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 78.

عن الحسن قال: قال عمر بن الخطّاب رضى الله عنه: النساء عورة فاستروها بالبيوت وداووا ضعفهن بالسكوت

5 Lane quotes Ṭabarī: عورة is, in a free woman 'all the person, except for the face and the hands as far as the wrists; and respecting the hollow of the sole of the foot, there is a difference of opinion'. Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *'wr*.

This moral defect is elaborated in other sayings, such as the following attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa':

> And Ibn al-Muqaffa' said: Beware of consulting with women, because their opinion is foolish and their will is feeble. Restrict them from looking by the means of imposing seclusion on them. A strict seclusion is better for you than doubt. Yet their going out is not worse than the coming in of someone whom you do not trust in regard to them. If possible, you should not let them know anything about your affairs.[1] Do not let a woman deal with anything that is beyond her comprehension; that is easier for her condition, simpler for her mind and kinder to her beauty. The woman is an aromatic plant and not a household manager. Do not bother her with her honour, and do not let her plead to you in favour of someone. Do not spend too long time alone with women, or otherwise they will get bored with you and you with them. Preserve something of yourself, because it is better that you abstain from them when they desire you strongly, than that they pounce upon you and break you. Beware of jealousy when it is not relevant, because that would make the sound woman among them sick.[2]

The moral and corporal defect of 'awra is here combined with an intellectual defect. The following saying by 'Umar elaborates this treatment of women, a treatment built on strict seclusion and uncompromising hierarchy.

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1 يُعرفن عليك *'arafa 'alā* is, according to Lane, to be an *'arīf* over s.o./people, denoting to know one's companions, or even manage their affairs: Ibid., s.v. *'rf.*

2 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 78-79. ‫وقال ابن المقفع: إيّاك ومشاورة النساء فإنّ رأيهنّ الى أفن وعزمهنّ الى وهن واكفف‬
‫عليهن من أبصارهن بحجابك إياهن فإن شدة الحجاب خير لك من الارتياب وليس خروجهن بأشد من دخول من لا تثق به‬
‫عليهن فإن استطعت ألا يعرفن عليك فافعل ولا تملكن امرأتكم الأمر ما جاوز نفسها فإن ذلك أنعم لحالها وأرخى لبالها وأدوم‬
‫لجمالها وانما المرأة ريحانة وليست بقهرمانة فلا تعدُ بكرامتها نفسها ولا تعطها أن تشفع عندك لغيرها ولا تطل الخلوة مع‬
‫النساء فيمللنك وتمللهن واستبق من نفسك بقية فإن إمساكك عنهن وهن يردنك باقتدار خير من أن يهجمن عليك على انكسار‬
‫وإياك والتغاير فى غير موضع غيرة فإن ذلك يدعو الصحيحة منهن الى السقم‬

In another ḥadīth by 'Umar: Do not let your women stay in the upper rooms; and do not teach them the Book. Take help from nakedness against them. Say 'no' to them frequently, as a 'yes' would urge them to continue asking.[1]

The reason why women should not dwell in an upper room is that this room had some kind of window, from which they could peep at the outside world. This method is further explained in the following saying:

Al-Aṣmaʿī said: It was said to 'Aqīl ibn 'Ullafa, who was a jealous man: 'Whom do you leave behind to take care of your family?' He said: 'The two guardians, nakedness and hunger.' That is, he made them starve so that they did not just talk and behave in a free and easy manner, and let them be unclothed so that they did not rejoice overmuch.[2]

The kind of respect demanded from wives is explained in a poem by the Umayyad poet Kuthayyir, in which the speaker is the successful husband, who has managed to discipline his wives.

And al-Kuthayyir said:
When I came, they magnified my sitting-place / and showed reverence towards me, no displeased expressions
They were cautious against my jealousy, which they had known / before, thus they did not laugh, only smile
You see them only glancing/ from the outer angle of their eyes or turning over their wrists / silent, speaking only to answer / repeating what is said after having been made to understand / When they said something that gladdened him he concealed the joy and sought protection[3]

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1 Ibid., 78.    وفى حديث آخر لعمر: لا تسكنوا نساءكم الغرف ولا تعلموهن الكتاب واستعينوا عليهم بالعرى وأكثروا لهن من قول لا فإن نعم تغريهم على المسألة

2 Ibid.    قال الأصمعى: قيل لعقيل بن علفة وكان غيورا: من خلفت فى أهلك؟ فقال: الحافظين العرى والجوع. يعنى أنه يجيعهن فلا يمزحن ويعريهن فلا يمرحن

3 Ibid.

In this poem, the wives' fear of their husband is a token of his manliness. The wives are to respect their husband, a respect shown by non-talking, non-looking and non-laughing.

### Romantic love and unhierarchical relationships

*Nisā'* includes some longer tales about tragic and romantic love. The tales about romantic love are interesting from a power perspective. The necessary ingredient in romantic love is the tragic end – either both partners die, or only one of them does. To become a 'true' romantic love, both partners have to be equally in love; otherwise it will become a mere male fantasy about a female image, which is the dominant tendency in love poetry. In the chapter on lovers, there are some true romantic love stories. The wretched lovers of the chapter specifically devoted to them have one thing in common: they are all Bedouins in an Arab setting, apparently during the Umayyad era. Notably, both the woman and the man are subjects of their love story; they are equally acting, loving and suffering. In addition, in these Arab tales in a Bedouin setting, they are equally well-versed poets. In the tale from the road which is recapitulated above (116-17), the man dies first, and the woman dies on his grave.[1] In another tale the narrator is searching for his camel, when he sees a group of Bedouins, trying to prevent a young man and a young woman from running into each other's arms.[2] They cannot stop them; the young couple run away together, they fall in each other's arms and die. Before that, they have both declaimed poems about their love. The mountain is the scene for another tragic love story.[3] A young woman and a young man are in love, but the men in the woman's family intend to kill the boy. The girl comes to warn him together with a friend, but he believes that it is his enemies and shoots an arrow in the heart of his beloved. When he realizes what he has done, he kills himself. There are some variations of this tragic motif in

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قال كثير: وكنت اذا ما جئت أجللن مجلسى / وأبدين منى هيبة لا تجهما / يحاذرنا منى غيرة قد علمنها / قديما فما يضحكن
إلا تبسما / تراهن إلا أن يؤدين نظرة / بمؤخر عين أو يقلبن معصما / كواظم لا ينطقن إلا محورة / رجيعة قول بعد أن
تتفهما / وكن اذا ما قلن ضيئا يسره / أسر الرضا فى مفسه وتحرما

1 Ibid., 128-30.
2 Ibid., 130-31.
3 Ibid., 133-34.

other instances in the book. In the chapter on beauty, the narrator is also searching for his camel, when he meets a beautiful young Bedouin woman.1 She turns out to be wise, witty and eloquent, and he asks her to marry him. She answers with a poem about her late husband, whom she has promised to be true to until she dies, just as he had promised to be true to her.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various positions offered to women in *Nisā'*, picturing a multifaceted and often paradoxical literature. The paradoxical nature of this literature is somewhat faded in a study which, as in the analyses above, identifies similar narratives and groups them under a common heading. Yet the close readings show that the positions within individual narratives are not always static. The basic divisions here are between subject, ideological object and object. A comparison between them reveals that they are sometimes closely connected with a specific genre. Object is a position that might occur in any narrative, whatever the genre; it does not have any further implications. The absolute object, however, is closely linked to the misogynist genre, which would be interesting to study, but which is beyond the scope of this thesis. This genre is here represented by sayings influenced by Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and also Arab traditions.

The result from the textual readings above that probably will be most productive for further analyses is the clear difference between the narratives in which the discourse itself is the most important event and the narratives in which the woman is the ideological object, as described above. This difference is partly due to literary genres; while the first tends to be an anecdote about eloquent women, the second is mostly a normative saying, a ḥadīth or a proverb. Yet there are further differences between the narrative roles and positions given to women in these two kinds of texts, and, above all, in their view of hierarchy. The first type, exemplified by the verbal battle, has a pragmatic view of hierarchy and power. In it, the verbal act is more commanding, indeed more valued than the material act. The use of trickery is somewhat similar to this notion of the verbal act. Successful trickery is

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1 Ibid., 31.

appreciated, and is accepted as a way of changing a situation. There is certainly a hierarchy, but it might be overturned by the one who is in command of the discourse. This person, in our examples, is a woman. In some narratives she has a clearly subordinated role; she is anonymous while the man is well-known. Yet this does not prevent her from addressing him in an assertive manner. Even if he is the one who initiates the dialogue with his words or with his gaze, she may be the one who defines it as a battle, which she knows she will win. She does not only defend herself, she challenges too. It seems as if her first subordinated role increases her ultimate success. 'The anecdotal woman' is an eloquent and acting woman who has power over the discourse, and uses her subject-position to show off this power.[1] Her pride is her own verbal ability, which leads her to her success, not her body or her sexuality. The second type, on the other hand, has a static view of hierarchy; hierarchy is constructed by gender, piety, and lineage. A woman has her given place in this hierarchy; she cannot climb unless she is a slave, although she can certainly fall. In order that her status does not decrease, she has to accept her position in the hierarchy, accept the authority of the ones higher up, her husband, father, or other guardian, and fulfil the role society has offered her. Moreover, she has to accept it willingly and even happily.

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1 See Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body*, 29-53.

# Chapter 5: 'Ā'isha and her pious sisters

'Ā'isha is one of the most influential women in the history of Islam in her role as transmitter of ḥadīths and a pious example for women. Accordingly, her biography depicts a quite powerful woman, a woman who is aware of her unique position, and who is confident about her role as authority of the early history of the umma and narrator of her husband's sunna. Several instances in her biography display her revered position among the members of the umma. Narratologically, this is above all reflected by the fact that she is often the speaking subject, both as the narrator on the diegetic level, and as speaker on the hypodiegetic level. In the story, however, she is not only the acting subject; she is also often the object who is acted upon. There seems to be a rudimentary pattern for the occurrence of these contrasting positions, which will be mentioned below. 'Ā'isha is sometimes a subject in her interactions with Muḥammad, as well as in her later contacts with the umma. She has an especially strong subject-position in reports about her piety; she is asked and listened to and her judgment is respected. The main ground for her authority, however, seems in these narratives not to be her knowledge of Muḥammad's performance of religious duties, but rather her position as his beloved; she is 'the beloved of God's beloved' (see 1:33, 38, 50-51, and 109). Likewise, when she herself enumerates the grounds for her elevated position, her own deeds are not recounted; it is a result of the actions of other people (as well as supernatural beings). Among the ten reasons for her favourable position that she specifies in khabar 29, one is the fact that she was a virgin when she married, one is her parents' standing, two are God's and the angel Jibrīl's plans for her, and the rest are due to Muḥammad's emotions and intimacy with her.

This chapter will analyse 'Ā'isha's textual possibilities in particular, and the biographies of women in *Ṭabaqāt* in general. In order to understand specific features in 'Ā'isha's biography, a more general investigation will be made of how these features are carried out in the other biographies. Certainly, the biography of 'Ā'isha belongs to a context; it is connected with the other biographies in the work both thematically and formally. For that reason, I found it more useful not to analyse it isolated, but to consider it in view of some specific themes and forms in the women's section of *Ṭabaqāt*.

## Subjects of narration

The majority of reports in the biographies of women in *Ṭabaqāt* (as well as all other compilations of akhbār) are narrated by male transmitters. Yet, compared with other works, there is a relatively high portion of female narrators. This kind of akhbār about the first community of Muslims probably has the highest number of female narrators in classical Arabic literature. These female narrators, however, predominately occur at the earliest stages of the transmission, that is, close to the age of the Prophet.

In ʿĀʾisha's case, she is not only the narrator in many instances – she narrates about her own life. According to Genette, the homodiegetic narrator is either the main character in the story, or a secondary character who is more like an observer or witness.[1] When the narrator is the main character, the narration is autodiegetic. Autodiegetic narrations in biographies such as those in *Ṭabaqāt* could be labelled autobiographical, at least when the narrator is the hero of the story.[2] ʿĀʾisha is the first narrator or authority of forty-three reports in her biography, almost one third, which is far more than other women's biographies in *Ṭabaqāt* This gives the impression that the textual ʿĀʾisha controls her own life-story as narrator, which does not automatically mean that she had control over it in reality, outside diegesis, where later scholars have attributed words to her and produced akhbār about her.[3] The switch of perspective from homodiegetic to heterodiegetic in several narratives might indicate that the use of ʿĀʾisha's voice is an authoritative device. As an example, 1:16 begins with ʿĀʾisha's narration in first person and then continues with a heterodiegetic narration in which ʿĀʾisha is narrated about (see above, 78). Nevertheless, her frequent voice and authority show that similar roles were deemed as at least *possible* for women; their words could be worth listening to.

ʿĀʾisha is the authority and first narrator of almost all narratives about her childhood with the Prophet. Besides, there are other female narrators inscribed in the isnāds on different levels in her biography. Except for the female witness narrators (see above, 85-86), there are a few female narrators, such as ʿAmra bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who narrates about ʿĀʾisha's wedding story (1:2), and her hijra story (1:26), Umm Dharra who relates about

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1 Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 245.
2 See Hilary Kilpatrick, 'Autobiography and Classical Arabic Literature', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 22, no. 1 (1991), 4, and Elias who has studied autobiographical material in ḥadiths narrated by ʿĀʾisha, mainly from Ibn Ḥanbal, but also Ibn Saʿd: Elias, 'The Ḥadīth Traditions of ʿĀʾisha as Prototypes of Self-Narrative'.
3 See Spellberg, *Politics,* 12ff.

'Ā'isha's generosity (1:49), as well as 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa (1:88-89) and Fāṭima al-Khuzā'īya (1:137). However, although these female names indicate that the role as narrator is possible for women, the isnāds suggest that this role is strictly limited. Except for 'Ā'isha, who transmits from her husband, women never transmit from a man, only from 'Ā'isha herself (twenty women) or from another woman contemporary with 'Ā'isha or from the next generation (four women). On the other hand, there are a number of women in the women's section of *Ṭabaqāt* who do narrate from men, but then almost exclusively from the prophet Muḥammad, or occasionally from his foremost male companions, whom they might be related to. Thus 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's daughter Fāṭima narrates from her father,[1] and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's daughter-in-law Ṣafiyya relates from him.[2] Women who narrate from Muḥammad meet with him in formal or informal gatherings, where they ask him questions directly. Women who narrate from, for example, the caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar often run into them by chance or listen to their public speeches. Among these women are Zaynab who is addressed by the caliph Abū Bakr when she is on pilgrimage, 'Amra bint al-Ṭabīkh who runs into 'Alī when she is at the market and Mayya who listens to the caliph 'Umar's public speech in Basra.[3] However, there are a few occasions when a woman intentionally addresses a male companion, such as when Musayka is sent to the caliph 'Uthmān to ask if it is permitted for a pregnant woman in the state of *'idda* to visit her family and give birth there.[4]

As to the other wives of the Prophet, Umm Salama's biography has the largest amount of autodiegetic narratives after 'Āisha. She is the authority of eight of thirty-two akhbār, most of them about the Prophet's proposal to her.[5] In Umm Salama's biography we find one of the rare occasions with a woman in the isnād relating from a man, Zaynab bint Ḥanzala who relates from Muḥammad ibn 'Alī.[6] The other wives have few autodiegetic narratives, if any. Ḥafsa, who is not only a wife of the Prophet, but also the daughter of the

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1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 341-42.
2 Ibid., 347.
3 For Zaynab and Mayya, see ibid., 345 for 'Amra, see ibid., 358.
4 Ibid., 345-46. *'Idda* is a woman's waiting period after the death or divorce of her husband, when she is not allowed to marry another man, in order to secure the paternity of an eventual child. 'Uthmān answers Musayka that the pregnant woman should immediately be sent home. It is thus, according to this report, not permitted to women in a state of 'idda to leave their houses in any case. The interesting point here is that Musayka emphasizes that she did not have to seclude herself from 'Uthmān, and could thus ask him directly, indicating that this was an unusual incident at least at the time of the narration.
5 Her biography consists of thirty-two reports and twelve of them are narrated by women, among them 'Ā'isha.
6 Ibid, 64.

caliph 'Umar, is not the narrator of any of the twenty-six akhbār in her biography.[1] Umm Ḥabība, sister of the caliph Mu'āwiya and another of the Prophet's wives, is the narrator of one khabar in her biography, which consists of fourteen akhbār.[2] Umm Ḥabība herself is the narrator of a long khabar about her dreams foreseeing the Prophet's marriage to her.[3] The Prophet's wife and cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh has a relatively long biography, fifty-five akhbār, of which she is the narrator of four.[4] Juwayriya is the narrator of two of the nineteen akhbār in her biography.[5] The captive wife Safiyya is dedicated thirty-six akhbār, and she is the narrator of one of them.[6] The wife Maymūna is the authority of six of the fifty-three akhbār in her biography.[7]

As for the remaining women, the biography of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima is the longest with fifty-nine akhbār, none of which is related by Fāṭima[8] Ā'isha's sister Asmā', who helped Muḥammad when he escaped from Mecca and later married the prominent companion Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām,[9] is the narrator of six of the twenty-nine reports in her biography.[10]

In conclusion, the number of narrating women in Ṭabaqāt is not overwhelming, despite the fact that it is probably one of the medieval Arabic works with the most female narrators. Taking into consideration that the isnāds consist of at least three narrators, the male dominance is considerable. Women's narrations about the pioneer society are deemed worthy of hearing, because they transmit original testimonies from the early history of Islam, whereas women are almost totally excluded from the later scholarly environments in Medina and Iraq. The prominent legal and social significance of these narratives has ensured that the names of these women are remembered, and established narration as a suitable activity for women.[11]

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1 Ibid., 56-60. 'Ā'isha narrates one report, and an anonymous woman two: ibid, 59-60.
2 Ibid, 68-71. Four of them are narrated by women, among them 'Ā'isha who narrates about the reconciliation between Umm Ḥabība and 'Ā'isha on Umm Ḥabība's death-bed: ibid., 71.
3 Ibid., 68-69.
4 Ibid., 71-72. Further seven have at least one female narrator, among them 'Ā'isha.
5 Ibid., 83-85. 'Ā'isha narrates one of them (83).
6 Ibid., 85-92, Ṣafiyya on p. 87. In further four, women are narrators, among them 'Ā'isha on p. 90.
7 Ibid., 94-100. Further two are narrated by women.
8 Ibid., 11-20. Four are narrated by 'Ā'isha and two by other women.
9 For some aspects of their marriage, see below 201.
10 Ibn Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, vol. 8, 182-86. Further five are narrated by Fāṭima bint al-Mundhir, who is also transmitter of Asmā's narrations.
11 Cf. Ahmed, Women, 73: 'To accept women's testimony on the words and deeds of the prophet was to accept their authority on matters intended to have a prescriptive, regulatory relation to mores and laws.'

## Objects of marriage, subjects of pious endeavours for Islam

Most of the entries in *Ṭabaqāt* begin with an introduction, where some key-events in the life of the woman are noted, such as her genealogy, marriages, children, conversion to Islam, as well as for example her hijra and allegiance with the prophet Muḥammad. However, longer articles, such as 'Ā'isha's, have very short introductions or none at all. The introductions combine the ancient interest in genealogy with the urge to document the early events in Islam. The language in the introductions is formulaic, and distinguished by a specific grammatical feature: women are always grammatical objects in connection with marriage and marital activities, while they are subjects in connection with pious activities. This gives the impression that marriage is a patriarchal project, while the actions conducted for the sake of Islam require independent subjects. Despite its brevity, the introduction to the first biographical article in *Ṭabaqāt* of the Prophet's first wife Khadīja, provides an example.

> Mention of Khadīja bint Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā ibn Quṣayy, her genealogy, God's Messengers, GBGS, marriage to her and her conversion to Islam.[1]

Here, three important activities are introduced: genealogy, marriage and piety. Grammatically, it is Khadīja's genealogy andconversion to Islam, but the marriage is not hers; it is her husband's marriage to her. 'Her Islam' could also be translated 'Her practising of Islam'. The important thing is that it is 'her' Islam, it is she who converts and practises Islam, while with regard to marriage, it is the Prophet who marries her. This linguistic feature is thematized in the subsequent story, though discretely. Khadīja is in control of her life and affairs, she 'had honour, a great wealth and traded with Syria', and she 'hired men and paid them for travelling and trading'.[2] One of these men was Muḥammad, he works for her and she gives him an offer to marry her. Nevertheless, when marriage is to be settled, it is one of her uncles who marries her off. Moreover, there is a shift in grammatical person, now it is

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1Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 7.

ذكر خديجة بنت خويلد بن اسد بن عبد العزى بن قصى ونسبها وتزوج رسول الله صلعم إياها إسلامها

2 Ibid., 9.

God's Messenger who marries her: 'God's Messenger married her when he returned from Syria; he was then twenty-five years old'.[1]

Other typical introductions provide more details of this characteristic discrepancy: the women are objects of genealogy and subjects of pious endeavours for Islam, linguistically and thematically. One common formula for women is 'she converted to Islam and swore the oath of allegiance to God's Messenger'.[2] It is an important device here that the woman did this by her own will, not on the command of anyone and not to please anyone else than God. The introduction to the biographical entry of Arwā bint Kurayz, mother of the third caliph 'Uthmān, is quoted below as an example. Arwā's biographical entry consists of an introduction and two reports, both from her funeral. The introduction is typical: genealogy of her father and mother, her husbands, the names of her children and something about the key activities in early Islam, such as accepting Islam, migrating, and swearing the oath of allegiance.

> Arwā bint Kurayz
> ibn Rabī'a ibn Ḥabīb ibn 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Quṣayy. Her mother was Umm Ḥakīm, al-Baydā' bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Quṣayy. 'Affān ibn Abī l-'Āṣ ibn Umayya married her. She bore him 'Uthmān and Āmina, 'Affān's two children. Then 'Uqba ibn Abū Ma'īt married her. She bore him al-Walīd, 'Umāra, Khālid, Umm Kulthūm, Umm Ḥakīm and Hind. Arwā bint Kurayz accepted Islam, migrated to Medina after her daughter Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqba and swore the oath of allegiance to God's Messenger. She stayed in Medina until she died in the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān.[3]

Arwā's marriages are described in verbs with the husbands as grammatical subjects and Arwā as object, 'Affān 'married her', then 'Uqba 'married her'.

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1 Ibid.

2    اسلمت وبايَعتْ رُسول الله

3 Ibid., 166.

اروى بنت كُرَيز ابن ربيعة بن حبيب بن عبد شمس بن عبد مناف بن قصيّ وأمّها امّ حكيم البيضاء بنت عبد المطلّب بن هاشم بن عبد مناف بن قصيّ تزوّجها عفان بن ابى العاص بن اميّة فولدت له عثمان وآمنة ابنى عفان ثمّ تزوّجها عقبة بن ابى معيط فولدت له الوليد وعمارة وخالدا وأمّ كلثوم وأمّ حكيم وهندا وأسلمت اروى بنت كريز وهاجرت الى المدينة بعد ابنتها امّ كلثوم بنت عقبة وبايعت رسول الله ولم تزل بالمدينة حتّى ماتت فى خلافة عثمان بن عفّان

Arwā is the active subject of *waladat*, 'she gave birth to', but the preposition [*li-*] immediately transforms her role into an object of the more important act, paternity. She 'bore him' his children. However, when Arwā bint Kurayz becomes a Muslim, she does it as a subject, she 'accepts Islam', and she performs the necessary hijra to Medina, which her daughter Umm Kulthūm had done independently before her. In these formulaic introductions, language reflects the legal situation. In the case of Arwā's children, for example, her husbands have the legal rights to them, and thus legally, they are 'his children', which does not disregard Arwā's biological motherhood.

## Language and power

Marriage is the central event in the lives of the women in *Ṭabaqāt* especially in the biographies of the Prophet's wives. In spite of this, marriage is described in words where the woman is the object of her marriage, as we have seen above. None of the most common words used for 'marry' in 'Ā'isha's biography, *tazawwaja* and *nakaḥa*, denotes in itself a hierarchical power relationship.[1] In two instances, however, the power relationship is made explicit by the use of a verb: *malaka 'uqda* (1:21) and 'Ā'isha's words *malakanī* (1:36). The verb *malaka* signifies legal ownership; that is, to possess something and have authority over it.[2] Matrimony, as indicated by this choice of word, is a transaction in which the rights over the bride are taken over by the groom from the father, or, in some cases, from the bride herself. In the case of 'Ā'isha, the transaction is made between the father and the groom. A woman's marriages may also be referred to with the prepositions *taḥta* (under) and *'indah* (with, at). She is 'under' someone, or staying 'with' someone. According to Stern, the first term is a metonym for 'being under a man's protection', and the other for 'staying in a man's house'.[3] Nonetheless, the notion of being 'under' a man at least denotes an unambiguous hierarchy. Other words which belong to the matrimonial sphere are conjugated likewise; for example the words for sexual relations, where the man is always the subject and the woman object or passive subject.[4]

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1 The verb *zawwaja* (of which *tazawwaja* is the reflexive) means originally to couple or pair a thing with a thing, and unite them, a signification which apparently conflicts with the polygynic marriages. *nikāḥ* is the common term for marriage, signifying 'legal sexual intercourse' as a synonym for marriage Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *zwj, nkḥ*.
2 Ibid.  s.v. *mlk*.
3 Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, 71.
4 For these words in 'Ā'isha's biography, see the notes in Appendix 1.

Actually, this specific verb, 'to marry', has been charged by ideology in various languages and historical contexts. Dennis Baron quotes the linguist Richard Grant White's (1870) argument for why women cannot be subjects of the active verb 'to marry' in English:

> Properly speaking, a man is not married to a woman, or married with her; nor are a man and a woman married with each other. The woman is married to the man. It is her name that is lost in his, not his in hers; she becomes a member of his family, not he of hers; it is her life that is merged, or supposed to be merged, in his, not his in hers; she follows his fortunes, and takes his station, not he hers. And thus, manifestly, she has been attached to him by legal bond, not he to her; except, indeed, as all attachment is necessarily mutual. But nevertheless, we do not speak of tying a ship to a boat, but a boat to a ship. And so long, at least, as man is the larger, the stronger, the more individually important, as long as woman generally lives in her husband's house and bears his name, - still more should she not bear his name, it is the woman who is married to the man.[1]

White obviously connects linguistic use with social practice with a, for him, unproblematic gender hierarchy. The arguments White gives are arguments of the specific form of patriarchy he lives in: the woman loses her name when she marries and becomes a member of the husband's family. Yet he allows the possibility that the woman could, at least theoretically, be the grammatical subject of 'to marry', that is, when the man is no longer 'the larger, the stronger, the more individually important' and when she does not live in her husband's house. The linguistic construction belongs to a certain social organization of society, and if that organization changes, linguistic use may also change. According to this pragmatic view, it is possible to use a construction such as 'to marry' deliberately in a certain way, with reference to a preferable social organisation.

As to earlier times, Émile Benveniste claims that Indo-European expressions for marriage demonstrate that matrimony means something completely different for women than for men.[2] This difference is reflected in

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1 Richard Grant White, *Words and Their Uses* ([1870] 1891), 140; quoted in Baron, *Grammar and Gender*, 46.
2 Emile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, [1969] 1973), 193.

language by the fact that terms for marriage in relation to the man are verbal, while for women they are nominal.[1] He finds no verb in older Indo-European language in which a woman might be the subject of 'to marry': 'the absence of a special verb, indicates that the woman does not "marry", she "is married". She does not accomplish an act, her condition is changed.'[2] The woman's only possible position in a verbal construction denoting marriage is as object; she is 'led', 'taken', 'given', or 'married'. Even if it is uncertain whether Benveniste's theory about marriage expressions would be valid after a more exhaustive study, there is a striking similarity to the usage in classical Arabic literature. It is predominantly, almost exclusively, men who marry in formal context. Women's married state, in turn, is often referred to by nominal expressions: they are 'under' someone (*taḥtahu*), or 'at' someone's house (*'indahu*).

The akhbār in the women's section of *Ṭabaqāt* had been narrated and re-narrated for more than 200 years when they were edited by Ibn Saʿd, and the language may bear traces of various social environments. We therefore cannot state that women's exclusion from linguistic subject-positions in marriage reflects a certain society – only that it belongs to a general patriarchal practice. The 'real' lineage is the patrilineal; women are taken and given to provide new sons, who are full members of the kinfolk. Yet, contrary to Benveniste's findings in Indo-European languages, women's exclusions from linguistic subject-positions are not all-embracing in the early Arab texts; it is in fact possible to say that a woman marries a man, a feature that will be elaborated upon below.

## Women's allegiance, marriages and seclusion

In the biographies of the disputed wives, their marriages or concubinage with the Prophet are denoted with the formula 'he imposed seclusion [ḥijāb] on her.'[3] According to their biographies, marriage was presented to them by the Prophet as a choice, which included their conversion to Islam. There are variant versions as to whether they actually converted or not. If the formula is used, it is the same as saying that the woman in question accepted the offer, and that the Prophet married her, which enhances her post-mortal status. ḥijāb is thus a symbol for distinction. On the other hand, seclusion is

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., 195.
3 ضرب الحجاب عليها Cf. Ahmed, *Women*, 55-56. The disputed wives are the captive women whom the Prophet may have married or kept as concubines, Ṣafiyya, Rayḥāna and Juwayriya.

not an important topic in the wives' biographies. In 'Ā'isha, it is discussed in a few akhbār, such as 59.

However, seclusion of women is treated as a theme already in the introduction to the women's section, before Khadīja's biography. [1] Here, women's seclusion, or rather its symbolic representation, i.e. covering clothes, occurs as a main issue. The introduction is actually about the women's oath of allegiance to the Prophet, *bay'at al-nisā'*. [2] This event shows women's active participation in Islam, as they swore the oath themselves in the presence of the Prophet, not through the intermediation of their male relatives. Yet many of the accounts focus on the question of how the Prophet could have received the oath without violating the rules of seclusion. [3] Not the women's oath itself but its execution in accordance with the principles of gender segregation seems to be the main point. The performance of an oath of allegiance needs a handshake to be completed, and several narrators seem worried about the image of the Prophet touching women's hands. Thus, out of thirty-nine reports, sixteen deal with this issue, among them the very first report in the women's section:

> 'Abdallāh ibn Idrīs al-Awdī related to us, on the authority of Ḥuṣayn ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, on the authority of 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, he said: The Prophet, GBGS, swore the oath of allegiance with the women with a piece of cloth on his hand. [4]

Most of the narratives deny that the Prophet shook hands with the women at all; in three reports a statement is attributed to the Prophet which renounce women of their individuality: 'My speech to one hundred women is like my speech to one of them'. [5] While men are treated as individuals, women are treated as a biologically defined group or sometimes as dependents of the men. In one narrative, two women meet the Prophet together with a group of men in order to swear the oath; he shakes hands and lets each man swear the oath individually, but passes by the women. When he is asked about it, he says: 'I made the same covenant with them as I did with you, I do not shake

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1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 1-7.
2 The oath is mentioned in *Qur'ān* 60:12.
3 See Roded, *Women*, 24.
4 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 1,

حدثنا عبد الله بن ادريس الأودى عن حصين بن عبد الرحمن عن عامر الشعبى قال: بايع النبيّ صلعم النساء وعلى يده ثوب

5 Ibid., 2.

hands with women'.[1] Thus, when he made the covenant with the men, the women were included, although they did not seem to be aware of that in this report. However, there is an inner conflict in this initial chapter. In some of the reports women are actually presented as individuals and even though the Prophet sometimes refuses to shake hands with them he addresses them individually.

Another topic in this opening section is what exactly the Prophet made the women vow. Several of the propositions made here deal with the necessity to segregate women from men: they were to promise not to sit together with men and not to talk with men.[2] This issue was apparently seen as complicated and in need of a solution, as there is no regulation set in the Qur'ān about it.[3] The beginning of the women's section is normative, dealing with women as a collective, in contrast to the individual biographies of women. There, with a few exceptions, seclusion is not an issue.

### The mother of his children

In the biographies of men in *Tabaqāt* their marriages are generally not referred to at all. Immediately after their genealogy, their children are enumerated, followed by *wa-'ummuhum*, 'and their mother is…' If any of their children's mothers is a concubine, her name is not mentioned, only that she is an *umm walad* (see above, 61). Below is the introduction to the biography of Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaydallāh, whose biography is found among the first in *Tabaqāt*.[4] He was married to several women, among them 'Ā'isha's sister and the caliph Abū Bakr's daughter Umm Kulthūm.[5] The topics in his biography are his battles, his appearance, clothes, piety, generosity, and his death. At least one report is narrated by women, two of his daughters. Nevertheless, his marriages are not mentioned in the reports of his biography – neither his weddings nor any other detail of them. The only instance where his wives are mentioned is in the introduction, where his wives' names are relevant only as part of the genealogy of his children.

Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaydallāh

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1 Ibid., 5.
2 Ibid., 4-5.
3 See Roded, *Women*, 25.
4 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, 152-61.
5 We have already met two of the women mentioned in Ṭalha's introduction: his wife Umm Abān bint ʿUtba, who chose him as a husband rather than the other prominent companions to the Prophet who proposed to her, ʿUmar, al-Zubayr, and ʿAlī (148-49), and his daughter ʿĀʾisha bint Ṭalḥa (160-61).

ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Amr ibn Ka‘b ibn Sa‘d ibn Tamīm ibn Murra. His *kunya* is Abū Muḥammad. His mother is al-Ṣa‘ba bint ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Imād al-Ḥaḍramī. Her mother is ‘Ātika bint Wahb ibn ‘Abd ibn Qusayy ibn Kilāb. Wahb was the master of the pilgrims' charity for the whole of Quraysh. Among Ṭalḥa's children is Muḥammad, who was a frequent prayer, and he had his *kunya* from him. He was killed at the Battle of the Camel together with his father. Further, there is ‘Imrān ibn Ṭalḥa. Their mother is Ḥamna bint Jaḥsh ibn Ri’āb ibn Ya‘mar ibn Ṣabra ibn Murra ibn Kabīr ibn Ghanm ibn Dūdān ibn Asad ibn Khuzayma. Her mother is Umayma bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim ibn ‘Abd al-Manāf ibn Quṣayy. Further, there is Mūsā ibn Ṭalḥa; his mother is Khawla bint al-Qa‘qā‘ ibn Ma‘bad ibn Zurāra ibn ‘Udas ibn Zayd from the Tamīm tribe. Al-Qa‘qā‘ was called Euphrates' waves because of his generosity. Further, there are Ya‘qūb ibn Ṭalḥa, who was generous, and died at the battle of al-Ḥarra, and Ismā‘īl and Ishāq. Their mother is Umm Abān, bint ‘Utba ibn Rabī‘a ibn ‘Abd al-Shams. Further, there are Zakariyyā’, Yūsuf and ‘Ā’isha; their mother is Umm Kulthūm bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Further, there are ‘Īsā and Yaḥyā; their mother is Su‘dā bint ‘Auf ibn Khārija ibn Sinān ibn Abī Ḥāritha al-Murrī. Further, there is Umm Ishāq bint Ṭalḥa. Al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib married her, and she bore him Ṭalḥa. Then he died, leaving her a widow, and al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī took over her, and she bore him Fāṭima. Her mother is al-Jarbā’, she is Umm al-Ḥārith bint Qāma ibn Ḥanẓala ibn Wahb ibn Qays ibn ‘Ubayd ibn Ṭarīq ibn Mālik ibn Jad‘ā’ from Ṭayyi’. Further there is al- Ṣa‘ba bint Ṭalḥa, her mother is an *umm walad*. Further, there is Maryam bint Ṭalḥa, her mother is an *umm walad*. Further, there is Ṣālih ibn Ṭalḥa, he died and left no offspring. His mother is al-Far‘a bint ‘Alī, a captive from the Taghlib tribe.[1]

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1 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt* vol. 3, 152-53.

طلحة بن عُبيد الله ابن عثمان بن عمرو بن كعب بن سعد بن تميم بن مرة ويكون ابا محمد وأمه الصَعبة بنت عبد الله بن عماد الحضرمى وأمها عاتكة بنت وهب بن عبد بن قُصى وكان وهب بن عبد صاحب الرِفادة دون قريش كلها وكان لطلحة من الولد محمد وهو السجاد وبه كان يكنى قتل يوم الجمل مع أبيه وعمران بن طلحة وأمهما حمنة بنت جَحش بن رئاب بن يعمر بن صبرة بن مُرة بن كبير بن غَنَم بن دُودان بن اسد بن خُزيمة وأمها أميمة بنت عبد المطلب بن هاشم بن عبد مناف بن قُصى وموسى بن طلحة وامه خَولة بنت القَعقاع بن معَبد بن زُرارة بن عُدس بن زيد من بنى تميم وكان يقال القعقاع تَيار الفُرات من سخائه ويعقوب بن طلحة وكان جوادا قُتل يوم الحَرة واسماعيل واسحاق وامهم ام أبان بنت عتَبة بن ربيعة بن عبد شمس وزكرياء ويوسف وعائشة وامهم ام كلثوم بنت ابى بكر الصديق وعيسى ويحيى وامهما سُعدى بنت عوف بن خارجة بن سنان بن ابى حارثة المُرى وام اسحاق بنت طلحة تزوجها الحسن بن على بن ابى طالب فولدت له طلحة ثم توفى عنها فخلف عليها الحسين بن على فولدت له فاطمة وامها الجرباء وهى ام الحارث بنت قَسامة بن حنظلة بن وهب بن قيس بن عُبيد بن طَريق بن مالك بن جدعاء

According to the introduction, he had fifteen children with nine women, listed hierarchically. First, we have the aristocratic wives with their long genealogies, then the slave concubines who bore him children. He might have had other slave concubines, but if they were childless, they are not included in his biography. Finally, there is a captive woman whose name is mentioned despite of her slave status. As a captive in war, she still might have a good origin.

The introduction above is typical of the biographies on men in *Ṭabaqāt,* and it differs linguistically from the introductions to the women's biographies, but not thematically. It succeeds in recording Ṭalḥa's fifteen children and the names and genealogies of their mothers without once mentioning a word for marriage.

### 'Ā'isha's marriage

The linguistic discrepancy between women's object-positions in marriage and their subject-positions in pious activities for the sake of Islam has ample examples in 'Ā'isha's biography. 'Ā'isha is always the grammatical object of wedding activities while she is the linguistic subject of pious activities.[1] She is also a subject, both on the level of language and on that of the story, in her interactions with the umma as a widow, and in some specific aspects of her marital life together with Muḥammad.

'Ā'isha's life is categorized according to the Prophet's marital activities with her, his wedding to her, his consummating of the marriage with her, and, in addition, his death. These events form the chronology of her life in the first quarter of her biography, as well as scattered reports in the later part. This is 'Ā'isha's marital chronology, that is, the formalized, formula-like, and summarized accounts of the chronology of her married life. Significantly, 'Ā'isha is always the object of the activities taken place here, even when she is the narrator of them. There are also other narratives about her life with the Prophet, which differ from the marital chronology as to 'Ā'isha's subject-position. In scenes depicting specific events in her married

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من طَيء والصعبة بنت طلحة وامها ام ولد ومريم ابنة طلحة وامها ام ولد وصالح بن طلحة دَرَجَ وامه الفَرعة بنت على سبية من بنى تغلب

1 It is also in regard to piety that 'Ā'isha's co-wives are invested with the strongest subject-positions in the narratives about them; they act as individuals and authorities and are regarded as possessing proficiency. For the wives' piety, except for 'Ā'isha, see the biographies of Ḥafṣa (ibid., 58-59), Zaynab bint Jahsh, (ibid., 73, 78, 81), Juwayriya, (85), Maymūna (98-99), and Sawda (36):

life with Muḥammad, she interacts with him as a subject. Still, even if 'Ā'isha has a more active position in the childhood narratives than in her marital chronology, she and her husband are far from equal. He, the Prophet and husband/father, is the tender but unquestionable authority, while she is the amusing and adorable child-bride. However, the husband promotes her subject-position to a certain degree. He hides himself so that she can play freely when she is a child, and when she is an adult, he lets her choose whether to agree to a more restricted life or not (see below).

### 'Ā'isha's wedding story

'Ā'isha's wedding story is initiated already in the first khabar, a heterodiegetic narrative with the focus on Abū Bakr, and in the second where 'Ā'isha is the homodiegetic narrator. These two narratives are central for the story of 'Ā'isha's marriage. In the first report, 'Ā'isha is the absolute object; her marriage is an interaction between men. On the level of the narrative, these men are involved in a network of subjects where Abū Bakr is the main agent. He is also the only one who speaks, although he acts on command of God's Messenger. The girl 'Ā'isha's marriage is first an affair between her father and Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī, father of the first suitor, while his son, the suitor, Jubayr is as powerless as 'Ā'isha in these business transactions. No one objects when the Prophet wants 'Ā'isha for himself; he is the absolute authority. Still, the business transactions have to be handled correctly, and Abū Bakr needs time to cancel the marriage.

> God's Messenger, GBGS, asked Abū Bakr, the trustworthy, for 'Ā'isha's hand. Abū Bakr said: 'God's Messenger, I have already promised her or mentioned her to al-Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī ibn Nawfal ibn 'Abd Manāf, for his son Jubayr. Leave me until I withdraw her from them.' He did so, and married her to God's Messenger, GBGS, while she was a virgin. (1:1)

The narrative starts with a scene and ends with a summary conclusion, a statement from 'Ā'isha's marital chronology. Since this khabar opens 'Ā'isha's biography, it has a special position. Probably the main point here is that 'Ā'isha was a virgin when she was married to the Prophet, which is one of her own arguments for her favourable position (see 1:29). In the second report 'Ā'isha is the subject of narrating – it is her narration. Nevertheless,

her narration is about the Prophet's marriage with her; she is the subject of narrating, but object in the story she recounts, her own wedding-story. This narrative consists entirely of 'Ā'isha's chronology, without a scene enlightening a certain aspect of it.

> God's Messenger, GBGS, married me in the month of Shawwāl, year ten of his prophecy, three years before the hijra. I was then six years old. God's Messenger, GBGS; emigrated and arrived at Medina a Monday when twelve nights had passed of the month of Rabī' al-awwal. He celebrated the wedding with me in the month of Shawwāl, at the beginning of the eighth month after the Hijra. The day he went in to me [to consummate the marriage], I was nine years old. (1:2)

In the heterodiegetic narrative of the first khabar, it is the father who marries off 'Ā'isha, while in her own autodiegetic narration it is God's Messenger who marries her, without the intervention of the father. This shift in agency may mean nothing; it is only two aspects of the same story. What does remain, however, is the object-position of 'Ā'isha, a position which is, as we have seen, inscribed for women all through the formal proceedings of the wedding and marriage. She has no subject-position in these two introducing reports, except for narrating in one of them. 'Ā'isha is an object of the men's transactions, but she is an object with a very special position – she is chosen by God's Messenger.

**Scenes from 'Ā'isha's married life**

'Ā'isha's age at marriage is one of the major issues in her biography.[1] It is a part of her wedding chronology, where her age is merely stated without any comments. However, the age is elaborated upon in the childhood narratives, where 'Ā'isha is playing with her friends, playing with dolls, or on a swing, with a compassionate Muḥammad in the background. In one scene, he is even the one who secludes himself from her and her friends, in order not to frighten them with his presence (1:35). It seems to be important in reports narrated by 'Ā'isha to emphasize that she was a child both when the Prophet

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1 Her young age at the time of the marriage with the Prophet is controversial; it was at the time of Ibn Saʿd and it still is. This is demonstrated by the many reports about it, and the fact that there is more than one opinion in the reports in the medieval texts.

married her and when he consummated the marriage with her (1:3-4, 8, 17-18). The narratives about 'Ā'isha as a child together with the Prophet depict something which resembles a father and daughter relationship, perhaps alluding to the biography of Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, who was 'Āisha's post-mortal rival in the sectarian Muslim debate.[1] In fact, the father-daughter story of 'Ā'isha and Muḥammad is more elaborated than that on Muḥammad and Fāṭima in *Ṭabaqāt*. Muḥammad treats the child 'Ā'isha tenderly and with respect and tolerance. In Fāṭima's biography there are no childhood narratives; Muḥammad's fatherly duties consist of marrying her off and reconciling between her and her husband. There are a few records of emotional bands, such as when Muḥammad wants her to live closer to him, but not as many as in 'Ā'isha's biography.[2] Actually, 'Ā'isha's relationship with Muḥammad is treated with more signs of affection than that with her real parents, for example in khabar 130 and 143. In khabar 143, Abū Bakr is eager to please God's Messenger and hits his daughter upon hearing that she has done something her husband disapproved of. However, God's Messenger objects to the corporal punishment.

> God's Messenger, GBGS, said to Abū Bakr: 'Abū Bakr, do excuse me for reprimanding 'Ā'isha!' He said: Abū Bakr raised his hand and punched her chest fiercely. Then God's Messenger said: 'God forgive you, Abū Bakr! This is not what I wanted!' (1:143)

Yet the need to reprimand 'Ā'isha is not objected to, and neither is the depiction of penalty as a matter between the husband and the father. Possibly this narrative is about a clash between the traditional patriarchal ideology based on kinship, where the father is responsible for his daughter's behaviour, and one more universalistic, where the husband is responsible for his wife and authority is not based on tribal or family belonging.

In khabar 130, 'Ā'isha's mother punishes her daughter for breaking the loyalty bond between them, the bond between the dependants, the mother and the child. In this khabar 'Ā'isha is a young girl, possibly below six years old and certainly below nine, as she is not yet married. As in the example above, Muhammad objects to corporal punishment. This narrative involves a more complex network of subjects; in fact it is one of the longest narratives

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1 According to Spellberg: ''A'isha's portrayal in the earliest written Arabic material developed into an implicit and explicit comparison with her two most notable rivals: Khadija and Fatima', Spellberg, *Politics*, 161.
2 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 14.

in 'Ā'isha's biography. Notable is also 'Ā'isha's mother Umm Rūmān's confidence in Muhammad, as she confides to him the reason for her punishment, which is something that she did not want Abū Bakr to know.

> When Khadīja died the Prophet, GBGS, felt deeply sad. Then God sent Jibrīl, and he came to him with 'Ā'isha in a cradle. He said: 'God's Messenger, this one will take away some of your grief, she has some of Khadīja's qualities.' Then he removed her. God's Messenger used to visit Abū Bakr's home often, saying: Umm Rūmān, treat 'Ā'isha well and remember me concerning her. As a result, 'Ā'isha enjoyed a special position among her family, but they did not know about God's command in regard to her. God's Messenger, GBGS, came to them one of the days he used to come to them, and he did not fail to come to Abū Bakr's house one single day from the day the latter accepted Islam until he emigrated. He found 'Ā'isha hiding at the door of Abū Bakr's house crying sadly. He asked her [what the matter was] and she complained about her mother and said that she had reproached her.[1] The eyes of God's Messenger filled with tears and he went in to Umm Rūmān. He said: 'Umm Rūmān, have I not entrusted you with the care of 'Ā'isha, and asked you to remember me concerning her?' She said: 'Oh God's Messenger, she told the Trustworthy [Abū Bakr] about me and made him angry at us.' The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'Even though she did that!' Umm Rūmān said: 'Truly, I will never do her any wrong.' 'Ā'isha was born in the beginning of the fourth year of the prophecy. God's Messenger married her the tenth year, in Shawwal, when she was six years old. He married her one month after Sawda. (1:130)

The power structure in this story is rather complex. Abū Bakr and God's Messenger are absolute authorities, while Umm Rūmān and 'Ā'isha are relatively, but not altogether, powerless. While Abū Bakr executes his power from above, or from the outside, God's Messenger pays attention to the feelings of the mother and daughter, and, so to speak, empowers them somewhat. He listens to them and encourages them to speak, and accordingly

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1 تولّع ب as form V, it may have this signification, according to R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 ed., 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1927) s.v. *wlʻ*: 'aimer à blâmer quelqu'un' and 'à l'outrager'. As form IV, it may even denote 'désirer ardemment la mort de quelqu'un'.

he also attains their confidence. Abū Bakr and God's Messenger represent here two kinds of authorities. In this story, Abū Bakr is the master of the house and its inhabitants, wife and child. His power is present although he himself is absent. Still, his authority is not readily accepted by his wife, who prefers to conceal things that he would dislike. His authority does not grant inner and true obedience. Instead of objecting to his invincible though external power to discipline, the wife punishes her daughter, who was not able to conceal her mother's secret, as if the daughter is the cause of her distress and not her husband. In her view, it is not what Umm Rūmān did that was wrong, but the fact that her daughter informed her husband about it. God's Messenger, in turn, has his power from God and licence for his relationship with the little girl from the angel Jibrīl. He does not have to use violence to enforce his power, and his command to Umm Rūmān is not objected to. His power is gentle and compassionate. He does not need to use an imperative to convey his command, but still has to be obeyed. Moreover, in the report about ʿĀ'isha's choice (1:60, see also below), the Prophet encourages ʿĀ'isha to ask her parents for advice before she chooses between him and the profane world. She dismisses the proposal and chooses her husband straight away. Although God's Messenger's suggestion indicates that the parents are important for a woman even after marriage, she demonstrates that the husband's command, at least this husband's, comes first.

## Conflicting images of women

If the grammatical object-position of women in regard to marriage had been totally accomplished, it would possibly be regarded as a linguistic feature that definitely reveals a hierarchical gender system, but without any significant value for analysis, as it might have been set ages before our texts. Hence, the exceptions, where women actually are grammatical subjects of verbs connoting marriage, are of significant interest for this analysis, especially as there seems to be a pattern for their appearances. The rudimentary pattern is that the exceptions never occur in the introductions, but occasionally in any of the subsequent narratives of a woman's biography. While the introductions are both formulaic and strictly regulated, with no possibilities for women to escape their object-positions in marriage, the other narratives in a biography might have their focus on something else, and thus a shift in positions might be overlooked. Moreover, the exceptions occur in

narratives about otherwise active women who have performed in the male domain, such as warfare, or shown exceptional independence in other matters.

## Umm Salama

One of these exceptions occurs in the biography of the Prophet's wife Umm Salama.[1] Her story differs from 'Ā'isha's: she is an adult when the Prophet marries her, he proposes to her directly and her first answer is no, declaring that she is too jealous to cope with co-wives. In two reports of her biography she is the active subject of marriage. These two instances hint at an alternative gender ideology, where women might be active in marriage. Nevertheless, the introduction to her biography is composed of the ordinary formulas.

> Umm Salama
> Her name is Hind bint Abī Umayya, and his [her father's] name is Suhayl Zād al-Rakb ibn al-Mughīra ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzūm. Her mother is 'Ātika bint 'Āmir ibn Rabī'a ibn Mālik ibn Jadhīma ibn 'Alqama ibn Jidl al- Ṭi'ān ibn Firās ibn Ghanm ibn Mālik ibn Kināna. Abū Salama married her and his name is 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Asad ibn Hilāl ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzūm. He migrated with her to Aksum at both emigrations. There she bore him Zaynab bint Abī Salama, and after that she bore him Salama, 'Umar and Durra, Abū Salama's children.[2]

According to the introduction, the children Umm Salama gives birth to are her husband's sons, not hers. It is Abū Salama who marries her and immigrates with her to Aksum. Abū Salama is a prominent early companion, and his consent of Umm Salama's later marriage to the Prophet is necessary. In a subsequent report, he commands his wife to remarry if he dies before her; he even prays to God that she will find a better man than him. In this

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1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 60-71.

2 Ibid., 60. واسمها هند بنت ابى أمية واسمه سهيل زاد الركب بن المغيرة بن عبد الله بن عمر بن مخزوم وأمها عاتكة بنت عامر
بن ربيعة بن مالك بن جذيمة بن علقمة بن جذل الطعان بن فراس بن غنم بن مالك بن كنانة تزوجها ابو سلمة واسمه عبد الله بن عبد
لاسد بن هلال بن عبد الله بن عمر بن مخزوم وهاجر بها الى ارض الحبشة فى الهجرتين جميعا فولدت له هناك زينب بنت ابى سلمة
وولدت له بعد ذلك سلمة وعمر ودرة بنى ابى سلمة

narrative, the strict regulation of the gendered language of the introduction has loosened.

> Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī reported to us, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ziyād related to us, ʿĀṣim al-Aḥwal related to us, on the authority of Ziyād ibn Abī Maryam, he said: Umm Salama said to Abū Salama: I have heard that a woman whose husband dies, and becomes one of the people of Paradise, if she does not remarry before she becomes one of the people of Paradise, God unites them in Paradise. It is the same if the woman dies and the man remains. Let us swear to each other that you will not marry after me, and I will not marry after you. He said: Will you obey me? I said: I want to obey whatever you command me. He said: If I die, marry! Then he said: God, provide Umm Salama with a better man than I when I die, who does not make her miserable, and does not hurt her.[1]

Umm Salama is the subject of the verb 'marry' in her own speech, even if it is with a negative sense, 'I will not marry'. Nevertheless, the narrative negates her subject-position; she might only be the subject of marrying on her husband's command, which she readily obeys: 'I want to obey whatever you command me'. She has her own will, to unite with her husband in Paradise, but her husband's will comes first. Her independent will is subordinated to her wifely obedience, and thus she is obliged to remarry after her husband's death.

Compared with ʿĀʾisha, Umm Salama had power over her marriage with the Prophet. ʿĀʾisha had no option, as revealed by her words: 'I was not aware that God's Messenger had married me until my mother took me and confined me to the house, preventing me from going out. Then it occurred to me that I had been married' (1:3). In the main narrative about Umm Salama's marriage to the Prophet, which is repeated in several akhbār, she does not accept his proposals without objections. He proposes, she speaks out about her doubts, he insists, she accepts and finally he marries her. In one of these

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1 Ibid., 61.    اخبرنا أحمد بن إسحاق الحضرمى حدّثنا عبد الواحد بن زياد حدّثنا عاصم الأحول هن زياد بن ابى مريم قال: قالت امّ سلمة لأبى سلمة بلغنى أنه ليس امرأة يموت زوجها وهو من اهل الجنة وهى من اهل الجنة ثم لم تزوج بعده الا جمع الله بينهما فى الجنة وكذلك اذا ماتت المرأة وبقى الرجل بعدها فتعال اعاهدك ألا تزوج بعدى ولا أتزوج بعدك قال اتطيعينى قلت ما استأمرتك الا وأنا اريد أن أطيعك قال فاذا متّ فتزوّجى ثمّ قال اللهمّ آرزق أمّ سلمة بعدى رجلا خيرا منّى لا يحزنها ولا يؤذيها...

narratives, we find the second occurrence of Umm Salama as the grammatical subject of her marriage. For the sake of comparison, two narratives are quoted. In the first, the Prophet is the subject, whereas in the second it is Umm Salama.

> 'Abdallāh ibn Numayr reported to us, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tamīmī related to us, on the authority of Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, he said: Umm Salama said: When my *'idda* from Abū Salama was completed, God's Messenger, GBGS, came to me and spoke with me with a hijāb between us. He proposed to me, and I said: 'God's Messenger, what could you gain from me? I say this because I wish something better for you. I am a woman whose years are running away from her, I am the mother of orphans, I am a very jealous woman, and you, God's Messenger, collect women.' [1] God's Messenger said: 'This does not hinder you. Concerning what you said about your jealousy, God will take it away. Concerning what you said about your age, I am older than you. Concerning what you said about your orphans, that is the concern of God and his messenger.' So I gave him my consent and he married me.[2]

This report is narrated by Umm Salama; it is her narration and focalization. Although it is the Prophet who grammatically marries Umm Salama, her active consent is important. It is she who has doubts about the marriage, doubts that God's Messenger has to consider and find solutions to. However, although paving the way for him to marry her, in this khabar she finally puts herself in a grammatical and formal object-position. That the formalities are considered in this report is shown by the explicit allusion to the institutionalized gender-segregation, the ḥijāb which is between them. God's Messenger does not speak to her directly, but with a curtain between them. In

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1 تجْمَعُ النساء  Cf. above, 154.

2 Ibid., 63.

اخبرنا عبد الله بن نمير حدثنا ابو حيان التميمى عن حبيب ابن ابى ثابت قال قالت أم سلمة: لما انقضت عدتى من ابى سلمة اتانى

رسول الله صلعم فكلمنى بينى وبينه حجاب فخطب الى نفسى فقلت اى رسول الله  وما تريد الى ما أقول هذا الا رغبة لك عن نفسى

انى امرأة قد أدبر منى سنى وانى أم أيتام وأنا امرأة شديدة الغيرة وأنت يا رسول الله تجمع النساء فقال رسول الله فلا يمنعك ذلك أمّا ما

ذكرت من غيرتك فيذهبها الله و امّا ما ذكرت من سنّك فأنا اكبر منك سنا وأما ما ذكرت من أيتامك فعلى الله وعلى رسوله فأذنتُ له

فى نفسى فتزوجنى...

any case, the curtain does not prevent her from speaking frankly. In the second report, Umm Salama does not narrate; still she is the grammatical active part of her marriage.

> Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Asadī reported to us, they said: ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ayman related to us, he said: Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām related to us that God's Messenger, GBGS, proposed to Umm Salama, and he said to her: 'What prevents you, Umm Salama?' She said: 'I have three characteristics, I am old, I have small children, and I am jealous.' He said: 'Concerning what you said about jealousy, we will ask God to take it away. Concerning your old age, I am older than you, and the child is to God and his messenger'. She married him and he visited her often without touching her, because she was breastfeeding her child…[1]

While the first narration was homodiegetic, or actually Umm Salama's autodiegetic narration, this second is heterodiegetic. Characteristically, it is less embellished and more summarized. Instead of the circumlocution in the first narrative, 'I permitted him and he married me', the second narrative has only space for the essence of the phrase, which is Umm Salama's active agreement with the proposal of God's Messenger, and not for the legal proceedings implicated by 'he married me'.

**The war heroes: Umm ʿUmāra and Umm Sulaym**

Among the other women who are grammatical subjects of their marriages we find the war hero Umm ʿUmāra.[2] Her biography consists of nine reports; four of them are narrated by her, and further three have a woman narrator in the isnād. Umm ʿUmāra participated in three battles; she fought armed and was injured. She narrates about her experiences in battle just as the male war heroes do in the first volumes of *Tabaqāt*. The introduction to her biography

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1 Ibid.

اخبرنا الفضل بن دكين ومحمد بن عبد الله الأسدى قالا حدثنا عبد الواحد بن أيمن قال حدثنى ابو بكر بن عبد الرحمن بن الحارث بن هشام: أن رسول الله صلعم خطب أم سلمة فقال لها فيما يقول يا أم سلمة قالت فى خصال ثلاث أما أنا فكبيرة وأنا مطفل وأنا غيور فقال أما ما ذكرت من الغيرة فندعو الله حتى يذهبه عنك وأما ما ذكرت من الكبر فأنا أكبر منك والطفل الى الله والى رسوله فنكحته فكان يختلف اليها ولا يمسها لأنها تُرضع

2 Ibid., 301-302.

is as formulaic as most others. Zayd marries her first, and then Ghaziyya takes her over. In contrast, she is an active subject in Islam; she accepts the new faith and performs some pious deeds for it.

> Umm 'Umāra
> She is Nasība bint Ka'b ibn 'Amr ibn 'Awf ibn. Mabdhūl ibn 'Amr ibn Ghanm ibn Māzin ibn al-Najjār. Her mother is al-Rabāb bint 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥabīb ibn Zayd ibn Tha'laba ibn Zayd Manāt ibn Ḥabīb ibn 'Abd Ḥāritha ibn Ghaḍb ibn Jusham ibn al-Kharaj. She is sister of 'Abdallāh ibn Ka'b who witnessed Badr, and full sister of Abū Laylā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ka'b, one of the weepers.[1] Zayd ibn 'Āṣim ibn 'Amr ibn 'Awf ibn Mabdhūl ibn 'Amr ibn Ghanm ibn Māzin ibn al-Najjār married Umm 'Umāra bint Ka'b. She bore him 'Abdallāh and Ḥabīb, two companions of the Prophet, GBGS. Then Ghaziyya ibn 'Amr ibn 'Aṭiyya ibn Khansā' ibn Mabdhūl ibn 'Amr ibn Ghanam ibn Māzin ibn al-Najjār took over her and she bore him Tamīm and Khawla. Umm 'Umāra accepted Islam and was present the night of 'Aqaba where she swore the oath of allegiance with God's Messenger. She was present at [the Battle of] Uḥud, [the Treaty of] al-Ḥudaybiyya, [the Battle of] Khaybar, the first pilgrimage, [the Battle of] Ḥunayn, and the Battle of al-Yamāma and she lost her hand.[2] She heard ḥadīths from the Prophet.[3]

In this introduction, it is Umm 'Umāra's husbands who marry her. Nevertheless, in a later khabar, the formula is not adhered to and it is she who marries her husbands.

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1 *Al-bakkā'ūn* are, according to Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* , s.v. *bk'* : 'classe d'hommes pieux qui pleuraient leurs péchés après avoir lu le Coran'.
2 Uḥud, Khaybar, and Hunayn were battles; al-Ḥudaybiyya was the treaty in Mecca between Quraysh and the first umma in Medina.
3 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 301.

ام عُمارة وهي نسيبة بنت كعب بن عمرو بن عوف بن مبذول بن عمرو بن غنم بن بنى مازن بن النجار وامها الرباب بنت عبد الله بن
حبيب بن زيد بن ثعلبة بن زيد مناة ين حبيب بن عبد حارثة بن غضب بن جشم بن الخزرج وهى اخت عبد الله بن كعب شهد بدرا
وأخت ابى ليلى عبد الرحمن بن كعب احد البكائين لأبيهما وأمهما وتزوج ام عمارة بنت كعب زيد ين عاصم بن عمروبن عوف بن
مبذول بن عمرا بن غنم بن مازن بن النجار فولدت له عبد الله وحبيبا صحبا النبى صلعم ثم خلف عليها غزية بن عمرو بن عطية بن
خنساء بن مبذول بن عمرو بن غنم بن مازن بن النجار فولدت له تميما وخولة اسلمت ام عُمارة وحضرت ليلة العقبة وبايعت رسول
الله وشهدت احدا والحديبية وخيبر وعمرة القضية وحنينا ويوم اليمامة وقُطعت يدها وسمعت من النبى احاديث

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, al-Mundhir ibn Sa'īd, banū al-Zubayr's client [*mawlā*] related to me, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabbān, he said: Umm 'Umāra was wounded with twelve wounds in Uhud. She had lost a hand in al-Yamāma, and besides her hand, she was wounded with eleven wounds in al-Yamāma. She came to Medina, where there was a surgeon.[1] Abū Bakr, who was caliph at that time, was seen coming to her and asking about her. He said: She married three, each of them had a son from her; Ghaziyya ibn 'Amr al-Māzinī, she had Tamīm ibn Ghaziyya from him, and she married Zayd ibn 'Āṣim ibn Ka'b al-Māzinī, she had Ḥabīb from him, who was injured by Musaylima, as well as 'Abdallāh ibn Zayd, who was killed at the battle of al-Ḥarra. The third is Nasība, his son died and he had no successors.[2]

Umm 'Umāra's wounds are a proof of her self-sacrifice for the new faith, and she is respected for this by the caliph Abū Bakr. She ventures into the manly domain of war, not as a woman, that is, providing water and first aid to the fighters, or inciting the fighters to do their best; she fights as a man, with weapons in her hands and returns from the battle-field with indisputable evidence of her courage. Umm 'Umāra is a woman who transgresses her gender-role; possibly this gives her the licence to be the subject of her marriages.

Umm Sulaym is another independent and strong-minded war hero, and she was not only a fervent early Muslim; she was also the mother of Anas ibn Mālik, a frequent transmitter of ḥadīths. She is the grammatical subject of marriage in her biography, which is quite long with thirty-six akhbār.[3] However, in the formulaic introduction, she is the grammatical object; Mālik

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1 This sentence could also be translated 'She came to Medina with her wound', which is probably wrong, as she had several wounds and جراحة is in the singular.

2 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 304.

اخبرنا محمد بن عمر حدثنا المنذر بن سعيد مولى لبنى الزبير عن محمد بن يحيى بن حبان قال: جرحت ام عمارة بأحد اثنى عشر جرحا وقطعت يدها باليمامة وجرحت يوم اليمامة سوى يدها احد عشر جرحا فقدمت المدينة وبها الجراحة فلقد رُئى أبو بكر يأتيها يسئل بها وهو يومئذ خليفة قال تزوجت ثلثة كلهم لهم منها ولد غزية بن عمرو المازنى لها منه تميم بن غزية وتزوجت زيد بن عاصم بن كعب المازنى فلها منه حبيب الذى قطعه مسيلمة وعبد الله بن زيد قتل بالحرة والثالث نسيبة ومات ولده ولم يعقب

3 Ibid., 310-18.

marries her and then Zayd takes her over. Yet she is the grammatical subject when she accepts Islam and fights for the new faith.

> Umm Sulaym bint Milḥān ibn Khālid ibn Zayd ibn Ḥarām ibn Jundab ibn 'Āmir ibn Ghanm ibn 'Adī ibn al-Najjār. She is al-Ghumayṣā', some say her name is al-Rumayṣā', some say it is Sahla, some say Rumayla, some say no, her name is Anīfa, and some say Rumaytha. Her mother is Mulayka bint Mālik ibn 'Adī ibn Zayd Manāh ibn 'Adī ibn 'Amr ibn Mālik ibn al-Najjār. Mālik ibn al-Nadr ibn Damdam ibn Zayd ibn Ḥarām ibn Jundab ibn 'Āmir ibn Ghanm ibn 'Adī ibn al-Najjār married her. She bore him Anas ibn Mālik. Then Abū Ṭalḥa Zayd ibn Sahl ibn al-Aswad ibn Ḥarām ibn 'Amr ibn Zayd Manāh ibn 'Adī ibn 'Amr ibn Mālik ibn al-Najjār took over her. She bore him 'Abdallāh and Abū 'Umayr. Umm Sulaym accepted Islam and swore the oath of allegiance with God's Messenger. She was present at the Battle of Ḥunayn when she was pregnant with 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Ṭalḥa. Before that, she attended the Battle of Uḥud, giving water to the thirsty and nursing the injured.[1]

However, in five subsequent akhbār Umm Sulaym is the grammatical subject of her wedding; she marries Abū Ṭalḥa. The narrative quoted below is heterodiegetic, as it is Umm Sulaym's grandson Isḥāq who narrates about her, but she is the authority of his narrative, which could be equated with being the first narrator. Her grandson quotes her words and renders them in direct speech. Umm Sulaym stipulates the conditions for the marriage, and sacrifices her right to bride-gift for her husband's conversion to Islam. Before that, she openly opposes her first husband in the name of the new faith and teaches their son to become a Muslim.

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1 Ibid., 310.

أم سليم بنت ملحان بن خالد بن زيد بن حرام بن جندب بن عامر بن غنم بن عدى بن النجار وهى الغُميصاء ويقال الرُميصاء ويقال اسمها سهلة ويقال رُميلة ويقال بل اسمها انيفة ويقال رُنَيثة وأمها مليكة بنت مالك ابن عدى بن زيد مناة بن عدى بن عمرو بن مالك بن النجار تزوجها مالك بن النضر بن ضمضم بن زيد بن حرام بن جندب بن عامر بن غنم بن عدى بن النجار فولدت له انس بن مالك ثم خلف عليها ابو طلحة زيد بن سهل بن الأسود بن حرام بن عمرو بن زيد مناة بن عدى بن عمرو بن مالك بن النجار فولدت له عبد الله وأبا عمير وأسلمت ام سليم وبايعت رسول الله وشهدت يوم حنين وهى حامل بعبد الله بن ابى طلحة وشهدت قبل ذلك يوم احد تسقى العطشى وتداوى الجرحى

'Amr ibn 'Āṣim reported to us, Hammām related to us, on the authority of Isḥāq ibn 'Abdallāh, on the authority of his grandmother Umm Sulaym: She believed in God's Messenger. She said: Abū Anas [her husband] came, he had been absent, and said: 'Have you become foolish?' She said: 'I have not become foolish, but I believe in this man.' She said: She began to teach Anas [her son] and request of him: Say 'There is no other God than God', say 'I witness that Muḥammad is the messenger of God'. He said: And he did so. He said: His father said to her: 'Do not destroy my son!' She said: 'I am not destroying him.' He said: Mālik, Anas' father went out and an enemy hit him and killed him. When she heard of his death, she said: 'Surely, I will not wean Anas until he leaves the breast, if he lives; and I will not marry until Anas instructs me.' He said: She did what she had to do, he left the breast, and Abū Ṭalḥa proposed to her, when he was an unbeliever. She refused and said to him one day: 'What do you think about a stone that you worship and that can neither harm you nor benefit you? Or a piece of wood that the carpenter comes with and carves for you, does it benefit you?' He said: Her words made an impression on him. He said: 'Your words have made me think, and I believe.' She said: 'I will marry you; I will not take any other bride-gift from you than that.'[1]

Notably in this narrative is how direct speech is used to confirm Abū Ṭalḥa's important decision in this heterodiegetic narrative: 'Her words made an impression on him. He said: "Your words have made me think, and I believe." The son Anas ibn Mālik, who instructs Umm Sulaym as to when it is time for a new marriage, is also the transmitter of most of the akhbār in her biography. He is also the one who marries off his mother in the following narrative, which illustrates the need to be formally correct. Despite the fact that it is Umm Sulaym who stipulates the conditions for the marriage, she has

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1 Ibid., 311.

اخبرنا عمرو بن عاصم حدّثنا همّام عن اسحاق بن عبد الله عن جدّته امّ سليم: انّها آمنت برسول الله قالت فجاء ابو انس وكان غائباً فقال اصبوت قالت ما صبوت ولكنى آمنت بهذا الرجل قالت فجعلت تلقّن انسا وتشير اليه قل لا اله الا الله قل اشهد انّ محمدا رسول الله قال ففعل قال فيقول لها ابوه لا تفسدي علىّ ابنى فتقول انّى لا افسده قال فخرج مالك ابو انس فلقيه عدوّ فقتله فلمّا تلغها قتله قالت لا جرم لا افطم انسا حتى يدع الثدى حيّا ولا اتزوج حتى يأمرنى انس فيقول قد قضت الذى عليها فترك الثدى فخطبها ابو طلحة وهو مشرك فأبت فقالت له يوما فيما تقول ارأيت حجرا تعبده لا يضرّك ولا ينفعك أو خشبة تأتى بها النجّار فينجرها لك هل يضرّك هل ينفعك  قال فوقع فى قلبه الذى قالت قال فأتاها فقال لقد وقع فى قلبى الذى قلت وآمن قالت فانّى اتزوجك ولا آخذ منك صداقا غيره

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to ask Anas to marry her off. He is at that time probably very young, as the first narrative quoted above informs us that he recently left her breast. However, in these summarily told heterodiegetic narratives the time-gap, or ellipse in narratological terms, between two sentences may be considerable.[1]

> She said: 'If you witness that there is no God except God and that Muḥammad is God's Messenger, I will marry myself to you, I do not want another bride-gift than that.' He said: 'Let me think about it.' She said: He went and thought, then he came and said: 'I witness that there is no God except God and that Muḥammad is God's messenger.' She said: 'Anas, come and marry Abū Ṭalha [to me]'![2]

In narratological terms, Umm Sulaym has a subject-position in all other aspects in this narrative, but has to put herself in an object-position in the formal act of marrying. In this matter there is a parallel to Khadīja's biography. The woman, in these reports, has to have a *walī*, a male guardian who represents her in the formal marriage proceedings. In both narratives quoted here Umm Sulaym is the subject of marriage in her own direct speech, when she stipulates the conditions, but she is also subject of marriage in summaries: 'Umm Sulaym married him'.[3]

  Umm Sulaym is the only woman in the whole volume who is the subject of a verb connoting sexual intercourse, although together with her husband. This is the only instance when both the wife and husband are treated as subjects of the matrimonial sexual act. The Prophet asks Umm Sulaym and Abū Ṭalha: 'Did you have sexual intercourse this night?'[4] On the level of the story, Umm Sulaym is particularly active in bringing about the intercourse, just as she was active in the pious cause of Islam.  The story goes that her and Abū Talha's infant son dies when the father is absent. Before she tells him the bad news, she makes him have sexual intercourse with her. Her

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1 For ellipse, see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 43.

2 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 312.

قالت فهل لك ان تشهد ان لا اله الا الله وان محمدا رسول الله وازوجك نفسى لا اريد منك صداقا غيره قال لها دعينى حتى انظر قالت

فذهب فنظر ثم جاء فقال اشهد ان لا اله الا الله وان محمدا رسول الله قالت يا انس قم فزوج ابا طلحة

3 Ibid., e.g. 311.

4 Ibid., 317. ﴿عرستم الليلة؟﴾'arasa means to consummate the marriage, but that is not the case here, as Umm Sulaym and Abū Ṭalha already have a child together.

purpose is to get pregnant as the Prophet was going to bless the child she became pregnant with this particular night.

### 'Women are among the weak'

The conflict in women's textual positions sometimes occurs on the thematic level. This is especially noticeable in biographies on independent and strong women, in which derogatory statements about women are included. For example, in Umm Sulaym's biography, there are three reports in which women are likened to fragile glass bottles, in contrast to the reports about Umm Sulaym herself, who is depicted as far from fragile.

> Al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā reported to us, Zuhayr related to us, on the authority of Sulaymān al-Tamīmī, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik, that she was with the women of the Prophet, GBGS, when a camel driver drove their camels. The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'Anjasha, be gentle, you are driving glass bottles!'[1]

This ḥadīth is quoted by Lane with the help of, among others, Ṭabarī. According to medieval lexicographers, whom Lane relies on, the metaphor refers both to women's physical and mental weakness:

> Women being here likened to قوارير of glass because of their weakness of purpose, and their fickleness; for such vessels are soon broken and cannot be restored to soundness: meaning, that the man thus addressed, named أنجَشَة (Anjesheh, a freedman of Muhammad,) should not raise his voice and sing in driving the camels, for fear of the women's having their desires excited by what they heard; or for fear that the camels, hearing the singing, should go quickly, and jolt and fatigue the riders.[2]

Umm Sulaym, who is represented in her biography as a non-fragile woman, is thus the authority of a ḥadīth that conveys an image of women as

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1 Ibid., 315.

اخبرنا الحسن بن موسى حدّثنا زهير عن سليمان التميمى عن انس بن مالك عن ام سليم انها كانت مع نساء النبيّ صلعم وهنّ يسوق بهنّ سوّاق فقال النبيّ صلعم اى انجشة رويدك سوقك بالقوارير

2 Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. qrr.

physically and morally fragile. The same phenomenon is found in the biography of Umm Kulthūm, Arwā's daughter.[1] She accepted Islam and immigrated to Medina alone, without the consent and company of her family. Her brothers went out to take her home again, but were prevented by the Prophet, which occasioned sūra 28:1, forbidding believers to send back women who come to them in order to join Islam. In the story, Umm Kulthūm is a strong-willed and autonomous; she opposes her family and undertakes the dangerous journey to Medina without them. However, she motivates her requested protection from the Prophet with a speech which is not consistent with her actions.

> God's Messenger, I am a woman and, as you know, women are among the weak. Should you then send me back to the heathens, so that they might tempt me away from my religion while I may not be able to withstand them?[2]

The discrepancy between her words and the independence of her actions is paradoxical; she refers to women's weakness whereas she herself has shown proof of courage and determination. Possibly Umm Kulthūm's words are an attempt to explain the phenomenon of independently immigrating women without breaking the rules of gender. The fact that women immigrated independently is known from the Qur'ān and had to be recorded. Still, this phenomenon was not consistent with Islamic norms as they were later formulated. Umm Sulaym and Umm Kulthūm should probably be read as exceptions, and not examples, allowed under extraordinary circumstances, such as the formation of the first Muslim community.

## Ideological object-positions

Ideological objectification, as defined in Chapter 4, is also current in *Ṭabaqāt* Just as in *Nisā'*, this tendency is present in narratives with an Arab setting (i.e. which emphasize 'Arab' values more than 'Islamic') as well as an early Islamic setting (which is of course also Arab).

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1 Ibn Saʻd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 167-68.
2 Ibid., 167.

يا رسول الله انا امرة وحال النساء الى الضعفاء ما قد علمت فتردنى الى الكفار يفتنونى فى دينى ولا صبر لى

**The choice**

One khabar (60) in ʿĀ'isha's biography conveys a story which, together with its reference in the Qur'ān, has similarities with the act of ideological objectification, that is, the woman's willing submission to her husband, or any male guardian. In this case, she should not merely direct her subjectivity to the pious sphere; she should also make offers along with her submission. In the narrative God's Messenger gives ʿĀ'isha a choice, with reference to Qur'ān 33:28-29, where the wives have to choose between 'God and his messenger' and 'the present life and its adornment'. If they choose the latter, God's Messenger will set them free, that is, divorce them without any reprimand. If, on the other hand, they choose the former, they have to adhere to specific restrictions. Firstly, they have to obey God's Messenger, their husband (33:31). Furthermore, they are required to 'speak honourable words' (33:32), to remain in their houses, not to display their finery, to perform their prayers and to pay the alms (33:33). In reward, they will get the 'Last Abode' (33:29), double reward (33:31) and a special position; they are not "as other women" (33:32). The wives have to make more rigorous sacrifices than other women, but they will get a higher reward. One of the sacrifices they have to make is obedience; they have to obey God and his messenger, and thus both Islam and marriage involve their submission.[1] When God's Messenger presents the choice to ʿĀ'isha in the narrative, he asks her to take her time and think about it and ask her parents for advice. However, ʿĀ'isha takes a quick decision; she does not have to ask her parents for advice. She submitted to the restrictions more than willingly and as an act of piety.

Nevertheless, ʿĀ'isha broke the agreement made in the choice, something that is only alluded to in her biography. The mistake she committed, according to later interpreters, was that she went out from her home and engaged in political activities. A long section of her biography is devoted to her pious repentance (*tawba*) as an old woman, in the form of wishes she makes on her deathbed. She wishes that she were not born at all, or had been born a tree, a leaf, or a clod of earth (1:99, 101-103, and 105-106). These wishes are explained in khabar 103; it is repentance. Apparently, ʿĀ'isha needs repentance, as Abū Jaʿfar implores God to forgive her. However, what she has done that needs God's forgiveness is not mentioned here. There is

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1 The word used for obedience in 33:31 is *qanata*. This word is used in regard to God, but there is also a derivation of it, *qanīt*, which means 'a woman lowly, humble, or submissive to her husband'. Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *qnt*.

only one khabar (38) that mentions her political activity, her engagement in the events which led to the Battle of the Camel, as well as the battle itself. In this narrative 'Ā'isha is defended by 'Ammār when a man scolds her, emphasizing her status as the beloved of the Prophet and his wife in Paradise. It is the Prophet's feelings for her that protect her from being scolded, not her own actions. In another khabar (104) this event is probably referred to: 'I have caused mischief after the death of God's Messenger'. The word for causing mischief, *aḥdathtu*, means to originate an innovation that is disapproved in the Sunna and the Qur'ān, and in this case the innovation is probably a woman's involvement in politics. The last khabar in 'Ā'isha's biography alludes to the connection between the two events – her political engagement, which meant both metaphorically and physically that she broke her seclusion, and her repentance. She cries when she hears the recitation of the Qur'ān 33:53 in which the wives are instructed to stay at home, if they choose God and his Messenger. [1] This is what she has to repent, her transgression of the Prophet's command by leaving her home, which led to the Battle of the Camel and to civil war. She could not resist taking active part in the crucial happenings taken place outside her house. It was her disobedience, her refusal to abide in her home, as a passive subject, if not an object, which had catastrophic results, and which she had to repent at the end of her life. Her repentance constitutes the conclusion of her biography, as a plea to the readers for forgiveness.

## Subjugation to the husband as a pious deed and model for reconciliation

In *Nisā'* there are several examples of the notion of women's responsibility for the harmony of the marriage, by means of submitting to their husbands, obeying them and pleasing them.

This notion is also current in *Ṭabaqāt*. The power relationship between husband and wife is on some occasions represented as a process in which the woman intentionally and willingly subjugates herself under the rule of the husband, for the sake of the harmony of the family and, ultimately, the society. This process may be represented as a mode of reconciliation between spouses and solving of marital conflicts. In Abū Bakr's advice to his daughter Asmā, 'Ā'isha's sister, about how to solve a conflict with her

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1 On Ibn Sa'd and other medieval writers' understanding of the connection between sūra 33:33 and 'Ā'isha's political engagement, see Spellberg, *Politics*, 135.

husband, the solution is that she keeps quiet and patient. She should obey him and passively consent rather than actively opposing.

> Asmā' bint Abī Bakr was married to (under) al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām, who treated her harshly. She came to her father and complained about it to him. He said: 'My daughter, be patient, because if a woman has a righteous husband and he dies, and she does not remarry, they will be united in Paradise.'[1]

In fact, there is no real conflict between spouses here; the only conflict is within Asmā, between her emotions and wifely duties. Thus, she cannot oblige her husband to take part in reconciliation, but has to achieve it herself by means of suppressing her emotions, accepting the maltreatment and violence, and remembering her subservient position. Asmā's recompense for enduring her husband's harsh treatment is to reunite with him in Paradise, the reward for a pious deed. The father is on the one hand protecting his daughter's interests, for which investment in paradise is better than investment in this life, and on the other hand protecting men's interests and their general rights to treat their wives severely if they wish. Women's duty to be patient with their husbands is connected with the notion that the husbands are their tickets to Paradise. In this view, serving, obeying and pleasing their husbands are the women's main marital and religious duties, illustrated here by a ḥadīth in the biographical entry of Ḥuṣayn ibn Muḥṣan's aunt:

> Ya'lā ibn 'Ubayd al-Ṭanāfisī reported to us, Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd related to us, on the authority of Bashīr ibn Yasār, on the authority of Ḥuṣayn ibn Muḥṣan on the authority of his aunt, that she came to the Prophet, GBGS, on an errand. When she had finished, he said: 'Do you have a husband?' She said: 'Yes.' He said: 'How are you towards him?' She said: 'I only fail to do what I am incapable of doing.' He said: 'Keep your mind on

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1 Ibn Saʻd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 183.

ان اسماء بنت ابى بكر كانت تحت الزبير بن العوام وكان شديدا عليها فأتت اباها فشكت ذلك اليه فقال يا بنية اصبرى فان المرأة اذا
كان لها زوج صالح ثم مات عنها فلم تزوج بعده جمع بينهما فى الجنة

where you are in relation to him, because he is your Paradise and your Hell.'[1]

This ḥadīth is about women's endeavours and rewards – it says nothing about men. The possible continuation of this narrative could be the same appeal directed to men. However, several instances in the *Ṭabaqāt* suggest that this is an exhortation directed solely to women; only they have to guard their behaviour to their spouses as alluded to in the ḥadīth above.

    The model for marital conflict resolution above is elaborated on in a narrative about 'Ātika bint Zayd's marriage with the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Here, the conflict consists in 'Ātika's disobedience and unwillingness to comply with her husband's wishes. She apparently refuses to have sexual intercourse with him, as he married her against her will. As a punishment, he isolates her and does not visit her. The result of this punishment is positive for the husband; she begs him to come to her, and this time she wants to prepare herself for him. Possibly, this narrative is an illustration of a successful conflict resolution following the instruction in Qur'ān 4:34, where the solution for marital conflict consists solely of the wife's correction of her behaviour and submission to her husband's wishes. This is the verse which allows husbands to beat their wives as a last solution. In the khabar below, 'Umar only has to take the first step in disciplining his wife; he isolates her and does not have to beat her as she is readily and willingly obeying him after her isolation.[2]

    'Ātika bint Zayd was married to (under) 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Bakr but he died from her, and he had stipulated that she ought not to

Marin discusses Ibn Sa'd and his Andalusian contemporary Ibn Ḥabīb's renderings of this story: Manuela Marín, 'Disciplining Wives: A Historical Reading of Qur'ān 4:34', Studia Islamica 97 (2003) 14ff. In a khabar quoted by Dhahabī, Asmā's and Zubayr's son defends his mother against his father's violence, and 'she is freed', i.e. Zubayr divorces her. Marín, 'Disciplining Wives: A Historical Reading of Qur'ān 4:34': 15-16.
1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 336.

اخبرنا يعلى بن عبيد الطنافسى حدثنا يحيى بن سعيد بن بشير بن يسار عن حصين بن محصن عن عمته انها اتت النبى صلعم فى
حاجة فلما فرغت قال ذات زوج انت قالت نعم قال فكيف انت له قالت ما آلو الا ما عجزتُ عنه قال فأنظرى اين انت منه فإنه جنتك
ونارُك

2 However, wife-beating is not encouraged. The Prophet himself is given as an example in ḥadīth literature, and according to it, he disliked wife-battering and did not practise it. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 147-48, ذكر ضرب النساء , 'On beating women'. See Marín, 'Disciplining Wives: A Historical Reading of Qur'ān 4:34': 17, 22, who points to the restrictions which later Qur'ān interpreters made in this issue, and also to the ongoing debate which often preferred Muḥammad's sunna to the legacy of Qur'ān 4:34. Nevertheless, whatever is stated about this topic, the intention is clear: women should obey their husbands and force, or threat of force, is an acceptable treatment (even if it is not recommendable).

remarry. She retired from the world, devoted herself to God and did not remarry. Men proposed to her but she refused. 'Umar said to her guardian: 'Mention to her that I want to marry her.' He mentioned 'Umar to her, but she refused 'Umar as well. 'Umar said: 'Marry her to me,' and he married her to him. 'Umar came to her, went in to her and fought her until he overcame her. He had sexual intercourse with her and when he had finished, he said: 'Ugh, ugh…' expressing displeasure with her. Then he went out from her, he left her and did not come to her again. She sent her *mawlāh* [freedwoman] to him and asked him: 'Come, I will prepare myself for you!'[1]

'Umar is the absolute authority in this narrative; he is the only one who speaks and his words have to be obeyed. 'Ātika had ardently accepted the order her husband 'Abdallāh, son of the first caliph Abū Bakr, gave her not to remarry. 'Umar, in turn, does not respect this prohibition. He first mentions, formally, that he wants to marry 'Ātika, but does not consider her will. Since he is the caliph, the highest earthly authority, her guardian has to marry her off to 'Umar whether she wants it or not. The command is forcefully expressed in Arabic by the verb in imperative followed by the same verb in perfect: 'marry her to me and he married her to him' (cf. below, 223). The guardian obeys the caliph's command, but 'Ātika initially does not. She tries to resist his attempt to have sexual intercourse with her to complete the marriage. However, during his punishment, which consists in avoiding her, she undergoes a mental change. Now she wants him to come and she wants to beautify herself in order to please him. Thus, finally she submits herself to him willingly.[2]

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1 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 194.

ان عاتكة بنت زيد كانت تحت عبد الله بن ابى بكر فمات عنها واشترط عليها ان لا تزوج بعده فتبنلت وجعلت لا تزوج وجعل الرجال يخطبونها وجعلت تأبى فقال عمر لوليها اذكرنى لها فذكره لها فأبت عمر ايضا فقال عمر زوجنيها فزوجه اياها عمر فدخل عليها فعاركها حتى غلبها على نفسها فنكحتها فلما فرغ قال اف اف افف قال اف اف ثم خرج من عندها وتركها لا يأتيها فأرسلت اليه مولاة لها ان تعال فإنى سأتيهاً لك

2 Nevertheless, there are other models for reconciliation between spouses in *Ṭabaqāt* t, which do not depend on the wife's willing subjugation. When the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima complains about her husband 'Alī ibn Ṭālib's harsh behaviour towards her, the Prophet involves them both in the process of reconciliation, which is resolved by his intervention and 'Alī's rectification of his earlier behaviour: ibid., 16-17. Marín discusses the early akhbār about 'Alī's mistreatment of his wife. These occur only in the early sources, and disappear along with the sanctification of the two spouses. Marín, 'Disciplining Wives: A Historical Reading of Qur'ān 4:34': 12-13. In an account about Ḥabība bint Sahl whose husband beats her, Muhammad urges her husband to

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The wife's voluntary submission is further represented in the biography of Hind bint 'Utba.[1] Hind bint 'Utba, mother of Mu'āwiya, the founder of the Umayyad empire, is known in other historical records as one of the main figures in the Meccan opposition to the Islamic movement before her conversion to Islam.[2] While the narrative of 'Ātika's subjugation alludes to the Qur'ān, Hind's subjugation is more adhering to tribal warrior tradition. Just as in 'Ā'ishas biography, Ibn Sa'd chooses not to mention her political activities. Instead there are accounts of Hind's conversion to Islam and practising of the religion. The narrative quoted below admits that she is self-governing and she persists in choosing her husband herself. Yet she uses her independent will to make herself the object of a despotic man; she deliberately chooses a life in subordination and seclusion. Her father presents two alternative husbands to her, one man who would be a tolerant husband and let his wife govern, while the other man is known for his fierce jealousy and harshness.

> Mālik ibn Ismā'īl Abū Ghassān al-Nahdī reported to us, 'Umar ibn Ziyād al-Hilālī related to us on the authority of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Nawfal ibn Musāḥaq, an old man from Medina, from the 'Āmir ibn Lu'ayy clan, he said: Hind said to her father: 'I am a self-governing woman. Do not marry me with a man before you have presented him to me.' He said to her: 'As you want.' Then he said to her one day: 'Two men from your people have asked for your hand. I will not mention the name of any of them before I have described them to you. Concerning the first, he is the most honourable man with noble ancestry. You imagine him being reckless because of his negligence, but that is his mild and easy natural disposition.[3] He has good friends and good answers; if you follow him, he will follow you, and if you deviate, he will be with you. You will be able to take decisions when he is rich, and when he is weak, your opinion will be enough. As to the other, he has a noble origin, an excellent judgement in achieving grounds for

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divorce her, as she may not herself take initiative to divorce: Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* vol. 8, 326. This example is advised in the Qur'ān, 4:128 and 4:35, which involves both spouses and considers the feelings of the woman.
1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* vol. 8, 170-72.
2 See e.g. Abū Ja'far Muammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Ṭabarī*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald, vol. 7, *The Foundation of the Community* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 118 and 29-31.
3 The translation of this phrase is uncertain, أسجح could be used with speech, 'to talk gentle'.

respect and pride for his kinsfolk. He disciplines his family, they do not discipline him, and if they follow him, he will make things easier for them, but if they shun him, he will make things difficult for them. He is fiercely jealous, quick in suspicion and insists on a rigorous seclusion. If he is hungry, it is not a little, and if he is contested, he can never be overpowered. I have now described their circumstances for you.' She said: 'As to the first, he is wasteful towards his precious wife, agreeing with her whereas she might not have been prevented from becoming gentle after she has been arduous and loosing herself under her misconduct. If she gives him a boy, she will produce a fool; and if she gives birth to noble sons, it will be by mistake. Do not mention this one to me again! As to the other, he is a lord [*ba'l*] for the noble free woman. I really love his moral character and I agree to him. I will adhere to the lord's/husband's discipline, stay in my tent and avoid going out. My and his son will be worthy of being the protector of the family's women and defender of its troop, preserver of its right, the one who adorns them with grounds for respect. He is not dependent, and not a coward in devastating events. Who is he? He said: He is Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb. She said: Marry me to him, but do not throw me to him after easy bargaining, and do not be tough like a fierce warrior (?)...[1]

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1 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* vol. 8, 170-71.

اخبرنا مالك بن اسماعيل ابو غسّان النهدى حدثّنا عمر بن زياد الهلالى عن عبد الملك بن نوفل بن مساحق شيخ من اهل المدينة من بنى عامر بن لؤىّ قال: قالت هند لأبيها انّى امرأة قد ملكت امرى فلا تزوجنى رجلا حتى تعرّضه علىّ تعرّضه علىّ فقال لها ذلك لك ثمّ قال لها يوما إنّه قد خطبك رجلان من قومك ولست مسمّيا لك واحدا منهما حتّى اصفه لك امّا الأوّل ففى الشرف الصميم الحسب الكريم تخالين به هوجا من غفلته وذلك إسجاح من شيمته حسن الصحابة حسن الاجابة ان تابعتيه تابعك وإن ملت معك كان معك تقضين عليه فى ماله وتكتفين برأيك في ضعفه وأمّا الآخر ففى الحسب الحسيب والرأى الأريب بدر ارومته وعزّ عشيرته يؤدّب اهله ولا يؤدّبونه ان اتّبعوه اسهل بهم وإن جانبوه توعّر بهم شديد الغيرة سريع الطيرة شديد حجاب القبّة ان جاع فغير منزور وإن نوزع فغير مقهور قد بيّنت لك حالهما قالت امّا الأوّل فسيّد مضياع لكريمته مؤاتٍ لها فيما عسى ان لم تعصم ان تلين بعد ابائها وتضيع تحت جنائها ان جاءت له بولد احمقت وإن انجبت فعن خطا ما انجبت اطو عنّى هذا ذكر هذا ولا تسّمه لى وإمّا الآخى فبعل الحرّة الكريمة إنّى لأخلاق هذا لوامقة وإنّى له لموافقة وإنّى لآخذة بأدب البعل مع لزومى قبّتى وقلّة تلفّتى وإنّ السليل بينى وبينه لحرىّ ان يكون المدافع عن حريم عشيرته الذائد عن كتيبتها المحامى عن حقيقتها الزائن لأرومتها غير مواكل ولا زُميّل عند ضعضعة الحوادث فمن هو قال ذلك ابو سفيان بن حرب قالت فزوّجه ولا تُلقنى اليه القاء المتسلّس السلس ولا تسُمُه سوم المواطس الضرس استخز الله فى السماء يخر لك بعلمه فى القضاء

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This narrative has no allusions to Islam or Islamic correct behaviour; nonetheless, the underlying ideology is the same as in Abū Bakr's advice to Asmā' above, but this time it is the daughter's own choice. Hind does not want a husband who would treat her gently and allow her to act on her own command, and even take over his affairs. Such a husband would spoil her character and make her latent pride and sinfulness flourish. She prefers a husband who would treat her harshly and discipline her; she would willingly confine herself to her home and follow her husband's discipline. The gender ideology displayed here is blatantly hierarchical. The phrase *adab al-ba'l* refers to the husband as the master, the ba'l, who should have knowledge of what is good adab in the sense of discipline of the mind and good manners. The good manners a woman should adhere to are staying inside the qubba and avoiding going out. She wants to be governed, not to govern; she wants to be subjugated, not to dominate. It is as if there are only these two alternatives. No equal relationship may exist between wife and husband. He has to govern her so that she does not govern him. Furthermore, the husband is responsible for the behaviour of his wife and children, his dependants. If the weak dependants have no one to correct them, they might develop their worst character traits. Thus, according to this khabar, a woman who wants to be good should seek a husband who might discipline her. Hind's explicit reason for marrying this aggressive man is that if she has a son with such a man, he would grow up to a worthy man, who could fight for his clan and protect its women. Accordingly, a man who matches the expectations of manhood alluded to in this khabar, such as dominance, violence and jealousy, is better for a woman than a man who would treat her gently. Even if the manly man would make the woman suffer physically and suppress her subjectivity, he would give her a respected position in society merely by means of his manly qualities, which appears to be more important than anything else. A variant of this anecdote occurs in *al-'Iqd al-farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, but with the supplement that Abū Sufyān did not beat his wives.[1] Wife-battering was not, even in view of this hierarchical relationship, unreservedly approved.

The topic in question here, the submitting wife, is far from unique for the Arab or early Islamic setting as represented in 'Abbasīd literature. The urge for subjugating women in marriage is expressed in various folktales around

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1 See El Cheikh, 'In Search for the Ideal Spouse': 192-93.

the world.[1] Many of these are variants of 'the taming of the shrew' who was taken up by Shakespeare.[2] Self-sufficient and strong women had to be forced into obedience, in order to keep the 'right' gender balance. These tales were often intended to be humorous, and the forceful taming of the wife was laughed at.[3] Nevertheless, in the examples discussed above and in Chapter 4 the women are not forced into obedience – they submit to their husbands voluntarily. Furthermore, their submission may require a sacrifice, just as the wives' voluntary choice of God and his Messenger required that they lived under restrictions. Asmā' had, as we have seen, to submit to her husband's maltreatment and violence, and thus sacrifice her integrity. 'Ātika had to break her former husband's command to her and possibly sacrifice her emotions for him, in order to submit to the new and mightier husband. Hind, in turn, used her independence and strong will only in order to sacrifice it and subjugate herself to a controlling and aggressive husband. The idea that the woman's submission to her husband is not complete without her active sacrifice is explicit in a ḥadīth about the Prophet's advice to his daughter, as related by Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 238/853):

> One of the daughters of the Prophet went to him complaining about her husband, and she showed the Prophet the trace of a blow she had received. The Prophet told her: O my little daughter! Go back to your husband and your home. Certainly, a woman cannot be held to be virtuous unless her husband asks anything extraordinary from her. If a husband orders his wife to go from mount Aswad to mount Ahmar and back, this is his right. If I had ever thought of ordering a human being to prostrate before another, I would have ordered the wife to prostrate herself before the husband.[4]

By this extraordinary action the woman proves that she does not submit herself to her husband unwillingly – that she is even prepared to make efforts and sacrifices in her submission to him. Indeed, she uses whatever physical strength and endurance she has, only in order to prove her obedience.

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1 See Jurish's overview of this theme in Marilyn Jurich, *Scheherazade's Sisters: Trickster Heroines and Their Stories in World Literature* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 12ff.
2 See ibid., 25-26, n.10 for a comment on the female trickster's role in this play.
3 Ibid., 13.
4 Ibn Ḥabib (d.238/853), *Kitāb adab al-nisā'*, no.197. Translated by Manuela Marín, quoted in Marín, 'Disciplining Wives: A Historical Reading of Qur'ān 4:34', 12.

## Conclusion: models of authority

The choice of women as constant objects or passive subjects of conjugal activities is only a grammatical feature and does not simply reproduce real events; language does not straightforwardly reflect reality. Specific phrases may be stagnated idioms without any connections to the real situation. Yet, when this feature is constantly repeated in texts about women, who in other instances are the active subjects of the verbs, it indicates a normative directing of connotations. It is noteworthy that it is possible to use a construction where the woman is the active subject of verbs related to conjugal activities. In those cases, women are objects of marriage in formal language, while they might be subjects of marital verbs in informal language.[1] On the other hand, while women in most instances in *Ṭabaqāt* are grammatical objects of marital activities, they are grammatical subjects of pious activities. This phenomenon could be described as a paradox, but actually it has its locus in the Qur'ān, where for example sūra 33:35-36 maintains that women are men's equals with regard to piety, while several other sūras, such as 4:34, suggest that husbands and wives are unequal in matrimony. The grammatical feature is reflected on the thematic level. The few exceptions to it only add to this impression, as only extraordinarily independent women are subjects of marital activities, women who have often acted in men's spheres.

I suggest that the linguistic and thematic positions of women in *Ṭabaqāt* follow the pattern of a normative gender ideology, an ideology which provides men with authority in the field of gender relations. In this ideology, the construction of the woman as the passive and subservient party in marriage, while she acts as an individual in pious activities, aims to transferring women's ability and capacity of power from the arena of gender relations to other arenas in the society, here mainly piety. While women's roles in *Nisā'* are heterogeneous, and do not convey a single gender ideology, *Ṭabaqāt* is homogeneous with a more easily detectable pattern of gender relations. There seems to be a pattern for when and how women may act as subjects in the narratives (which, of course, does not necessarily have anything to do with the real conditions). As witnesses of an extraordinary period they may narrate. Narrating is part of their pious deeds and in piety

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1 Formal language is here used for the more rigid formulaic language of the introductions and other instances where the formal procedures are reflected, while informal is used for all other cases, when the language supposedly is less rigid.

they are always subjects. Even the apparent exceptions, such as some women's subject-positions in marriage, mostly fit into the ideological pattern. In some narratives in ʿĀʾisha's biography a woman addresses her as 'My mother' but is rejected by ʿĀʾisha: 'I am not your mother, I am the mother of your men' (1:34 and 52). With this utterance, ʿĀʾisha transcends her gender so as to be an acceptable authority for men and women alike. Likewise, the female war heroes have transcended their gender when they fight with arms for Islam and thus have attained the licence to be subjects of marriage.

As for ʿĀʾisha's comparatively strong position as subject, it seems to be connected with her authority in Islamic tradition; it displays her piety and favourable position with the Prophet, and enhances her trustworthiness as a transmitter of ḥadīths. This is consistent with the conclusion in Chapter 3, that narrative practices are associated with creation of authority.

Moreover, I suggest that the potential of ʿĀʾisha and other women, such as Umm Salama, to act as subjects is connected with male authority. Male authority is essential in a gender ideology based on a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. The issue in several narratives is how this male authority should be performed. In some instances the Prophet's authority is contrasted with a different kind of male authority, as in the examples about Abū Bakr above. The Prophet's authority is compassionate and promotes an inner and true obedience. It grants those subordinated to it some space to act, as we have seen in the cases of ʿĀʾisha and Umm Salama. The other kind of male authority is aggressive and often only capable of obtaining an outer obedience, a pragmatic obedience. Abū Bakr did not attain his wife's inner and true obedience, whereas she spoke freely with the Prophet. In ʿĀʾisha's biography, the Prophet's model is presented as a better alternative. He does not have to force his women, and when he gives them the choice, he allows them to decline his authority. Although Āʾisha, despite her acceptance of his authority, transgresses it on a certain occasion, her sincere repentance grants her forgiveness. Both concepts of authority are connected with ideological objectification, as the woman is required to submit herself willingly. The aggressive male authority might attempt to obtain the wife's willing submission by use of violence or threat of violence, as in the example of ʿUmar and ʿĀtika above. This kind of male authority is what Hind bint ʿUtba prefers, and it is connected with a normative view of men as aggressive and jealous not only in war and other manly activities, but also in marriage.

# Chapter 6: 'Arīb and the singers

Contrary to 'Ā'isha, who is the autodiegetic narrator of several of the narratives in her biography, 'Arīb does not, for the most part, narrate. Likewise, there are only a few female narrators in *Aghānī* compared with *Ṭabaqāt*. Instead, 'Arīb speaks and acts on the level of the narrative. 'Arīb and 'Ā'isha have one thing in common – they are both authorities in their fields.

In some anecdotes in 'Arīb's biography she gives musical judgments and bestows money or gifts on talented musicians and poets (2:15 and 2:51). Her knowledge of songs is extensive and several authorities agree that she had composed a thousand or more songs, which she had collected in notebooks (2:4-7). When the caliph al-Ma'mūn and his brother Abū 'Alī dispute about a song, they ask her to help them (2:49). In this anecdote, 'Arīb displays her passion and commitment to her profession, as she continues to sing even though she is feverish and, in addition to that, is stung by a scorpion. Moreover, the author Abū al-Faraj defends her against her criticizers and praises her musical knowledge and skill (2:8-9, and also 1). As to her authority in good manners and eloquence, it is part of her role in the 'Abbāsid court circles and cultural elite where she is also, according to Bray, 'an outlet for male individualism'.[1] Bray's description of 'the urban Abbasid slave-heroine' in romantic literature has some similarities with 'Arīb as she appears in her biography: 'She is not a courtesan but a soul-mate, who educates her lover in monogamous love. At the same time, she may train him in the arts, making him a fit companion for princes and eligible for patronage and advancement.'[2] 'Arīb educates Isḥāq ibn Kundājīq, of whom she was passionately fond, in khabar 42. She asks him to give a share from a banquet he was invited to, and when he sends her simple food, 'bread, meat and sweets', she gives him a sharp reprimand: 'Your barbarian, your fool! Do you think I am a Turk, the meanest of soldiers, as you send me bread, meat and sweets?' concluding with the exhortation: 'Do not use common people's manners as etiquette'.

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1 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 138.
2 Ibid., 137.

## Love and friendship

The female singers in *Aghānī* are often subjects in their interactions with men; they speak, act and define the situation. Besides, even if they tend to be linguistic and thematic objects in their relationships with their owners and the caliphs, it is not automatically so. The situation may at any time be turned to their favour, as this is one of the most beloved topos of the anecdotes. Admittedly, the strong position of the female slave in her relation with men, especially in love affairs, is a literary motif in 'Abbāsid literature. In this aspect, the female slaves inherited the role of the Arab heroine, whose tragic destiny was shared by her beloved in romantic tales, as described in Chapter 4 (167-68).[1] Romantic love demands two equally active participants, equally loving and suffering, and in 'Abbāsid literature, romantic love fosters individuals: 'Literary convention asserts that individualism can find fulfilment only if the normal pattern of male-female authority is altered so that power and legal entitlement do not become the sole guides to conduct.'[2] The female slave is a soul mate and educator, not only by means of her superior education and skills, but also by her love.[3]

'Arīb's love affairs are one of the main topics in her biography. She is the concubine of several caliphs – she claims that she has slept with eight caliphs in khabar 40 – but these relationships were not love affairs but master-slave relationships. Especially the rival brother caliphs al-Amīn's and al-Ma'mūn's dealings with her are recorded in her biography, where al-Ma'mūn is described as having felt real affection for her (see 2:22, and also e.g. 23).[4] She is the object in her formal relationship with them; she has nothing to say when they either seize her from her master or buy her. Yet, in scenes from her and al-Ma'mūn's life, she acts independently, just as 'Ā'isha did in her life with Muḥammad (see 2:28-29, and 54-55). According to her biography, the caliph al-Ma'mūn was very devoted to her. He certainly values her highly, measured in money, but she constantly deceives him. His devotion may on occasion overturn their power relationship, at least outwardly, as

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1 Ibid., 137-38.
2 Ibid., 138.
3 For romantic love-stories between men and their slave girls, see Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Slave-Girl Lost and Regained: Transformations of a Story', Marvels and Tales: *Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004), Bray, 'Verbs and Voices,' 171-77, and Julia Ashtiany Bray, 'Isnāds and Models of Heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Ṭā'ī, Tanūkhī's Sundered Lovers and Abū 'l-'Anbas al-Ṣaymarī', *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 1, no. 1 (1998): 12-15.
4 Her relationship with the caliph al-Ma'mūn is emphasized in later works, and both Ibn Sā'ī and al-Nuwayrī call her 'Arīb al-Ma'mūniyya, see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol. 5 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1344/1925), 94, and Ibn Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, ed. Mustafa Gawad (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d), 55.

when he kisses her foot in khabar 23. His high regard of her makes her cheating more telling, as in khabar 55 where the discrepancy between his confidences in her and her cheating of him is the comical point of the narrative. In another narrative about her affair with Ibn Ḥāmid, she uses trickery to meet with him, behind the back of the caliph (2:28). At the same time, it seems to have been a certain understanding between them, as when only al-Ma'mūn understands 'Arīb's allusions (2:32-33).

The other kind of love affair consists of her affairs with various men, especially Ibn Ḥāmid, whom she is passionately in love with (2:28). According to some narratives, they married and had a daughter (2:28 and 29). She already loves Ibn Ḥāmid when the caliph seizes her, and her affair with him is a romantic love story, which legitimates the cheating. When al-Ma'mūn finds out about her affair he confines her to a dark shed as punishment (2:29). She is isolated in detention for one month, without seeing the light and with only bread and salt to eat and water to drink. When she is released, she is far from downcast – she walks out of the shed singing a song about her illegal love. Al-Ma'mūn's subsequent commentary is interesting: 'She will never become righteous'. To be righteous here is probably to submit to her owner, and her role as a slave and woman. The caliph deems her thus impossible to discipline and lets her have her own will. Ideological objectification is thus no option for 'Arīb; her individuality is too strong. Other men 'Arīb is in love with are Ḥātim ibn 'Adī, whom she escapes to from her owner but soon gets tired of (2:17-18), Hārūn al-Rashīd's son Abū 'Īsā (2:34) and the servant Ṣāliḥ al-Mundhirī (2:35). She is often the initiator of these affairs in her biography, and the power-play is fairly equal, or to her favour.

The relationships between women and men in Aghānī are far from always about love; there are also many relationships built on friendship. In the society of *Aghānī*, personal ties between people are essential, and the personal meetings are most valued. Besides, the narrative situations of the biographies depend on personal meetings. Consequently, the setting of several narratives in 'Arīb's biography is the majlis, involving a larger or smaller number of participants (see above, 45). A number of anecdotes depict her friendly welcoming of men in her home. She has a warm relation to the singer 'Allawayh, whom she embraces and kisses when he visits her in al-

Marākibi's home (2:43).[1] In another case, she visits her 'well-mannered and elegant brothers' (2:52). Other women seem also to have had close relationships with men based on friendship. Shāriya helped a male friend of hers when he was accused of the murder of the caliph al-Mu'tazz.[2] When he in turn was attacked, she had to hide in the house of another male acquaintance. The report is eager to prove that the relationship between them was of a purely chaste kind. She used to call him her father and refused to become a financial burden to him; she brought everything that she needed. Before that, she had held a remarkably high position at the court. The caliph al-Mu'tamid ate only the food she had cooked.[3] Jamīla was a woman with famous majālis and many friends. Ḥabāba used her elevated position as the caliph's favourite to help her male friends. Badhl was a close friend to 'Alī ibn Hishām, owner of slave singers and patron of the famous musician Ishāq al-Mawṣilī. Baṣbaṣ, 'Inān, Mutayyam, Faḍl and 'Ubayda were other women who had male friends and met with them at majālis or other occasions. Friendship between women is not often depicted, but that is rather due to the male orientation of the narration. However, Bid'a is 'Arīb's co-host in khabar 41, though she is her slave. In 2:60 'Arīb calls Bid'a and Tufḥa, another of her slaves, her friends and amusers.

## Objects of their masters, subjects in their professions

The introductions to the women singers' biographies in *Aghānī* rely on formulaic expressions, in the same way as in *Ṭabaqāt*, although with a different content due to the different objectives of the works. The introductions give room for the critic's evaluation of the women's professional and other qualities, and they are always positive. The first words in 'Arīb's biography are striking:

'Arīb was an excellent singer and a poet with faultless poetry. She had beautiful handwriting and diction. She was exceedingly charming, beautiful and elegant with a gorgeous figure. Moreover, she was a talented lute-player with a superior command of composition, with knowledge of melodic modes and strings as well as the art of memorizing and reciting poetry and adab. (2:1)

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1 Cf. Michael Cooperson, 'Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative', *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 109, who suggests that 'Allawayh was allowed to visit 'Arīb due to the fact that he was homosexual.
2 *Aghānī*, vol. 16:13.
3 *Aghānī,* 16:14.

Among other singers who are likewise eulogized we find Danānīr, who was one of the most beautiful and elegant women, as well as one of the women who knew most about adab, poetry and song.[1] Mutayyam was also one of the most beautiful women; according to her biography she was one of the best singers with the best knowledge of adab.[2] Badhl was one of the best singers of her time, and *ustādha* (craftsmaster, teacher) for all the good singers. She was beautiful and elegant and a prominent lute-player.[3] 'Ubayda was one of the leading composers and the best woman ever in playing the *tunbūr*.[4] She was certified by the most prominent artist and teacher of her time, Ishāq ibn Ibrahīm al-Mawsilī, and given the title of ustādha. She was also an outstanding beauty with a very nice voice. These eulogising expressions are one pole of the formulaic set-up in the introductions; the other pole comprises the names of the women's owners and teachers.[5] This information corresponds to the genealogical information in the biographies of the pious women. It shows the women's slave status and also the kind of education they had access to. In these formulas, they are always grammatical objects, just as they of course are objects in the story about the purchase and training of them. In the biography of the singer 'Inān, for example, the formula is verbalized as: 'al-Nāṭifī bought her and trained her'.[6] In Shāriya's biography, we are told that 'A Hashemite woman bought her, educated her and taught her singing'.[7] In her biography, Faḍl the poet 'grew up in the house of a man from 'Abd al-Qays. He sold her after he had educated her and trained her.'[8] In 'Arīb's biography, this information occurs in khabar 10 and not in the introduction: ''Arīb belonged to 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl, master of al-Rashīd's stables and conveyances [*marākib*]. He is the one who trained her, educated her and taught her singing.'

This formulaic information is the prerequisite for the women's professional career and their proficiency; they are born slaves and given careful education. Using the same terminology as in Chapters 4 and 5, the female

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1 *Aghānī,* vol. 18:65.
2 *Aghānī,* vol. 7:293.
3 *Aghānī,* vol. 17:75.
4 *Aghānī,* 22:205. Ṭunbūr is a pandure, a kind of lute with longer neck than the 'ūd: H. Farmer, 'Ṭunbūr,' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed, 10, eds. Th. Bianquis, C.E Bosworth, E van Donzel, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000).
5 See Kilpatrick, Book of Songs, 25.
6 *Aghānī*, vol. 23:85. اشتراها الناطفي ورباها
7 Ibid., vol. 16:3. اشترتها امرة من بنى هاشم فأدبتها وعلمتها الغناء
8 Ibid., 19:301. نشأت في دار رجل من عبد القيس وباعها بعد أن أدبها وخرجها

singers and poets are endowed with strong subject-positions in their professions, while they are objects in the formal descriptions of their relationships with their owners. Their proficiency in their profession is similar to the first Muslim women's proficiency in piety. On the other hand, their relationships with their owners and teachers are not entirely comparable with the object-positions of the pious women in these narratives. The singers' initial object-position rather functions as a starting point for their professional career. However, although 'Arīb is cheating and defying the caliph al-Ma'mūn she is an exception; most slave singers cannot defy the wishes of the caliphs.

## Language and power

The women's object-positions as slaves are reflected in the terminology. The technical term for 'slave woman', *ama* (pl. *imā'*), is generally not used for individual singers.[1] The most common way of expressing slave status is the genitive construction, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, verbs signifying possession. Any word for a woman could theoretically be put in construct state and thus make her a slave, but by far the most common is jāriya. A woman who is referred to as someone's girl is mostly nameless, as in 'Arīb's biography: 'one of our jawārī related to me' (2:35), and 'It was related to me by one of al-Mutawakkil's jawārī' (2:36). Other words for 'girl' could also denote a slave status, depending on the context. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī gives 'his girl' (*sabiyya lahu*) to Abū Dulaf when the latter declares that he enjoys her singing.[2] The word sabiyya does not have the same connotation of slave status as jāriya has, but the imperative 'take her' makes clear that this particular girl is a slave: 'The girl sang and my father enjoyed it. He said to her: "You are good! You are good!" Then Ibrāhīm said to him: "If she is good, take her! I brought her here for your sake only."'[3] To give someone a

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1 Lane, *Lexicon* , s.v. *'mw*. Often it is used with a certain disdain, as when the caliph Yazīd is blamed for preferring to stay at home with his imā' instead of managing his official duties, such as conducting the Friday prayer in Ḥabāba's biography, Aghānī, vol. 15:132. Yazid is also blamed for showing excessive grief when Ḥabāba is buried, with the words: 'She was a slave [ama] among slaves [*imā'*]'. هي امة من الاماء, ibid., vol. 15:145. This term also has a negative allusion when used for slaves other than the portrayed singers. When Khayzurān is jealous of the princess 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī's mother, whom her husband the caliph al-Mahdī is infatuated by, she says: 'He has not possessed a slave [ama] who was more painful for me to endure than she,' ما ملك أمة اغظعليّ منها, ibid., vol. 5:28. Shāriya's mother, who is negatively described in her biography, is also called an ama, ibid., 16:3.

2 'Ulayya's biography, *Aghānī*, vol. 10:171-72.

3 *Aghānī*, vol. 10:172. وغنت الصبية فطرب ابي وقال لها وقال لها أحسنت أحسنت فقال له ابراهيم ان كانت احسنت فخدها فما أخرجتها الا لك

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slave is a sign of generosity on behalf of the master, while the slave herself is the absolute object of this episode.

As to terms related to marriage, women's positions differ from *Ṭabaqāt*; in Aghānī women may be grammatical subjects as well as objects of verbs connected with marriage. There is no specific dominating tendency, except for marriage with a caliph, who is always the subject, as when the caliph al-Mutawakkil marries the slave singer Farīda.[1] The object-position of the woman seems to be less important if the husband is unnamed or from a lower or equal social standing. It is not constant as in the pious women's biographies. For example, 'Arīb married the servant Ṣāliḥ al-Mundhirī secretly (2:35). 'Arīb and Ibn Ḥāmid are both objects in regard to the caliph al-Ma'mūn, who 'married him to her' (2:28) or 'married her to him' (2:29). The freed slave Duqāq married several military leaders and scribes.[2] She is variously linguistic subject and object in her marriages. Shāriya's jāriya Sharra marries a singer and 'Ubayda al-Ṭunbūrīya's mother marries her protector's assistant.[3] There is a special formula for women who have gained power over their husbands: *'ghalabat 'alayhi'*, 'she overpowered him'.[4] This formula indicates that conjugal relations may be seen as formalized power relationships; each alternative had its own term. Another word for women's success with their husband is *ḥuzwa* (see above, 115), which also signifies the adjustment of a hierarchical power relationship; that is, the woman has, due to her own efforts, succeeded in gaining a solid position in her master's household.

In addition, if a woman artist gives birth to a child, the father is not always mentioned, contrary to the women in *Ṭabaqāt*, who always gave birth to the husbands' children. In regard to sexual reunion, the subject position of the woman is possible as in khabar 55 in 'Arīb's biography, where the reciprocal form of the verb is used. In 'Arīb's biography, the verb *nāka* is used for sexual intercourse, but there is also a legal term for concubinage, *waṭ'*, which denotes both 'trample upon' and 'having sexual intercourse'. In the

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1 *Aghānī*, vol. 3:115.
2 *Aghānī*, vol. 12:282. That a singer could be an acceptable marriage partner for prominent men is also indicated in Badhl's biography. She was freed when al-Amīn was killed, and 'Prominent military leaders, scribes and Hashemites wished to marry her, but she refused and lived independently until she died.'

ورغب اليها وجوه القواد والكتاب والهشاميين في التزويج فأبت وأقامت علِى حالها حتى ماتت , *Aghānī*,  vol. 16:81.

3 *Aghānī*, vol. 16:13 and vol. 22:208.
4 Among these women we find two slave concubines and singers, 'Ulayya bint al-Mahdī's mother who 'overpowered' the caliph al-Mahdī and Habāba who 'overpowered' the caliph Yazīd, and used her power for helping her friends: *Aghānī*, vol 15:28 and 15:127.

biographies of pious women, it is this word that is used to distinguish between the prophet Muḥammad's legal wives and his concubines. The legal dimension of waṭ' is implemented in the biographies of women when the slave poet Faḍl claims that she is a free woman, because 'her father had sex with her mother [waṭi'a], and she [her mother] gave birth to her [Faḍl] by him'.[1] This statement implies that her father was a free man who had legal sex with his female slave and that the child born under such circumstances should be free. The word could also be used for sexual intercourse with a free wife. One anecdote in Shāriya's biography illustrates the similarity between the wife's and the concubine's conditions.[2] In this anecdote, the caliph al-Mu'taṣim wants the prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī to liberate the singer Shāriya, who claims to be a free woman. The prince promises to comply with the caliph's wishes. However, this is an anecdote about successful cheating and of course Ibrāhīm deceives them. He pretends that he sets the girl free and marries her, but before that he had given Shāriya to his daughter and thus both the release and the marriage are invalid, as it is not allowed to free someone else's slave. Shortly thereafter Ibrāhīm buys Shāriya back from his daughter. Shāriya does not know anything about this; she thinks that she was married until she discovers the truth when Ibrāhīm died: 'He had sex with her as his slave, but she thought that he had sex with her as a free woman'.[3] Apparently, her life as a concubine does not differ in effect from that of a free wife as long as her master is alive.

The formal situation of the slave singers in *Aghānī* is unstable, which is reflected by the language. The female singers and poets enter and leave different roles combined with different levels of independence and access to power. They may start as slaves who are sold and bought as commodities. Later, they may become concubines, confined or not confined to seclusion, and they may attain the status of umm walad, and thus be liberated after the death of their masters. They could also be liberated without being an umm walad. As freed slaves, they could choose to marry. Some singers enter a relationship with the caliph, without their necessary consent. In that case, they may or may not be restricted by seclusion. They may divorce, and remarry one or several times. They may also choose to remain unmarried,

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1 *Aghānī*, vol. 19:201, أباها وطىء أمها فولدتها منه

2 *Aghānī*, vol. 6:6-8.

3 *Aghānī*, vol. 6:8, كان يطؤها عى أنها أمته وهو تتوهم أنه يطؤها على أنها حرة

and live as independent singers with their own musical schools and slave musicians. Among the expressions describing these unstable positions, there is *ḥajabahā* 'he secluded her', denoting a regulated sexual relationship, i.e. marriage or concubinage, and *kharajat* 'she went out', when the relationship is over. That is to say that the man is the subject of the act of restricting while the woman is the subject of the act of leaving the restriction.

Badhl 'goes out' when her master the caliph al-Amīn is killed as she is *mudabbara*, that is, her master has stipulated that she will be liberated after his death.[1] Later, after the death of 'Alī ibn Hishām, the caliph al-Mu'taṣim seizes all his slave women and marries the singer Badhl the Younger. [2] Then, the story tells us, Badhl the Elder goes out with the other slave women, except for Badhl the Younger because she is under his covert and he does not let her go out.[3] When 'Ubayda, the tunbūr-player, who is a free woman, become pregnant with her lover, he secludes her (*ḥajabahā*). [4] However, according to the anecdote, she resists the seclusion and meets with her lovers secretly. In this case, seclusion probably denotes marriage, for later, after their daughter has died, he divorces her, and she goes out. Words connoted with ḥijāb and sitr may signify a man's control of a woman when he has a regulated sexual relationship with her, but it is also used with the woman as the subject, when she herself wants to control a situation in accordance with her independence and free will. It signifies in such cases 'preventing someone from entering', or 'hiding oneself'.

As an example, Badhl had her own house in Baghdad, with her own slaves.[5] She was very rich and famous for knowing thirty thousand melodies. Several prominent military and administrative leaders asked her to marry them, but she declined. She was a close friend of the famous musician 'Alī ibn Hishām, owner of slave singers. In one anecdote she is angry with him, after she has heard that he declared that he no longer has any need for her; the four thousand songs he learnt from her are sufficient.[6] When he visits her wishing to resolve their conflict, she first refuses to let him in. Her servant then begs her not to deny him entrance and he is permitted. The verb used for denying entrance is *taḥjubīn*, which is connected with ḥijāb. Badhl secludes herself from her former friend in order to show her displeasure with him.

1 *Aghānī*, vol. 16:81.
2 *Aghānī*, vol. 16:81.
3 Ibid., لم يُخرجها
4 *Aghānī*, vol. 22:208.
5 *Aghānī*, vol. 17:75.
6 *Aghānī*, 17:76-77.

After she lets him in, she continues to demonstrate her displeasure by putting a scarf (*mandīl*) on her head and does not move to welcome him.[1] Thus, she uses the scarf as a lighter form of seclusion, to create a distance between her and ʿAlī. The scarf symbolizes the alienation between the former friends, but also Badhl's independence. It is she who decides who may come near her, physically and emotionally. In the case of ʿArīb, words connected with *sitr* are used in her struggle for freedom. Already in 2:17, when ʿArīb's lover-to-be hides in her master's house, the verb used is *istatara*. Before that, ʿArīb hid (*satarat*) the rope she needed for escaping from her master. Then, in 2:18, the participle of form five is used, with the connotation 'covered': ʿArīb is *mutasattira mutakhaffiya*, that is, she covers herself in order to hide; the cover is hence a device for keeping her freedom.

Other expressions could be used as well to denote changing positions. Mutayyam is freed when her master ʿAlī ibn Hishām dies, as she is his umm walad.[2] When the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim hears of that, he takes her to his palace in Samarra and isolates her there. The caliph is all-powerful in this narrative. Although Mutayyam is freed and unmarried, her life is severely restricted by the caliph's decision; she even has to ask him for permission to go to Baghdad and visit her children. Maḥbūba recites poetry to her master al-Mutawakkil's relatives from behind a *sitr*.[3] She used to sit behind a curtain at the caliph's back when he was drinking, which was a sign of her elevated position. Farīda, the caliph al-Wāthiq's concubine, is also in favour and sings to men from behind a sitāra.[4]

## Power, authority and (dis)obedience

In Chapter 4, women's positions were classified according to the dominant positions in the various narratives. However, the distribution of positions may be intricate within each narrative, especially the longer. A subject-position in a narrative indicates some degree of power, although it may be limited. When there are several subjects in a story, the characters are involved in a network of subjects and also power relationships within the narratives (see above, 31). Bal's model for disclosing their power relationship may be functional with questions such as: does the subject of

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1 See Rosenthal's article on the mandīl, a common piece of clothing that was used by women and men alike; it could be simple or luxurious, and it had multiple uses, from handkerchief to clothing: Rosenthal, *Four Essays*, ch. 4.
2 *Aghānī*, vol. 7:294.
3 *Aghānī*, vol. 22:200.
4 *Aghānī*, vol. 4 113-19.

speaking speak in a monologue with imperatives or a dialogue, and in that case, is it a 'real' dialogue, how is action distributed among the characters, and whose actions affect the others and whose do not?[1]

Khabar 12 in 'Arīb's biography depicts her early life-story, her birth and the tragic destiny of her parents. It is a typical heterodiegetic summary, interrupted by one single monologue. In this narrative there is an evident correspondence between linguistic subject or object positions, degree of power and ability to speak. The father's monologue is the dramatic peak of the narrative, to which all agents have to relate. His imperative has to be obeyed, since the power to act as subjects tends to be distributed according to the characters' status. Yet this hierarchy will be challenged, although secretly.

> 'Arīb's mother was called Fāṭima. She was a harem inspector of Umm 'Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khālid. She was a tidy girl. Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā saw her and fell in love with her. He asked Umm 'Abdallāh if she could marry him to her, which she did. When Yaḥyā ibn Khālid heard the news he rejected it, and said to him: 'Must you marry someone whose father and mother are not known? Buy instead of her a hundred slave girls and throw her out!' He threw her out, and lodged her in a house in the quarters of Bāb al-Anbār, without his father's knowledge. He entrusted the protection of her to someone and visited her often. She gave birth to 'Arīb in the year 181 [797]. When she died she was 96 years old. He said: 'Arīb's mother died when Ja'far was still alive. He gave her to a Christian woman and appointed her as her wet-nurse. When the incident with the Barmakids happened, she sold her to the slave-trader Sinbis, and he sold her to al-Marākibī. (2:13)

'Arīb's mother, Fāṭima, initiates her daughter's life-story, but is from then on a constant object. Thus she joins the silent troupe of women in the periphery of the biography, who constitute the background in several narratives. She is the object of Ja'far's desire and covert rebellion. Ja'far sees her, falls in love with her and wants to marry her. When his father disallows the marriage, he brings her out and lodges her somewhere else, under the protection of someone he trusts. She does not act independently; she is only the

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1 See the model in Bal, *Death,* 32ff.

grammatical subject of verbs relating to biological and corporal transformation – she gave birth to ʿArīb (*waladat*) and finally she died (*mātat*). Umm ʿAbdallāh, the mother of Jaʿfar's nephew, is a subject of action; she is also an authority with the power to marry off her servant to Jaʿfar. She acts as a helper in the network of subjects, carrying the story forward at a decisive moment, but she is also an authority to a certain degree. We do not know if she actually had the power to say no to Jaʿfar, but the word used here, 'asked' (*saʾala*), does not in itself signify a command. Umm ʿAbdallāh has some power and Jaʿfar comes next in the hierarchy. He takes what he wants, with the help of his sister-in-law; he has power to move the servant girl Fāṭima's life space as he pleases. We are not informed whether she is consenting or not – it is obviously not important. While Fāṭima is the absolute object, Yaḥyā is the absolute authority; he is the only one who is allowed to speak. His order is delivered in a monologue and his imperative 'throw her out!' is obeyed by his son: 'he threw her out'. However, Jaʿfar's compliance is immediately followed by his rebellion. He observes his father's order, but undercover he defies it, acting in accordance with his own wishes. It is this rebellion ʿArīb has inherited, together with the consequences of her grandfather's utterance: 'Do you marry someone whose father and mother are not known? Buy instead of her a hundred slave-girls and throw her out!'

These words might be read as an indication of the patriarchal discourse of the time, making the most of the Qurʾānic acceptance of men's sexual relations with slave women (*Qurʾān* 4:3). All the same, it is part of the irony permeating ʿArīb's life-story. Yaḥyā 's granddaughter will herself become a slave, but she is far from an anonymous object, which a man may buy and then dispose of. She is a named acting woman, distinguished from the numerous anonymous and passive jawārī. Her mother was a free woman with unknown parents, that is, parents who were not part of the society's elite. Conversely, ʿArīb is a slave woman with ancestors who belonged to the absolute top of the society. ʿArīb's mother was the object of her father's passion, while ʿArīb herself is the acting subject of all her love affairs.

**Pragmatic obedience: to obey without obeying**

Correctly speaking, there is no absolute authority in the narrative analyzed above. Certainly, the father's imperative had to be obeyed, but after having been obeyed, it is immediately violated. The fact that the father's imperative is followed but at the same time disobeyed is the irony of the narrative, an

irony involving the discrepancy between the 'ideal' and the 'real'. The classical Arabic prose conveys this irony by its subtle play with verb forms. The order works on both a semantic and a linguistic level. The father's imperative of the verb *'akhraja* is immediately followed by the particle fa-together with the perfect of the same verb: 'bring her out and he brought her out'.[1] Ja'far did not only obey his father's order, he obeyed it exactly in the way his father pronounced it. After having obeyed his father's order verbatim he feels free to involve another action, the verb *'askanahā* ('he settled her'), which certainly was not his father's intention, but was not explicitly forbidden.

This way of complying with an order is a common linguistic device in 'Arīb's biography, e.g. when Isḥāq obeys the caliph's order in khabar 3: 'calm down, and I calmed down',[2] when the caliph al-Ma'mūn orders 'Arīb's lover Ibn Ḥāmid to come to him, 'he ordered him to come and he came' (2:22),[3] or when 'Arīb asks Jaḥẓa to sing: 'She ordered me to sing, and I sang' (2:15).[4] In 2:26, the caliph orders Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī to buy 'Arīb for him: 'he commanded him to buy her and he bought her'.[5] In these cases, it is the person who has more formal power in the relationship who gives the order. When 'Arīb commands the young Jaḥẓa to sing, he is only a boy and she is a famous singer, who likes his singing and bestows money on him. The language in this narrative emphasizes 'Arīb's power-position; she does not give the money herself: 'She gave an order to give me fifty dinar'.[6]

The impression of this linguistic peculiarity is that an order should be observed exactly as it is uttered, which has the implication that an order only has to be observed in its semantic meaning, that only exactly what is asked for has to be done, nothing more. This implication delimits and diminishes the required obedience. As in the case of Ja'far above, who obeys only to be able to disobey, obedience is pragmatic. Ja'far obeys only as much as he has to so as to make the impression that his father's order is observed. Linguistically, his father's authority is absolute; it produces orders that have

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1 وأخرِجها فأخرجها

2 اسكن وسكنت

3 فأمر بإحضاره فأحضر

4 فأُمرت بأن أغنّى فغنّيتُ

5 فأمره أن يشتريها فأشترها

6 وأمرت لى بخمسمين دينار

to be obeyed verbatim. Yet, in the story, the father is not a successful authority, as his power does not require inner obedience, only external.

Pragmatic obedience, to obey without obeying, is a productive trope in 'Arīb's biography. Cheating is part of the concept of pragmatic obedience and it is also connected with hiding and secrets. In khabar 17, 'Arīb plans her escape secretly; hiding the ladder she is producing. Moreover, the narrator has heard that after her escape to Ibn 'Adī, he lends a lute from her old master, so that she could sing for her. Thus, her master was doubly cheated. In the subsequent narrative, khabar 18, she covers herself when she sings in the gardens, so that she can practise her profession without being recognized.

### 'I am a free woman!'

While only the grandfather is allowed to speak in the narrative that immediately precedes 'Arīb's birth, 'Arīb is the main speaker in the rest of her biography. As a speaker, she is also a focalizer, although 'Arīb sometimes disappears in the dealings of men in the narratives about her life-story, or becomes only an object of their transactions. In the heterodiegetic flow of her life-story only a few monologues are held. 'Arīb's public claim to be free, with two variants, is the most remarkable of them. Her scream for freedom in khabar 18 is in a way an answer to her grandfather's imperative. We will see how her speech interacts with the embedding for creating a dramatic effect, or, as in its variant in khabar 22, toning down its rebellious implications.

In khabar 18, 'Arīb first escapes from her master al-Marākibī to her lover Ḥātim ibn 'Adī, and then again from Ibn 'Adī. After she has left her lover, she sings with her friends in Baghdad in disguise. One day, when she is singing in a garden, her master's nephew recognizes her voice and sends for al-Marākibī, who apparently lived not far away. He comes and 'grabbed her collar, seized her and hit her with a hundred lashes'. Meanwhile, she is screaming: 'Why are you killing me? I cannot endure you, I am a free woman! If I am a property, then sell me! I cannot endure being oppressed.'[1] 'Arīb's declaration of freedom is remarkably courageous as she is being whipped at the same time with a hundred lashes. She declares that she is a free woman in contrast to property, yet 'free' is here more than just the opposite of a slave. 'Arīb uses her freedom to sing in gardens with her

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يا هذا أما لستُ أصبر عليك انا امرة حرة, إن كنتُ مملوكةَ فبعنى لستُ أصبر على الضيّقة 1

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musician friends. Being free, she chooses to practise her profession on her own, without being under the control of her master and teacher. In the first section of this narrative, her scream of freedom is the dramatic peak, while the dispute between the caliph al-Amīn and al-Marākibī is the peak of the second half of the narrative. Initially, 'Arīb plays an active role, but she is subsequently overshadowed by the men's interactions. After her short rebellion in speech and action, it is once again the men who act and she becomes the passive object, desired and contested about by al-Marākibī and the caliph al-Amīn. Nevertheless, it is her scream of freedom that induces them to act; it causes her owner's regret and the caliph's desire for her. Furthermore, in the end of the narrative, before the poem in which her former lover expresses his grief for her, it is once again 'Arīb who acts. She escapes from al-Amīn's palace after he has been killed and takes refuge with her former owner.[1]

The story in khabar 22 is somewhat different. Here, 'Arīb escapes from her master to Ibn āmid, which induces al-Marākibī to complain to the caliph al-Ma'mūn. It is Ibn Ḥāmid who will be punished, and he is brought to the police office. When 'Arīb learns of it, she comes to defend him, this time with uncovered face. Her scream for freedom is slightly different from the one in khabar 18, and the rebellious implications are toned down: 'I am 'Arīb – if I am a property, sell me! If I am free he has no access to me.'[2] The difference in wording corresponds to a disparity between the two narratives. In khabar 18, 'Arīb defends herself, while in khabar 22, she defends her lover. With 'I am 'Arīb' she refers to herself as being well-known, a phenomenon more than a person, with more or less legendary qualities. At least it is the impression the second time this expression occurs, in khabar 55. Here, the statement 'I am 'Arīb' implies that nothing else than extraordinary behaviour could be expected from this woman. In these cases, 'Arīb plays the role of a female court jester. Additionally, the scene in khabar 22 gives a somewhat ridiculous impression, with 'Arīb coming on a donkey to defend her nude lover in the police station, just as he is going to be flogged. In khabar 18 'Arīb claims to be free; then she hedges her previous declaration

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1 Following the chronology set in her biography, 'Arīb is supposed to have been very young when this happened. The caliph al-Amīn had heard about her when his father was alive, and asked him to give her to him (2:18). When his father, Hārūn al-Rashīd, died, 'Arīb was twelve years old. 'Arīb relates herself: 'In Muḥammad's [al-Amīn] day, I was fourteen and already composed songs.' (2:44) Al-Amīn was killed when 'Arīb was sixteen (2:18 and 22). However, her adventurous life did not stop there, as she lived to the age of ninety six (see 2:13), and apparently was active until a high age.

2 انا عريب إن كنتُ مملوكةً فليبيعنى وإن كنت حرة فلا سبيل له علىّ

and insists that in case she is bounded after all, she would rather be sold than stay with her owner. In khabar 22, the hedging comes first and the freedom declaration never occurs. Moreover, in this narrative, ʿArīb's possibilities to act are even more restricted – the story is rather about men's dealings with her: the caliph al-Amīn, the prince and musician Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī, the caliph al-Maʾmūn, her owner al-Marākibī and the judges al-Wāqidī and Qutayba ibn Ziyād. Certainly, she is the acting subject when she flees to Ibn Hāmid and when she comes to defend him, but these events are diminished in the narrative; it is rather the extravagant purchases made by the caliphs that are in focus. The disputes about her take place first between al-Amīn and her owner, then between al-Maʾmūn and her lover, and then between al-Maʾmūn and al-Marākibī. Moreover, it is her lover who is punished for her escape to him; hence she is not regarded as a subject of her own actions. Nevertheless, in the last sentence of the narrative, ʿArīb is the subject of the action; she 'made him feel utmost affection and love for her'. The caliph won this battle about the possession of her; he used his official power to get hold of her. Yet she is the last subject and is capable of utilizing the position she is forced into, when she uses her unofficial power to get the most possible advantages of the situation. Following the concept of patriarchal bargain, she is a master in maximising her life-chances (see above, 18).

## A free woman's paradox

When ʿArīb's father Jaʿfar defied the order of his father Yahyā, he did it covertly, without leaving any external traces. Similarly, Umm Muḥammad defies the norms under cover of seclusion. The story about Umm Muḥammad is found in khabar 61. She lives in her father's house and wants to take her neighbour Abū Muḥallim as her lover, but she has to do it secretly. She lets him in at night and ʿArīb sings for them. However, Umm Muḥammad has to conform to the norms for free women and thus she protests when her lover mentions her name in a poem, as that would 'remain a disgrace for me forever'. The 'double life' of Umm Muḥammad, listening to music and presumably adhering to adulterous sex in the nights, and at the same time caring for her reputation, is narrated as being without conflicts. In fact, the two poles of her double life resemble each other. She sees the man from inside her house, he does not see her; she invites him to her house, she does not go out to be seen in public; and her concern is not to be mentioned in a poem. She is unseen and unheard of, if it were not for ʿArīb and her public

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announcement of her story. Publicity is the only conflict in her story, and 'Arīb is aware of that; hence she explains that 'the main character of this story is dead, or else I would not have told it'. The institution of seclusion is thus Umm Muḥammad's refuge, behind which she can hide in order to commit illicit sex on her own command. Her obedience to the norms is pragmatic; she adheres to the rules outwardly only to be able to violate them.

## Discourses of desire

The anecdotes in the third part of 'Arīb's biography are mainly homodiegetic testimonies about men's meeting with 'Arīb. The male narrator either takes active part in the actions, or functions as a bystander, a mere witness. It is often he who initially focalizes the narrative, but the point of several anecdotes is that 'Arīb refuses to be focalized. The comical points of these anecdotes lie in the questioning of the gender structures of the prevalent order, which are challenged by 'Arīb's speech and action.

In some anecdotes 'Arīb speaks openly about her desires; these anecdotes could probably be categorized as belonging to the genre of *mujūn*, 'profligacy' (see below, 230). Thematically, they have to do with taking command of the discourse, and possibly the focalization; the humour in them resemble the anecdote in Nisā', where a woman who was charged for immorality proudly confessed greater sins (see above, 145-46). They are composed as verbal battles, which the most eloquent wins. The most eloquent is always 'Arīb. She takes command of the discourse, and as the discourse in this case is about explicit sexual matters, the most eloquent is the most challenging and shocking. Furthermore, the discourse of desire in 'Arīb's biography is not always a battle, as when 'Arīb induces Ibn Ḥāmid to sleep with her as a means of reconciliation in khabar 38 and 39, a topic we have already seen in *Nisā'* (above, 153).

In khabar 40 'Arīb refuses to be focalized by the male narrator, or any other man in his company. Here, 'Arīb outwits the typical strategy of power deployed by the male company, the ridicule. The company speaks about 'Arīb and laughs at her while she is sitting in the periphery, unable to hear them clearly. She is segregated as a mark of honour, but the segregation rather enhances her alienation due to sex and age.

> One day I was at my brother Abū 'Abbās' house, and 'Arīb was there, sitting separately on the seat of honour. Her jawārī were

singing among us, and behind their curtain. When the caliphs were mentioned, I said to my brother: ''Arīb said to me: Eight of them had sex with me, but the only one of them I desired was al-Mu'tazz, because he looked like Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd.' Ibn al-Furāt said to me: I turned to one of my nephews and said to him: 'What do you think about her desire today?' He laughed, but she noticed it, and said: 'What are you talking about?' I refused to answer her, and she said to her jawārī: 'Stop!' They did so and she said: 'They are free to go away, all of them, if you do not inform me about what you were talking about! They are free if I become annoyed about anything that has happened, even if it is despicable!' I told her the truth, and she said: 'So what? Regarding the desire, it is as it should be, but the instrument is not working.' Or she could have said: has become exhausted. 'Return to whatever you were doing!'

When al-Mu'tazz took over the caliphate, 'Arīb was sixtynine years old. Her male company laughs at the thought of an old woman's desire, but she refuses to be laughed at and segregated.[1] Her desire is not laughable, not different: 'So what? Regarding the desire, it is as it should be, but the instrument is not working'. She uses a metaphor for her sexual organ which is commonly used for men, since the male organ is seen as the active one; āla is an instrument, a tool, and, according to Lane, used for the male sexual organ.[2] When 'Arīb uses it, she is also questioning the gender-based active-passive dichotomy of the sexual act which is presupposed by the terminology for sexual relations. 'Arīb gets the last word, but she is not unchallenged in this anecdote. The comment, 'Or she could have said: has become exhausted', has a moral implication. There is a significant difference between 'not working' and 'exhausted'. The latter may be morally charged, while the first is neutral – the instrument may have ceased working due to age or sickness. There are at least two discourses in this anecdote, one which 'Arīb is in control of, and another, hidden discourse, the discourse of the morally distressed defender of the prevalent order, the narrator. However, 'Arīb uses a similar metaphor in the poem in 2:20, where she alludes to her sexual organ as being 'pliant'. The important thing in the anecdote quoted above, is that

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1 It is notable that the son of al-Mu'tazz, the only caliph 'Arīb felt desire for, is Abū al-Faraj' main source. Ibn al-Mu'tazz had himself written a book about her (2:9).
2 Lane, *Lexicon* , s.v. *'wl*.

'Arīb is able to defend herself verbally, and get the last word. Narratologically, one may claim that the battle is between two different focalizations of 'Arīb's action, that of 'Arīb herself and the one of the laughing company.

'Arīb's discourse of desire which refuses differences based on gender and age is further developed in khabar 41. The setting is homely: 'Arīb is offering cakes in a motherly manner and singing for the guests to feel comfortable. However, the narrator seeks to change the focus from motherly care to sex.[1] But 'Arīb gets in immediate control of the new focus; she does not even let him ask his question. Moreover, her answer to her own question displays a desire that is unambiguously corporal: 'My condition is a hard penis and a fresh breath. If he in addition owns a commendable beauty and good looks that may be praised, his value will be raised, but the first two are necessary for me.' The desired man is a body, an object just as women often have been described in literature. 'Arīb's desire is no different from a man's expected desire and her move from the caring to the genital should not be considered astonishing. 'Arīb's poem to her lover in khabar 19 demonstrates this attitude. The form of the poem is the typical ghazal where a male poet describes an exchangeable woman's corporal advantages.

The institution of seclusion, which divides between the private and the public, is challenged in khabar 20. 'Arīb's blasphemous negligence of this boundary is the precise comical point in this anecdote. The narrator and his company meet a caravan with women's covered camel litters (*hawādij*) on their way to a military campaign. When the narrator recites a scornful poem about 'Arīb, who is said to sit inside one of the litters, he apparently behaves 'like young men do'. 'Arīb on her part does not behave like women do. The poem the narrator recites, which is the poem in khabar 16, describes her action with a certain approval of her courage, and without any explicit sexual vocabulary. 'Arīb's answer, on the contrary, reveals the sexual subtext of 'Īsā's poem. Ignoring the insult, she takes command of the dialogue, and gets the last word. The narrator's attempt to disgrace her fails, and he is the one who is pushed away. This anecdote is an example of 'Arīb's command of verbal battles, and it is also an anecdote about 'Arīb's disobedience of the rules, rules that she, being a slave and a singer, does not have to follow, but which she implicitly adheres to when she puts herself in the free woman's

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1 Food and sex are connected in classical Arabic literature; they are al-aṭyabān 'the two good things': Geert Jan van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourse: Classical Arabic Literary Representation of Food* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 109-18.

position, secluded inside the covered litter. Her disobedience further illuminates the free woman's paradox. As long as she stays inside the litter, she is one of the secluded, honourable ladies. Yet 'Arīb does not ignore an insult, an opportunity to display her wit. She is never speechless, which is a part of her eloquence, and possibly of her pride and honour.

Arīb is a slave and a singer, and when the character 'Arīb speaks openly about her desire, she lives up to the readers' expectations, alluded to by the expression 'I am 'Arīb'. When a free woman, Umm Muḥammad, acts in accordance with the same discourse she has to do it more discreetly – she has to act in secret (see above). 'Arīb is allowed to do the opposite; she violates the rules openly and with great dramatic effect. In fact, she has secrets in her life, she hides and escapes secretly, as we saw above, but she can also, whenever she wants, openly reveal her secrets. She is the opposite of a free woman, who has to guard her secrets carefully under the cover of seclusion.

Anecdotes about desire are present in other singers' biographies in *Aghānī*, but not so abundant as in 'Arīb's biography. One vulgar proverbial sentence with explicit sexual meaning is attributed to two singers at the court of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd: 'The cunt is in more need of two pricks, than the prick of two cunts'. The singer Duqāq is said to have a fan with this sentence written on it.[1] The declaration is also attributed to the singer Danānīr, who is reported to have written it on a wall on the road to Mecca.[2] The statement has a subversive implication, expressed in a court where the caliph is said to have had more than two hundred concubines.

Numerous anecdotes in *Aghānī* are formed as verbal battles where the point is to get the last word. Analogous with them are the poetic battles, a popular activity for poets and other well-expressed individuals at the time. The poetic battle consists of poems composed in dialogues, where the quickest and wittiest of the two wins. In some of the biographies of women in *Aghānī*, such dialogues make up the main part. Such is the case with the poets Fadl and 'Inān, who were engaged in verbal battles with male poets. These battle dialogues are initiated sometimes by them, sometimes by the male poets, but they mostly get the last word. The verbal battle in the biographies of the women's singers and poets are battles between men and women. In *Nisā*', the battle was often between a named man and an anonymous woman, who had the passive role in the beginning of the anecdote, but soon got the upper hand

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1 *Aghānī*, vol. 12:284.    الحر إلى أيرين أحوج من الأير إلى حرين
2 *Aghānī*, vol. 18:68.

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and won the battle with a witty remark, which the man failed to answer. In the singers' biographies in *Aghānī*, the battle mostly has a sexual meaning, and sometimes the topic is the opposition between the male and the female genders. These poems belong to the genre of mujūn. Women could master mujūn just like they could master any discourse.[1]

As defined by Rowson, mujūn 'was applied both to behaviour, and particularly sexual behaviour, which flouted societal and religious norms, and to the literary expression of such behavior'.[2] 'Arīb mastered both according to her biography, as she both ignored sexual decorum and boasted about it. She is certainly an anti-hero, like other masters of mujūn, a genre which is, according to Meisami, both anti-religious and anti-heroic.[3] Possibly it is no coincidence that the last part of 'Arīb's biography, five songs and akhbār, is not about her, but the two most famous mujūn poets, Abū Nuwās and Bashshār ibn Burd, both famous for their erotic poetry.

The singer Duqāq, lady-in-waiting for the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's daughter Ḥamdūna, was known for her elegance (*ẓarf*),[4] mujūn and youthfulness (*futuwwa*). However, once she loses a poetic duel she has initiated, when she writes a poem about her vagina to Hamdūn.[5] He is incapable of answering, but a friend advises him to let a transsexual poet (mukhannath) look at his penis and describe it.[6] The penis was then depicted in terms connected with violence (it tears clefts apart),[7] religion (it is likened to a minaret) and power (it accomplishes justice).[8] The poem leaves Duqāq at a loss for an answer – the penis won.

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1 Cf. Gert Borg, 'Lust and Carnal Desire: Obscenities Attributed to Arab Women', *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 3, no. 2 (2000), which includes some translations of women's mujūn in *Balaghāt al-Nisā'*, by Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr. He presents the anecdotes with a strong reservation: 'The stories that will be presented in translation here are scabrous, obscene and to a certain extent tasteless', Borg, 'Lust and Carnal Desire': 149.

2 Rowson, 'Categorization,' 52.

3 Meisami, 'Arabic Mujūn Poetry: The Literary Dimension,' 9.

4 Actually, she is more than elegant, as ظرف means 'Excellence, or elegance, in mind, manners, and address or speech': Lane, *Lexicon* , s.v. ẓrf.

5 *Aghānī*, vol. 7:283.

6 مُخَنَّث I use the word 'transsexual' for *mukhannath* here, as this term does not imply the man's sexual preferences. Sometimes it is translated 'bisexual', or 'effeminate'. Rowson describes the mukhannath as a 'man who adopts nonsexual feminine attributes of appearance or behaviour', Rowson, 'Categorization,' 69. A mukhannath was at this time often an entertainer, a musician or a buffoon at the court: Rowson, 'Categorization,' 71.

7 يفتق الفتوق

8 يقضى الحقوق

## Poetry and narrative: two discourses, two focalizations

Poetry might be inserted in a narrative in order to comment on it (see above, 37-38), which is also the case in 'Arīb's biography. When the poetry comments on the prose narrative, it allows a different style and approach. While the narrative summarily retells 'Arīb's life-story, without emotions or values, the poetry may symbolically express emotions aroused by the event in the narrative. Van Gelder points to the function of poetry in *Thousand and One Nights* as conveying a 'visual element', much like the illustrations in modern translations of the work: 'In pre-modern times the visual element in the Nights is conveyed mentally, in the similes and metaphors of the poems'.[1] In 'Arīb's biography, poetry may convey a sort of visual element, namely the vision, or, in narratological terminology, the focalization of an event. The heterodiegetic narrative does not help readers without previous knowledge, more than a thousand years after its creation, to understand the symbolic value of 'Arīb's actions. The poetry, on the other hand, may express one person's emotions in regard to this action, or his focalization of it. It is the focalization of an individual's feelings, but these are not independent of the morals of the society. The emotions aroused reveal underlying values and clarify where the limits for the acceptable are broken.

'Arīb's actions in the story are focalized in poetry in khabar 17 and 55. The narrative in khabar 17 is heterodiegetic and a part of 'Arīb's life-story, her flight from her first owner down the wall on a ladder that she fabricated herself out of lute strings. The story is told summarily, without emotions, and without any markers of its possible extraordinary character. Nevertheless, after the narrative a long poem by her owner's son is inserted. The poet retells the story about 'Arīb's flight, but this time estimating 'Arīb's action: she 'did a wonderful thing'. The poet's admiration should be understood as irony, but still it is an admiration which is symptomatic for the anecdotes in which the formally subordinated person takes control over a situation. 'Arīb acts with courage: 'she mounted a difficult and dreadful beast', and cleverness: 'she waited patiently'. 'Arīb is likened both to a gazelle and a wolf, and her owner is 'wolves' prey'. Her owner is the loser, a 'destitute cuckold' who 'beat his face and tore his shirt'. The owner is thus blamed for not being able to keep the woman in secure seclusion and for having underestimated her capacity; she looked like a gazelle but acted like a wolf. The message in this poetry is in line with the anecdotes in *Nisā'* where

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1 van Gelder, 'Poetry and the Arabian Nights,' 15.

women are encouraged to test their men regarding whether they live up to the male ideal or not (see above, 150-52). In the example by Abū al-Ḥasan, the woman should test the man in order to give him the possibility to display his manly virtues. If he fails, he is a donkey, and the woman becomes the master with the whip. 'Arīb obviously does not intend to test her master, yet he is tested and fails. He is the one to blame, not 'Arīb, who becomes the master of the situation.

### 'Arīb and the hospitable woman

Khabar 55 is a homodiegetic anecdote; the narrator takes active part in his own story and is also one of its focalizers. The anecdote displays two versions, or two focalizations, of the same story, 'Arīb's monologue about her actions and the narrator's retelling of them in the form of a poem. Thus 'Arīb focalizes something that has happened outside the narrative, while the poem in turn is the narrator's focalization of 'Arīb's speech. The context is unusually dramatic. Normally, the drama of the anecdotes takes place in the dialogues and is not illustrated by the setting, which mostly is the home of 'Arīb or someone else. The dramatic setting in this narrative, the dark night with thunder and lightning, serves to emphasize 'Arīb's exceptional undertaking, which is to leave the caliph's camp in the middle of the night and meet with her lover. Several narratives in 'Arīb's biography depict her unfaithfulness to her owner. Being the caliph's concubine, she is governed by the same rules as his wives, and a sexual relation with another man would be considered adultery. However, due to 'Arīb's cunning, she overturns the hierarchy and becomes the master of the situation. Although without knowing it, al-Maʾmūn is the ultimate cuckold in this story. The mighty caliph as a cuckold is of course comical, but the humour of the anecdote is more than that. The contrast between the dramatic setting, the sound of hoofbeats which stirs the narrator's fright, and the familiar face illuminated by the flash of lightning, is also one of the comical points of the anecdote. Instead of confronting an enemy warrior from the Byzantine camp, the narrator meets 'Arīb, who has defied the weather, darkness and the caliph for completely different purposes. 'Arīb has in this anecdote, as in a few others, assumed legendary qualities, alluded to by her talking about herself in the third person.

The cuckold motif is related to the distribution of power and the difference between the official power and the unofficial, the overt and the secret. Al-

Ma'mūn commands the narrator, Ḥamdūn, who has to obey him and ride out in the dark and unfriendly night. The caliph is the absolute authority, but he has no power at all over 'Arīb's actions. Her disobedience is explicit. She does not have to hide it for al-Ma'mūn, which would make it a pragmatic obedience, as he does not believe in it even when her disobedience is displayed for him. Although 'Arīb performs her rebellious actions under the cover of the dark night, she more than willingly speaks about them. Ḥamdūn is the one who initiates the dialogue, but 'Arīb takes control of it and he fails to answer. Ḥamdūn is upset, and as a loyal subject he wants to tell the caliph the truth, but his version of the truth is unsuccessful. He finally understands that he is powerless, both in relation to the official power, the caliph, and to the unofficial power of 'Arīb.

There are two versions of 'Arīb's actions, her own speech and Ḥamdūn's choice of poem. She puts a rhetorical question which she answers herself. In 'Arīb's monologue, she proposes two potential courses of events, one pious and one profane: 'Do you think I prayed with him? Or recited from the Qur'ān to him? Or studied jurisprudence [*fiqh*] together with him? Fool, we reproached each other, discussed, became reconciled, drank, sang, made love with each other and departed.' The pious alternative is rejected as unlikely while the profane is admitted as reasonable. Still, 'Arīb's two possible careers, unlikely or not, have a common trait, defined by her own words. In both of them, the woman and the man are described as a team consisting of two equals, or with the woman as the active party. She is not only the subject of the verbs; various reciprocal forms are used stressing that the activities are carried out together with the Ibn Ḥāmid.

The first activity 'Arīb refers to is performing the voluntary prayer of Ramaḍān, an endeavour that reveals particular piety. [1] This activity is improbable, but if she had done it, she would have done it as the grammatical subject, together with Ibn Ḥāmid. The next activity is reciting the Qur'ān; she is the subject, the one who recites, while he is the object, the listener. [2] The third activity is studying Islamic jurisprudence. The form of the verb used, the third form of *darasa*, first person, together with the pronominal suffix *hu*, him, suggests mutual activity: 'I studied jurisprudence together

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1 صليتُ معه التراويح

2 قرأتُ معه أجزاءً من القرآن

with him'.[1] These pious undertakings might be out of the question for 'Arīb and Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid in their nocturnal meeting. Nevertheless, the mere suggestion implies that for another couple it would have been an option – an option in which the woman is an equal, even the active, party, at least linguistically. Moreover, what they really did at their meeting they did in a grammatically unusually equal way. The sixth form of the verb is used: *ta'ātabnā*, *taḥādathnā* and *tanāyaknā*, 'we reproached each other', 'conversed with each other', and 'fucked with each other'. Form eight, *iṣṭalaḥnā* also implies mutuality; 'we became reconciled one with another'. The most remarkable of these words is *tanāyaknā*, which seems to be exceptionally unusual. The narrator fails to answer 'Arīb, and his attempt to tell the caliph is unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the poem conveys his focalization of the events, his version of 'Arīb's action, the poem, and it is accepted by the caliph as possible.

> Salute the ruins of the camping-site of the hospitable woman, a sociable woman, who makes the best man of a people equal to the worst. / If they, who spend the night at the highland / by Ṭayy's two mountains and the lowland of al-Ḥabl / remain sitting with her until the shadow becomes short, / so, when they depart, everyone of them would have had a reunion with her.[2]

The opening of the poem, as well as the scenery, associates with pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. This is naturally safe for the narrator, since it is far away from the 'Abbāsid court in Baghdad as well as from the military camp in Anatolia, but it also insinuates the eternal nature of the sinful woman. The hospitable woman by Ṭayy's two mountains is probably supposed to be comparable with 'Arīb, who rides out in the night of Anatolia to meet with her friend and lover. Still, the differences are significant. The hospitable woman is immobile, passive and indiscriminate. She is sitting by the two mountains of Ṭayy while the men are coming to her. She does not discriminate among

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1  دارسته شيئاً من الفقه   Following Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *drs*; form III of *darasa* in this case means 'I read with him each of us teaching the other'.
2

ألا أطلالاً لواسِعة الحَبل / ألُوفٍ تُسوّى صالِحَ القوم بالرَّذْل / فلو أنَّ مَن أمْسى بجانب تَلْعة / إلى جَبَلَيْ طَى فساقطة الحَبّل / جُلوسٌ إلى أن يقْصُرَ الظِّلُّ عندها يراحُوا وكُلُّ القوم منها على وَصْل

men, she accepts anyone. 'Arīb, on the other hand, is bold and mobile. She takes great risks to meet with one particular man, while she obviously offends others, such as the narrator. The activities she performs with her lover are all on equal terms or with her as the active party. She is movable, it is she who visits her lover, not the reverse, and she does it on horseback under quite severe weather conditions. She also insists on formulating her own version of her doings; the question 'What have you done at his place?' does not necessarily demand such a detailed answer. In short, she expects herself to have power over her actions, as well as the verbal representation of them. However, her representation of the events is not accepted, or not understood by the narrator, who transforms them into a possibly less frightening story about a woman who is passively accepting instead of actively demanding. The narrator's focalization is supported by al-Ma'mūn, as he deems the poem credible. The pre-Islamic poetic treasury, which is operative for various purposes in 'Abbāsid literature, is effective here. Still, 'Arīb's own speech about her action dominates this anecdote and is supported by the context. 'Arīb's position is not threatened by this poem, in contrast to Hind bint Asmā', mentioned on page 115-16 above, whose betrothed refused to marry her after he had heard a defaming poem about her alleged promiscuity.

## Conclusion: authority and disobedience

This chapter has treated women's biographies in *Aghānī,* a work that is in many aspects different from *Ṭabaqāt*. While *Ṭabaqāt* could be expected to be somewhat ideologically loaded, as it is part of the sacred history of Islam, Aghānī combines history-writing with entertainment. Still, there are similarities between the two women who are in focus in these analyses, 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr and 'Arīb. Except for the narrative similarities in their biographies, which are composed of akhbār, the two women are both authorities within their fields. In addition, the analyses of the dominant positions available for the women on the various levels of the text reveal a dichotomy that is to some extent similar.

   In the biographies of pious women, we saw that the formal proceedings of marriage are reflected in language by women's overwhelming grammatical object-position in terms connected with marriage, while they are endowed with a strong linguistic and thematic subject-position as to piety. Correspondingly, the women slave singers are objects in the formal owner-

slave context, while they are often depicted as subjects in their professions. However, their behaviour and actions as independent individuals are emphasized in their stories, while the formal dependence on husbands or owners is not an important issue.

Several narratives in *Ṭabaqāt* seem to explore models for male authority. Authority is constantly present in the biographies of women in *Aghānī* as well, but rather than a model, it is here a reality in a changing society, where positions are unstable, hierarchies not necessarily durable and authorities challenged. Hierarchy in *Aghānī* mostly has to do with owner-slave relationships, where the slave may be the concubine of her owner. There is also an ever-existing hierarchy between the caliph and his subjects. He is the absolute authority whom everybody has to obey, but in this capacity he is often secretly deceived, as al-Ma'mūn who is the best cuckold (in the case of 'Arīb). In 'Arīb's life-story we find hierarchical relationships between father and son (Yaḥyā and Ja'far), spouses (Ja'far and Fāṭima) and owner-slave (al-Marākibī and 'Arīb). The presumable object of such power relationships often resists the power imposed on her/him, openly ('Arīb against al-Marākibī), or secretly (Yaḥyā against Ja'far, and 'Arīb against the caliph al-Ma'mūn). Power relationships are frequently shifting and in humoristic peaks they are turned around.

In 'Arīb's biography, authority and hierarchies are constantly challenged, be it hierarchies of gender or social status. Here there are no traces of ideological objectification or of the Prophet's example of male authority. The supreme authority in 'Arīb's biography is always unsuccessful, even if it seems to be successful. It does not oblige more than pragmatic obedience, as in the case of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, 'Arīb's grandfather, and the caliph al-Ma'mūn. In this respect, Yaḥyā's authority is similar to that of Abū Bakr in khabar 130 in 'Ā'isha's biography. Umm Rūmān's obedience towards her husband Abū Bakr was pragmatic; it was the disclosing of her secret defiance that was wrong, not the defiance itself. 'Arīb is not even always pragmatically obedient, she is explicitly disobedient; yet, due to her wit and eloquence, she always gets the upper hand in the story. Some narratives about her interactions with men are comparable with verbal battles, and although they do not contain any clear-cut dialogues, they tend to focus on the verbal expression as the main event in the story. Eloquence is here to be in command of the discourse, which is equivalent to being in command of the situation. The contents of elquence vary depending on the discourse; a discourse about sexual desire demands explicit sexual language, preferably

provocative. This phenomenon was also observed in *Nisā'*, as we saw in the section on sexual intercourse (e.g. 115). The different codes of behaviour and speech for different occasions make obscene language correct in some circumstances.

However, there are several indications that 'Arīb is seen as an extraordinary person who could not be measured with the criteria for free women, nor for slave women. Abū al-Faraj, the extradiegetic narrator, declares in his introduction that she is outstanding among the jawārī. She claims to be a free woman, daughter to Ja'far al-Barmakī, and thus an aristocrat. Yet, compared to a free woman like Umm Muḥammad, she does not have to fear being disgraced. Whereas Umm Muḥammad has to meet with her lover, drink and listen to singing in the cover of her seclusion, 'Arīb can do it openly and even talk about it. When the caliph al-Ma'mūn puts her under arrest for one month because of her love affair with Ibn ḥāmid, she stubbornly resists the attempt to subjugate her. As a consequence of her defiance, the caliph does not even try to punish her further for her adultery; he even agrees to her wishes and marries her to her beloved, declaring that she will never become righteous anyway. This story agrees to some extent with the misogynist sayings in Nisā', such as the hadīth where the woman is likened to a crooked rib. If a man tries to straighten a crooked rib it will break; thus it is better to leave women as they are, faulty and weak, and accept them as such. Yet 'Arīb is an individual woman in the story about her detention and not representative of her gender. Furthermore, her imperfection gives her only advantages, as al-Ma'mūn marries her to her beloved (if that is what she wishes). Her love to Ibn Ḥāmid is more romantic than immoral; it makes her endure the severe circumstances of detention, as well as inspiring her poetic creativity. In the light of the rest of the narratives about 'Arīb's interactions with her owner al-Ma'mūn, it seems that his declaration here is more of an attempt to save his own face and take command of the situation. This time he was not cuckolded, as he voluntarily gave 'Arīb to her lover in marriage. Thus, the only way to overcome 'Arīb was surrendering to her wishes.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## Narrative technique and gender-positions

The women we have met in this thesis lived in different epochs and geographical areas; not much in their living conditions was similar. Consequently, they are characters in narratives from different genres, which presumably have different objectives. Yet they have some traits in common: they are women; they are (as to ʿĀʾisha and ʿArīb) authorities in their fields, and they occupy vital functions in ʿAbbāsid literature.

Chapter 3 explored narrative technique in the biographies of ʿĀʾisha and ʿArīb, especially in regard to creating authority, that is, providing the text with credibility. A narrative about an event, more or less important, is often confirmed by someone who has seen the event in it with his/her own eyes in a subsequent witness-narrative. The isnād, with its elaborate terminology for narrative situation, enhances the trustworthiness of the transmission. Direct speech in narrative, in the form of a monologue or dialogue, may also add to the creation of authority, as it supposedly is rendered exactly as it was said in the extra-textual situation. Creating authority has to do with the truth claim of the narrative as a mode of communicating, which is important in all history-writing. It is especially important in ʿĀʾisha's biography, as she is a main transmitter of the Prophet's sunna. The truth claim is less important in ʿArīb's biography, where, on the other hand, the legitimacy of music and the prominence of its practitioners are a main issue. ʿArīb's excellence is proved by homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narratives confirming each other, as well as having several variations of a story. In the latter case, it is not so much the exact truth of the story that is important, but the fact that there are variations enhances its claim, namely that of ʿArīb's extraordinariness. Authority and narrative techniques are thus in a way a link between the biographies of such extremely disparate women as ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr and ʿArīb.

The women's biographies in *Ṭabaqāt* are organized around two poles: women's object-positions in marriage and subject-positions in piety, linguistically as well as thematically. Here, I argue, we might discern a normative tendency, which acknowledges women's capacity to act as individuals, as long as it is within certain spheres of society. The few exceptions, where women are grammatical subjects in their marriages, only

add to this impression, as these women are, according to the story, extraordinarily strong and independent. Some of them have even successfully taken part in a male domain: they have fought in battles for the new faith armed, and not, as women ordinarily did, only aiding the fighters. Thus they have transcended their gender roles, which possibly gives them licence to be in command of their marriages. However, this licence has probably not been unproblematic, as the biographies of these women contain narratives that oppose the image of a powerful woman. This is also the case in the biography of the Prophet's first wife, Khadīja bint Khuwaylid, who in all respects is a powerful and acting woman, except for the formal proceedings of the wedding.

In *Aghānī,* it is possible to discern a similar dichotomy, but it is not elaborated in the women singers' biographies. While they are endowed with strong subject-positions in their professions, the are objects in regard to their owners, linguistically and sometimes thematically, but this dichotomy is not a major issue in their biographies, as it seems to be in the women's biographies in *Ṭabaqāt*. This is partly due to the fact that the formulaic language is much more elaborated in *Ṭabaqāt*, mirroring genealogical, religious and historical interests promoting the new faith, while the singers' biographies are chiefly entertaining. Partly it is also due to the interpretation of the social situation of the first Muslim community in Medina as being stable, whereas positions and hierarchies in 'Abbāsid 'Irāq, at least the singers' environment, are uncertain and fluctuating. At least in 'Arīb's biography, hierarchies and authorities are constantly challenged on a thematic as well as a linguistic level.

The analyses of women's textual positions in *Nisā'* showed that they are related to specific genres, or literary forms. In the anecdote, which is prevalent in *Aghānī*, the discourse itself is often the most important event. In it, any power relationship and any hierarchy may be turned around to the favour of the one who is in command of the discourse, which often is a woman. 'Arīb is always in command of the discourse in her biography. In the wisdom literature, ḥadīths, proverbs and sayings, on the other hand, hierarchies are stable. Here, the woman is practically always the grammatical object of her relationships with related men, although she may be the active subject in other aspects. These narratives, I suggest, have a normative intention. Of course, there are normative anecdotes as well as wisdom that do not picture women as objects in connection with marriage, but the dominant tendency is as described above.

In addition, sometimes the wisdom literature, as well as various akhbār from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic literary corpus, is not only inclined to depict the woman as an object in her relationship with her husband, family and tribe, but also represents her objectification as deliberate and willing. This specific tendency is what I have identified as 'ideological objectification', a change from subject-position to object-position which demands the woman's active participation and an inner and true motivation. My suggestion with the attribute 'ideological' is that this movement in positions is in some way or other deliberate, an active attempt to change reality. Women's strength and active roles are accepted, but women are encouraged to direct their capacities towards issues that strengthen the patriarchal society, such as the well-being of their husbands and families. This tendency even becomes a part of women's piety. The analyses in Chapter 4 showed how this tendency operated in both language and stories in several narratives in *Nisā'*. Ideological objectification is also current in *Ṭabaqāt*, when women are not only objects to their husbands' authority, but submit to it willingly and wholeheartedly.

The reason for this is not easy to derive from the narratives analysed in this thesis. In the medieval Muslim context, there are at least two possible responses; one has to do with the concept of submission in medieval Islam, and the other with the preferred male authority. The khabar about the choice in 'Ā'isha's biography, which is an explanation of *Qur'ān* 33:28-32, could probably be seen as a key event in the tendency described above, women's object-position in marriage and subject-position in piety. In these verses, the Prophet's wives are encouraged to be more pious than all other women, and this piety demands their obedience toward God and his messenger, their husband. The important thing is that it is their own active choice; they have to submit willingly and thus it is also consistent with the notion of ideological objectification. In the narratives from a Muslim context, women submit to their husbands as men submit to God. Moreover, this tendency is present in texts from other contexts. When Hind desires an aggressive husband to submit to, she does so in an Arab tribal milieu. Tribal and Muslim contexts and values are intertwined in several of the narratives in *Nisā'*, where the wife is encouraged to put herself in an object-position in favour of her husband and her people. Furthermore, ideological objectification is sometimes depicted as demanding more than women's readiness, namely their sacrifices. Only when the woman sacrifices something in obeying her husband does she show her true eagerness to submit to him. The Prophet's

wives had to live under stricter restrictions than other women in order to submit to God and his messenger, but their reward in the next world would correspondingly be greater. When Hind chose a jealous and aggressively demanding husband, she used her independent will only to sacrifice it; her reward is a worthy son. However, while ideological objectification is a rather strong tendency in *Ṭabaqāt* and *Nisā'*, it seems to be practically non-existent in the women's biographies in *Aghānī*. There is no authority in 'Arīb's biography who obtains wholehearted subordination; subordination is always external and builds on pragmatic obedience. The challenging of hierarchies is a more productive topic here, as in several anecdotes in *Nisā'*.

The analyses of gender do not only illustrate women's positions; they may also disclose men's positions within the gender ideology. The narratological analysis of 'Ā'isha's biography showed the prominent position of marriage in her biography, and not only on a thematic level. 'Ā'isha's life chronology is measured against her husband's activities with her, where he is the active subject and she is the object. The marital chronology is summarized and consequently puts 'Ā'isha in a linguistic object-position, while her husband is the subject of the marital activities. Narratives about events in 'Ā'isha's married life, on the other hand, may give a more nuanced picture, as they are less summarized and often consist of dialogues, which in themselves might prove a less rigid power structure. The Prophet exercises his authority while at the same time he recognizes her subjectivity. She has a choice, but she will obey her husband in the end, although she has, of course, an outstanding husband.

The more embroidered narratives in *Ṭabaqāt* show that there is more than one model for the husband's authority derived from his primary position in marriage. The Prophet's authority is non-violent and compassionate; it gives his wives space to act as individuals and produces inner and true obedience on their behalf. Another model of male authority is aggressive and forceful and may be connected with the image of women in some of the more misogynist anecdotes in *Nisā'*. This authority is not necessarily, but at least more likely, provoking pragmatic obedience, that is, external obedience. However, literature is not static, especially not akhbār literature – more than one view, or, as it were, ideology, may be detected in the same text. When 'Ā'isha is sent to inspect a new bride on behalf of her husband, her obedience is pragmatic, as she tries to cheat him. In this case, the issue is the Prophet's omnipotence, as he is able to reveal 'Ā'isha's lie.

# CONCLUSION

In *Nisā'*, there are anecdotes and poems where women articulate their opinions about men, the function of which seems to be upholding manly virtues. Women act as guardians of men's keeping within the limits of their gender, just as men guard women's gender-based behaviour. First and foremost, men should be potent, which might be the reason for the weight attached to women's desires. Potency is linked with nobility, as in an anecdote about the pre-Islamic poet al-Ḥārith ibn Ẓālim, whose sexual potency revealed his noble origin.

Another male virtue, shown in pre-Islamic as well as Islamic narratives, is ability to control the wife's behaviour. There are several narratives about this in *Nisā'*, but the most illuminating is the khabar about Hind's choice in *Ṭabaqāt*, where she explicitly claims that an aggressive and jealous man will improve her moral qualities, while a gentle and weak man who lets her take control will worsen them. Behaviour is not generally gendered in 'Arīb's biography, where both men and women act more or less as individuals. Of course, the fact that 'Arīb is a woman is noted, she is the best female singer, etc., and her social position as a caliphs' concubine is due to her gender. Yet her destiny is an individual's destiny more than engendered by the fact that she is a woman.

Besides piety, the arena where women have the strongest subject-position in *Ṭabaqāt* is narrating. Admittedly, narrating in this case could be seen as a pious deed, as the women convey knowledge about the origins of the umma. 'Arīb, on the other hand, does not narrate, but still focalizes her story by means of direct speech or hypodiegetic discourse. In fact, 'Arīb and the 'anecdotal women' in *Nisā'* are masters of the discourse; they excel in speaking and disputing verbally. Their pride and power seem to be connected with their eloquence and their command of the discourse, just as the pride of the first Muslim women had to do with their knowledge and transmission of pious matters. Certainly, there is a crucial difference between transmitting ḥadīths from the Prophet and being the victor of a verbal battle. Yet narrating and talking were indeed activities in which women could excel in both *Ṭabaqāt*, *Nisā'* and *Aghānī*. There were a pious discourse and a profane one, each with its own rhetoric and eloquence. In the explicit sexual discourse with examples in *Nisā'* and *Aghānī,* not least 'Arīb's biography, eloquence consisted of provocative and obscene language. Yet this did not conflict with good morals. Each discourse was appropriate for its specific situation, as expressed by al-Aḥnaf (see Ch. 4): 'If you want success with women, you should use obscene language when you have intercourse, and improve your

moral character'. While the pious women excel in the pious discourse in *Ṭabaqāt,* the profane women excel in various profane discourses in *Nisā'* and *Aghānī.* Moreover, the advice above connects sex and success with women, a theme which is not unusual in *Nisā',* where marital happiness may be equated with sexual fulfilment. The connection between sex and marital happiness reappears in *Ṭabaqāt* where the Prophet's wives' sexual demands on him are taken for granted, and also in 'Arīb's biography, where she attempts reconciliation between herself and her lover with the help of sexual intercourse.

### Gender and 'Abbāsid literature

The analyses in this thesis demonstrate the sometimes contradictory nature of 'Abbāsid literature, not least in regard to women. There is a clear discrepancy between the normative prescriptions of the wisdom material – ḥadīths, sayings and proverbs – and the entertaining material, such as anecdotes. This discrepancy is possibly natural but it is expanded into a paradox in a text such as *Nisā',* where normative sayings prohibiting women from looking and talking are found side by side with anecdotes where witty women talk and look, without being condemned.

It is not easy to derive facts about women's real conditions during the epoch in which the texts were written from these narratives, more than once again stressing that there were several ways to be a woman, in that time just as today. During the period and in the geographical area where the texts analysed in this thesis were written, women had different possibilities and living conditions depending on whether they lived in towns or villages, whether they were settled or nomads, free or slave, and according to which religious and/or ethnic belonging they had, as well as their marital status and age. At least, however, the analyses show that woman's conditions and possibilities during the early 'Abbāsid era were not one-sided, as some scholarship suggests. Norms about women, which today are understood as having been fixed and unchanged since this time, do not necessarily say something about women's real conditions. These norms were advocated in one sort of literature, by one or several groups in society but presumably not by everybody. Anecdotes are more likely to depict 'real' situations, even though they are also permeated by literary motives and conventions. The intent of this thesis was not to illuminate women's real conditions;

nevertheless, the roles granted them in literature could at least outline the limits of what was seen as thinkable for women.

Undeniably, there is a conflict in 'Abbāsid literature between the ideal and the real, the norm and the entertainment, which is specifically evident in literature about women. Why could 'Arīb break the norms in such an emphatic manner? Of course, as a slave and later a freed slave, and as an artist, she did not need to follow the rules for the common women. Yet the interesting point is that the narratives about her collected by Abū al-Faraj are devoid of moral lectures and sometimes flagrantly approving. She mastered her specific discourse and her social context. Contradictions are particularly noticeable in the narratives about women collected by Ibn Qutayba, which, at least according to the title of his work, aspire to give some sort of general picture of women. Here normative utterances about women, sometimes bordering on misogyny, are found alongside anecdotes where women break those norms in various witty ways, without any comments from the narrator or the author. Not least the poetry and the etiological narratives that accompany them give prominence to gender roles that diverge from the 'official' roles, or in any case from what emerges in legal literature.[1] In *Nisā'* women are, as defined by the title (*The Book on Women*), a collective entity; it does not focus on the individual but the typical, yet its examples are often multifaceted and individualistic. Comparing two similar narratives, one in Nisā' and one in the biography of 'Ā'isha, is illuminating. While 'Ā'isha narrates about herself as an individual in her own biography, the narrator 'Ā'isha associates herself with the concept 'woman' in Ibn Qutayba's text. 'Ā'isha's narration is the second narrative unit in *Nisā'*. In this narrative two seemingly contradictory statements are juxtaposed: first a statement about women in general, and then a statement about 'Ā'isha herself. Obviously, 'Ā'isha is outside the concept of 'woman' in general; she has her own rules related to her marriage with the Prophet. This marriage frames her life-story. Yet at the same time, the character 'Ā'isha makes comments that apply to all other women, that is, to 'woman' as a concept.

> On the authority of 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, she said: The woman should not brought in to her husband before the

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1 See Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 130.

age of ten years. ʿĀʾisha said: But I was brought in to God's Messenger, GBGS, when I was a girl of nine.[1]

In ʿĀʾisha's own biography, edited by Ibn Saʿd, she narrates only the second of the above sentences, the one about personal experience, omitting the normative remark of the first sentence.[2] It is thus her personal experience which is in focus, although related to her husband. In Ibn Qutayba's text something has happened – ʿĀʾisha's experience is extended to that of 'woman', woman as a concept, woman as a collective experience. Although ʿĀʾisha is unique, since she is not like any other woman and consequently does not follow the same norms, her uniqueness is more of an exception that proves the rule. This short narrative is, I suggest, a part of a normative process, where the individual ʿĀʾisha is the source, 'woman' is the definition and all persons of the female sex are the target. Ibn Qutayba takes this normative tendency even further in the gendered wisdom from various sources (pre-Islamic Arab, Persian and Christian, as well as early Islamic), where sometimes the female gender is compared to the male gender: 'women are such and such, while men are such and such'. ʿĀʾisha is a symbol; just like Mary in Christianity she is extraordinary with a position that no other woman can ever reach, but still, and because of her extraordinariness, she serves as an example. ʿArīb's extraordinariness, on the other hand, exempts her from following the rules, and she is free to follow her individual wishes (see ch. 6).

The three works *Tabaqāt, Aghānī* and *Nisāʾ* were written during the early ʿAbbāsid era, and whether their content is narratives about the pre-Islamic people's time, the earliest Muslim community, or the Umayyad court, the concern here is the gender formation during precisely the ʿAbbāsid era. The Arab past seems to be a dynamic component of this formation, as narratives about it are abundant in ʿAbbāsid literature. Yet these narratives have mostly been treated as sources for early Arab history. The following interpretation of the role of our texts in the ʿAbbāsid society relies on the arguments of Bray in 'Men, women and slaves in Abbasid society'. She argues that: 'The majority of modern discussions overlook the ways in which the Abbasids –

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1 Ibn Qutayba, *Nisāʾ*, 1.

وعن عائشة رضى الله عنها قالت: لا تُدخَل المرأة على زوجها فى أقلّ من عشر سنين. قالت عائشة: وأُدخلتُ على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأنا بنت تسع سنين

2 This utterance is repeated in several akhbār in her biography, for example khabar 8: 'God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was a girl of six years and I was brought to him when I was a girl of nine years.'

the main chronicles of early Islam – identified patterns of social and gender relationships in their own society and contrasted them with those of the Arab past.'[1] The 'Abbāsid society was more complex than earlier Muslim societies, with more various career opportunities for men. It allowed more chances to develop individuality, which sometimes was necessary for succeeding in a career.[2] The most important of the changes in the roles of Muslim men was their demilitarisation.[3] In literature, the 'Abbāsid self-image is shaped against the image of the Arab past. The Arabs are the Muslim forefathers, soldiers and conquerors. They are guided by their tribal loyalties, ignoring individual self-fulfilment. Narratives about women played a significant role in the shaping of the self-image. While 'Abbāsid legal literature constructs an ideal concept of family, built on free men's dominance in accordance with their positions (husband, father, son, etc.), romantic love was a means to develop individuality; however, it requires two equal subjects.[4]

Romantic love in 'Abbāsid literature was searched for outside the regulated power relationships of the family, and found in sophisticated, well-educated female slaves like 'Arīb, who educate their lovers in culture and fine manners, preparing them for a career in the court, and at the same time displaying their owners' wealth and enhancing their prestige.[5] This is contrasted in 'Abbāsid literature with the earlier Arab societies, where love was (according to this literature) not a means to accomplishing individualism or making a career, but 'a test of essential virtue, symbolising non-urban, non-domestic, non-prudential and hence Arab values'.[6] This kind of love needed another kind of women and men; the genders were defined differently, less polarized: 'Arab male and female lives both had the similar outline, dictated by lineage and character'.[7] Bray identifies two types of 'female romantic heroine' in the Arab, tribal setting, in contrast to 'the urban Abbasid slave heroine': 'the Umayyad Bedouin heroine, forbidden to marry her suitor and forever chaste and unattainable, and the aristocratic Umayyad virago, who goes unveiled, taunts her admirers, and marries and divorces her

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1 Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves,' 122.
2 Ibid., 141.
3 Ibid., 139.
4 Ibid., 138.
5 Ibid., 136.
6 Ibid., 138-39.
7 Ibid., 138.

way through the ranks of nobility at her own pleasure'.[1] We meet a few of these Umayyad heroines in *Nisā'*. 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa is often mentioned as an example of such a woman, although that is not her role in the anecdote quoted in Chapter 4.

'Arīb's individualism as displayed in her biography could be seen in light of her role as soulmate and educator of men, helping them to develop their own individualism. *Nisā'* is a document of various discourses on gender, containing 'Abbāsid slave heroines, as well as the Umayyad heroines together with normative narratives from various sources, regulating gender relationships built on men's dominance and women's subjugation. However, although its content on several occasions may be ideologically influenced, the explicit aim of *Nisā'* (as a part of *'Uyūn al-akhbār*) is to aid men in their individual careers. It intends to enhance ambitious men's knowledge, in order to refine their eloquence within diverse discourses. The biography of 'Ā'isha differs from the other works. Her subjectivity is neither individualistic, nor consonant with tribal Arab ideals. Nevertheless, her subjectivity may be connected with an individualistic view of piety in the 'Abbāsid society, that is, piety as an individual choice rather than a tribal obligation. In that case, the emphasis on women's subject-positions in piety and object-positions in marriage in all women's biographies in *Ṭabaqāt* is somewhat explicable. The women in *Ṭabaqāt* had access to the ultimate example of the Prophet, and thus their examples cannot be ignored. If they were not performing piety willingly and as active subjects, the concept of Islam as an individual choice and individual obligation would be demolished, as it cannot be valid for less than all Muslims. With an egalitarian piety, the Arab tribal ideals (as viewed in 'Abbāsid literature) are done with, just like advantages based on family connections instead of individual abilities. Marriage, on the other hand, did not have to adhere to the same radical equality. On the contrary, Islam was probably more attractive for influential persons if it maintained the norms of male supremacy already flourishing in various societies.

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1 Ibid.

# Appendix 1

## Translation of the biography of 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr[1]

'Ā'isha, bint [daughter of] the trustworthy Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfa ibn 'Āmir ibn 'Amr ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd ibn Taym ibn Murra ibn Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy. Her mother is Umm Rūmān bint 'Umayr ibn 'Āmir ibn Dahmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Ghanam ibn Mālik ibn Kināna.  [39]

1  Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī reported to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, he said:
God's Messenger, GBGS, asked Abū Bakr, the trustworthy, for 'Ā'isha's hand. Abū Bakr said: 'God's Messenger, I have already promised her or mentioned her[2] to al-Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī ibn Nawfal ibn 'Abd Manāf, for his son Jubayr. Leave me until I withdraw her from them.' He did so, and married her to God's Messenger, GBGS, while she was a virgin.

2  Muḥammad ibn 'Umar[3] reported to us, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī al-Rijāl reported to us on the authority of his father, on the authority of his mother 'Amra bint 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Sa'd ibn Zurāra, she said: I heard 'Ā'isha saying:
God's Messenger, GBGS, married me in the month of Shawwāl, year ten of his prophecy, three years before the *hijra*. I was then six years old. God's Messenger, [40] GBGS, emigrated and arrived at Medina on a Monday when twelve nights had passed of the month of Rabī' al-awwal. He celebrated the wedding with me in the month of Shawwāl, at the beginning of the eighth month at the refuge.[4] The day he went in to me,[5] I was nine years old.

3  Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us: Abū Hamza Maymūn, *mawlā*[6] of 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, related to me, on the authority of 'Urwa, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: Indeed, I was playing with the girls when God's Messenger married me.[7] I

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1 The following is a translation of the biographical article on 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr in Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, 39-54.
2 ذكر is here used as a technical term for demanding a woman in marriage; see Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, 29, who writes about the terminology used in this passage about 'Ā'isha.
3 Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī was Ibn Sa'd's teacher and main informant; see above, 46-47.
4 The refuge is Medina.
5 دخل علّيها, 'he went in to her', sometimes with the preposition bi- دخل بيها, is a technical term for having sexual intercourse. In this case, it is used for consummating the marriage, which is a separate part of the wedding procedure and may take place on a different occasion; see Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, 71.
6 A *mawlā* is a non-Arab, protected by an Arab tribe, or a freed slave.
7 The word used for girls here is *jawārī*. Compare with the signification of jawārī in Chapter 6 and Appendix 2.

was not aware that God's Messenger had married me until my mother took me and confined me to the house,[1] preventing me from going out. Then it occurred to me that I had been married, but I did not ask her until she herself informed me.

4  Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us: ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Abī al-Zinād related to us, on the authority of Hishām, on the authority of ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was six years old, and came in to me in order to consummate the marriage when I was nine years old. I was playing with dolls together with the girls, when I was prepared for him to come in to me.[2] When he came in, my friends felt embarrassed by his precense and left. Then God's Messenger left instead, because he was glad about them on my behalf.

5  Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ reported to us, on the authority of Sufyān, on the authority of Ismāʿīl ibn Umayya, on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of ʿUrwa, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married me in the month of Shawwāl and consummated the marriage[3] in Shawwāl, and which of God's Messenger's wives was in more favour with him than I? ʿĀʾisha used to prefer that her women were brought [to their husbands][4] in Shawwāl.

6  ʿAbdallāh ibn Numayr reported to us, on the authority of al-Ajlaḥ, on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Mulayka, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, asked Abū Bakr, the trustworthy, for the hand of ʿĀʾisha. He said: 'Oh God's Messenger, I have already given her to Muṭʿim, for his son Jubayr. Excuse me until I have withdrawn her from them.' He withdew her from them, he divorced her and God's Messenger, GBGS, married her

7  Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Fuḍayl ibn Marzūq related to us, on the authority of ʿAṭiyya, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, asked Abū Bakr for the hand of ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr when she was a young girl. Abū Bakr said: 'Oh, God's Messenger, may a man marry his brother's daughter?' This because he had previously said: You are my brother in religion. He said: He married her to him for a bride gift consisting of a house to the value of fifty or almost fifty. Her nursemaid came to her when she was playing with children. She took her by the hand and proceeded

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1 حبس implies a rather strict seclusion, as the word has meanings such as prevent from escape, shut up, imprison, hold in custody, etc, see Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *hbs*.

2 دُخِلتُ عليه The passive is used here, which makes the phrase difficult to translate.

3 بنى بى means literally 'he pitched a tent for me', alluding to the bridegroom's traditional pitching of a tent for his bride, where the marriage was consummated; Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *bny*.

4 تُدْخَلُ نساؤُها Passive of form IV is used here, and there is no object. The women were brought, or led, apparently to the bridegrooms to consummate the marriage with them.

with her to the house. She prepared her properly; she had taken a veil [hijāb][1] with her and she brought her to God's Messenger [to consummate the marriage].

8    Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Ḥammād ibn Salama related to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was a girl of six years and I was brought to him [to consummate the marriage with me] when I was a girl of nine years. I was then playing on a swing and my hair was hanging.[2] I was brought when   [41] I was playing on it; I was taken to be prepared.  Then I was brought to him [to consummate the marriage with me]. He had already been shown my picture on a piece of silk [see 29].

9    Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Ḥammād ibn Salama reported to us, on the authority of Ḥamīd al-Ṭawīl, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, mourned so much for Khadīja that they feared for him, until he married 'Ā'isha.

10   Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ and al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn and Mu ḥ
     ammad ibn Rabī'a al-Kilābī reported to us, on the authority al Fuḍayl ibn Marzūq, on the authority of Aṭiyya al-'Awfī, that the Prophet, GBGS, married 'Ā'isha for a house to the value of fifty, or almost fifty, dirham.

11   Wakī' reported to us, on the authority of Sufyān on the authority of Ibn Ishāq, on the authority of Abū 'Ubayda that the Prophet, GBGS, married 'Ā'isha when she was seven years old, and consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, and died leaving her a widow of eighteen years old.

12   Wakī' reported to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of his father, that the Prophet, GBGS, married 'Ā'isha when she was six or seven years old and consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old.

13   Abū Mu'āwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us, al-'Amash related to us, on the authority of Ibrāhīm, on the authority of al-Aswad, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said:
     God's Messenger, GBGS, married her when she was nine years old, and he died leaving her a widow of eighteen years old.

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1 The mentioning of the ḥijāb here is a revisionism, according to Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, 111: 'the term ḥijāb does not appear to be used in pre-Islamic sources to denote a veil or mode of wearing a veil, nor does it seem to have been used with reference to the seclusion of women'. In addition, on account of its unreliable isnād, this particular tradition 'should be rejected as not being authentic', 121.
2 ولى جُمَة The translation follows Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *jmm*: 'the hair of the head that falls upon the two shoulder-joints'.  It may perhaps be braids.

14 Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Isrā'īl related to us, on the authority of Abū Isḥāq, on the authority of Ibn 'Ubayda, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married 'Ā'isha when she was six years old, he came in to her [to consummate the marriage] when she was nine years old and GBGS died from her when she was eighteen years old.

15 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Aṭā' reported to us, Isrā'īl related the same to us, on the authority of Abū Isḥāq, on the authority of Muṣ'ab ibn Sa'd.

16 Abū 'Āṣim al-Nabīl al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Makhlad, al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn and Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Asadī reported to us, they said: Sufyān related to us, on the authority of Ismā'īl ibn Umayya on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Urwa on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: God's Messenger married me in Shawwāl, and I was brought for him [to consummate the marriage] in Shawwāl, and which of his women were more in favour with him than I? She used to prefer that her women were brought [to their husbands] in Shawwāl. Abū 'Āṣim said: People did not like to go in to women [to consummate their marriages] in Shawwāl due to the plague that occurred in Shawwāl in the earliest time. Abū 'Āṣim said: Sufyān reported this ḥadīth to us in the year 146 [763-64] in Mecca, in the house of al-Ḥasan ibn Wahb al-Jumaḥī.

17 Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm reported to us, Ja'far ibn Sulaymān related to us, Hishām ibn 'Urwa related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: The Prophet, GBGS, married me when I was seven years old and came in to me [to consummate the marriage] when I was nine years old and was playing with dolls with my friends. When he came, they were together with me and the Prophet, GBGS, said: 'Stay where you are!'

18 'Affān ibn Muslim reported to us, Wahīb related to us, Hishām ibn 'Urwa related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: [42]
I was playing with dolls in God's Messenger's home, GBGS. My friends came to me, but were restrained by God's Messenger, GBGS, but God's Messenger was glad about them on my behalf, and thus they played with me.

19 'Affān ibn Muslim reported to us, Wuhayb related to us, Hishām ibn 'Urwa related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that God's Messenger, GBGS, married her when she was six years old, and he consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old, she stayed with him for nine years.

20 'Ārim ibn al-Faḍl reported to us, Ḥammād ibn Zayd related to us, on the authority

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of Hishām ibn ‘Urwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was seven years old, and consummated the marriage with me when I was nine years old.

21    Kathīr ibn Hishām reported to us, Ja‘far ibn Burqān related to us, on the authority of al-Zuhrī, he said: God's Messenger arranged the marriage[1] with ‘Ā’isha when she was six years old, and he had sexual intercourse with her[2] when she was nine years old. He died from her when she was eighteen years old.

22    Muhammad ibn Ḥumayd al-‘Abdī reported to us, Ma‘mar related to us, on the authority of al-Zuhrī and Hishām ibn ‘Urwa, they said: The Prophet, GBGS, married[3] ‘Ā’isha when she was nine years old or seven.

23    Aḥmad ibn Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī reported to us, Wuhayb related to us, on the authority of ‘Ubaydallāh ibn ‘Umar, on the authority of Yazīd ibn Rūmān, on the authority of ‘Urwa, on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, she said: I used to play with girls with the agreement of God's Messenger, GBGS.

24    Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar reported to us, Khārija ibn ‘Abdallāh related to us, on the authority of Yazīd ibn Rūmān, on the authority of ‘Urwa, on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, came into me one day while I was playing with dolls. He said: 'What is this, ‘Ā’isha?' I said: 'Sulaymān's horses'. Then he laughed.

25    Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar reported to us, Isrā’īl related to us, on the authority of al-A‘mash, on the authority of Ibrāhīm, on the authority of al-Aswad, on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, married me when I was six years old, and he consummated the marriage with me when I was nine years old. God's Messenger, GBGS, died when I was eighteen years old.

26    Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar reported to us, Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān related to us, on the authority of  Rayṭa, on the authority of ‘Amra bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, on the authority of ‘Ā’isha, that she was asked: When did God's Messenger, GBGS, consummate the marriage with you? She said: When God's Messenger, GBGS immigrated to Medina, we stayed behind, and his daughters stayed behind. When he arrived at Medina he sent Zayd ibn Ḥaritha to us, and he sent with him Abū Rāfi‘, his client. He gave them two camels and five hundred

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1 ملك عقدة عائشة For the connotation of the term, see Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, 72. See also 176 above.

2 جمعها   Form III of this verb is the most common term for sexual intercourse, in this case, form I is used with the same denotation. The consummation of the marriage is intended here.

3 نكح This term is used both for marriage (the common form for marriage in the ḥadīth-collections) and for the sexual act. According to Lane, *Lexicon*  s.v. *nkḥ,* its main connotation is the sexual act.

dirham, which God's Messenger, GBGS, got from Abū Bakr so that they could buy the camels they needed. Abū Bakr sent ʿAbdallāh ibn Urayqiṭ al-Dīlī with them with two or three camels. He wrote to ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr and instructed him to convey his family, my mother Umm Rūmān, me, and my sister Asmāʾ, al-Zubayr's wife. They left together and when they arrived at Qudayd, Zayd ibn Ḥāritha bought three camels for the five hundred. Then they all travelled from Mecca and met with Ṭalha ibn ʿUbaydallāh who wanted to emigrate with Abu Bakr's family. We all departed; Zayd ibn Ḥāritha and Abū Rāfiʿ brought out Fāṭima, Umm Kulthum and Sawda bint Zamaʿa. Zayd conveyed Umm Ayman and Usāma ibn Zayd. ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr brought out Umm Rūmān and his two sisters. Ṭalḥa ibn ʿUbaydallāh left, and we all set out before sunrise until we came to Bayḍ in Mīnā, when my camel broke loose with me and my mother in the sedan. My mother said: 'Oh my daughter, my bride!', until he [ʿAbdallāh] overtook our camel, after it had safely descended (the mountain pass called) Lift, but the mighty and sublime God protected from harm. We arrived at Medina, and I stayed with Abū Bakr's dependants, and the family of God's Messenger stayed as well. God's Messenger, GBGS, was these days building the mosque and houses around the mosque, and he settled his family there. We stayed for days in Abū Bakr's house, and then Abū Bakr said: 'God's Messenger, what prevents you from consummating the marriage with your wife?' God's Messenger, GBGS, said: 'The dower.' Abū Bakr gave him the dower, twelve ounces [of gold] and perfume. God's Messenger, GBGS, sent it to us. God's Messenger consummated the marriage with me in this house where I stay, and in which God's Messenger, GBGS, died. God's Messenger made a door in the mosque facing ʿĀʾisha's door. She said: God's Messenger, GBGS, consummated the marriage with Sawda in one of these houses, which are next to me, and God's Messenger, GBGS, used to be in her house.

27 Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Yūnus reported to us, Zuhayr ibn Muʿāwiya related to us, Hishām ibn ʿUrwa related to us, on the authority of ʿUrwa, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, that Sawda gave her day to ʿĀʾisha. She said: 'My day is ʿĀʾisha's.' God's Messenger used to allot to ʿĀʾisha her day and Sawda's day.

28 Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Ḥammād ibn Salama related to us, on the authority of Hishām, that is ʿUrwa's son, on the authority of ʿAbbād ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said: I said: 'God's Messenger, women use to get a kunyā, give me a kunya!' He said: 'I will give you the kunya after your son ʿAbdallāh.'[1]

29 Ḥajjāj ibn Naṣr reported to us, ʿĪsā ibn Maymūn related to us, on the authority of al-

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1 'Adballāh ibn al-Zubayr is the son of Asmāʾ, ʿĀʾisha's sister. ʿĀʾisha was thus called Umm ʿAbdallāh after him, which was her kunya.

Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said: I am distinguished as more excellent than the wives of the Prophet, GBGS, for ten things. It was said: And which are they, Mother of believers? She said: He did not marry any other virgin than I. He did not marry any other woman whose both parents are *muhājirūn*[1] than I. The mighty and sublime God revealed my innocence from the Heaven; Jibrīl came from the Heaven with my picture on a piece of silk, and he said: 'Marry her, she is your wife.' We used to wash ourselves in the same basin, and he did not do that with any other of his wives. He used to perform the prayer while I was in his presence, and he did not do that with any other of his wives. The [44] revelation came down to him when I was with him, and it did not come down to him when he was with any other of his wives. God took his soul when he was lying in my arms, he died on a night that was allotted to me, and was buried in my house.

30   Shabāba ibn Sawwār reported to us, Shuʿba related to us, on the authority of al-Ḥakam, on the authority of Abū Wāʾil, he said: ʿAmmār said when he mentioned ʿĀʾisha, he said: Truly, we know that she is the wife of God's Messenger in this world and the hereafter.

31   Al-Muʿallā ibn Asad reported to us, Wuhayb ibn Khālid and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn al-Mukhtār related to us, they said: Hishām ibn ʿUrwa related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, that God's Messenger, GBGS, said to her: I was shown you twice in my sleep. I saw a man who was carrying you on a piece of silk, and he said: 'This is your wife.' Then he uncovered it and I saw that it was you. I said: If this is from God, he will accomplish it.

32   ʿAffān ibn Muslim reported to us, Wuhayb ibn Khālid related to us, Hishām ibn ʿUrwa related to us, on the authority of ʿAbbād ibn Ḥamza ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, that: ʿĀʾisha said: 'Oh God's Prophet, will you not give me a kunya?' The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'I will give you a kunya after your son ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr.' She was then called by the kunya Umm ʿAbdallāh.

33   ʿAffān ibn Muslim reported to us, Mahdī ibn Maymūn reported to us, Shuʿayb ibn al-Ḥabḥāb related to us, he said: I heard al-Shaʿbī relating on the authority of Masrūq, he said: When he related on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, Mother of believers, he used to say: The truthful woman, daughter of the trustworthy man, the vindicated in this and that, related to me.[2] Someone else said in this ḥadīth: The beloved of God's beloved.

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1 *Muḥājirūn* were those who had performed the hijra and immigrated to Medina.
2 'the vindicated' refers to the vindication o f ʿĀʾisha in the Qurʾān from the accusations against her for adultery and the censuring of her slanderers, *Qurʾān* 24:11-17.

34 Hishām Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭayālisī related to us, Abū ʿAwāna related to us, on the authority of Firās, on the authority of ʿĀmir, on the authority of Masrūq, that a woman said to ʿĀ'isha: 'Oh Mother!' She said: 'I am not your mother; I am the mother of your men.'

35 Hishām Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭayālisī reported to us, Abū ʿAwāna related to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀ'isha that she used to have dolls, that is, toys, and when the Prophet, GBGS, came in to her, he used to cover himself with his garment. Abū ʿAwāna said: So that she would not be restrained.

36 Hishām Abū al-Walīd reported to us, Abū ʿAwāna related to us, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿUmayr, on the authority of ʿĀ'isha, that she said: I was given characteristics which no other woman has been given. God's Messenger took me in possession when I was seven years old, the angel came to him with my picture in his hand, and he looked at it. He consummated the marriage with me when I was nine years old. I saw Jibrīl, and no other woman saw him. I was his most beloved wife, and my father was his most beloved companion. God's Messenger got ill in my house, and I cared for him. He died when only I and the angels witnessed.

37 Hishām Abū al-Walīd al-Ṭayālisī reported to us, Sharīk related to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀ'isha: When Sawda got old she gave her day to me. God's Messenger, GBGS, used to allot my day and her day to me.

38 ʿUbaydallāh ibn Mūsā reported to us, on the authority of Isrā'īl, on the authority of Abū Isḥāq, on the authority of Ḥumayd ibn ʿArīb, he said: A man slandered ʿĀ'isha in the Battle of the Camel and people gathered around him. ʿAmmār said: 'What is this?' They said: 'A man slandered ʿĀ'isha.' ʿAmmār said: 'Hold your tongue! This is abominable and reviled! Are you slandering the beloved of God's Messenger, GBGS? Indeed, she is his wife in Paradise!' [45]

39 Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Uways reported to us, Sulaymān ibn Bilāl related to us, on the authority of Usāma ibn Zayd al-Laythī, on the authority of Abū Salama al-Mājishūn, on the authority of Abū Muḥammad, al-Ghifāriyyūn's mawlā, that ʿĀ'isha said to the Prophet, GBGS: 'Who are your wives in Paradise?' He said: 'You are one of them.'

40 Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Ismāʿīl ibn Abī Khālid reported to us, on the authority of Muṣʿab ibn Isḥāq ibn Ṭalḥa, he said: It was reported that God's Messenger, GBGS, said: I have been shown her in Paradise, so that my death will

be easier for me. It was like seeing her hands before me, that is, 'Ā'isha's.

41 'Abdallāh ibn Numayr reported to us, Hishām ibn 'Urwa reported to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: I used to play with dolls, and my friends came to me to play with me. When they saw God's Messenger they were restrained by him. Then God's Messenger brought them back to play with me.

42 Abū Mu'āwiya, the blind, reported to us, on the authority of Ismā'īl ibn Sumay', on the authority of Muslim al-Buṭayn, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said: ''Ā'isha is my wife in Paradise.'

43 Abū Mu'āwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of 'Abbād ibn Ḥamza, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: I came to the Prophet, GBGS, and said: 'Oh God's Messenger, you have given your wives kunya, give me one!' He said: 'I will give you a kunya after your sister's son, 'Abdallāh.'

44 Anas ibn 'Iyāḍ al-Laythī reported to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of 'Abbād ibn Ḥamza, that Ā'isha said: 'Oh God's Prophet, will you not give me a kunya?' The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'You will have a kunya after your son 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr.' She used to be called Umm 'Abdallāh.

45 Abū Mu'āwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us on the authority of al-A'mash, on the authority of Muslim, on the authority of Masrūq, that it was said to him: 'Did 'Ā'isha know the religious duties well?' He said: 'Oh yes, by the one who has my soul in his hands! I saw the eldest of the companions of Muhammad, GBGS, ask her about religious duties.'

46 Abū Mu'āwiya al-Ḍarīr and Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydallāh al-Ṭanāfisī reported to us, they said: al-A'mash related to us, on the authority of Muslim, on the authority of Masrūq, that when he related on the authority of 'Ā'isha, he used to say:
The truthful woman, daughter of the trustworthy man, the beloved of God's beloved, the vindicated woman, related to me.

47 Abū Mu'āwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us on the authority of al-A'mash, on the authority of Tamīm ibn Salama, on the authority of 'Urwa, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, he said:

I saw her give seventy thousands in alms; she raised the side of her garment.[1]

48   Abū Muʿāwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us, Hishām ibn ʿUrwa related to us, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, he said: I saw her give seventy thousands in alms; she raised the side of her garment.

49   Abū Muʿāwiya al-Ḍarīr reported to us, Hishām ibn ʿUrwa related to us, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir on the authority of Umm Dharra, she said: Ibn al-Zubayr sent money to ʿĀʾisha; in two sacks there were 100,000. She asked for a tray, and started to distribute to the people; she was fasting that day. He said: And when it was evening, she said: 'Girl, give me my fiṭr.'[2] Umm Dharra said: 'Oh Mother of believers, could you not have bought meat for a dirham of the money that you have spent, and have it for fiṭr?' She said: 'Do not reprimand me; if you had reminded me, I would have done that.' [46]

50   Asbāṭ ibn Muḥammad reported to us, on the authority of Muṭarrif, on the authority of Abū Isḥāq, on the authority of Muṣʿab ibn Saʿd, he said: ʿUmar assigned a stipend of 10,000 to the Mothers of believers, but added 2,000 to ʿĀʾisha. He said: She is the beloved of God's Messenger, GBGS.

51   Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ and Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd reported to us, they said: Ismāʿīl ibn Abī Khālid related to us, on the authority of Qays ibn Abī Ḥāzim, that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said: 'Oh God's Messenger, who is your most beloved?' He said: 'ʿĀʾisha.' He said: 'I mean among men.' He said: 'Her father.'

52   Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Sufyān related to us, on the authority of Firās, on the authority of al-Shaʿbī, on the authority of Masrūq, he said: A woman said to ʿĀʾisha: 'Oh Mother!' She said: 'I am not your mother; I am the mother of your men.'

53   Abū Usāma Ḥammād ibn Usāma reported to us, Hishām ibn ʿUrwa reported to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said:
God's Messenger, GBGS, said to me: I have been shown you twice in my sleep. I was given you on a piece of silk, I uncovered it, and it was you! He said: It was said: 'This is your wife!' He said: I said: If this is from God, he will accomplish it.

54   Muḥammad ibn Zayd al-Wāsiṭī reported to us, Mukhālid ibn Saʿīd reported to us,

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1 درع According to Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *drʿ*, the *dirʿ*, when used for women, is 'a garment, or piece of cloth, in the middle of which a woman cuts an opening for the head to put through, and to which she puts arms [or sleeves], and the two openings of which [at the two sides] she sews up'.
2 Fast-breaking meal.

on the authority of 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, on the authority of Masrūq, he said:
'Ā'isha said to me: I have seen Jibrīl in this my room, sitting on a horse, and God's Messenger speaking softly to him. When he came in, I said to him: 'Oh God's Messenger, who is he whom I saw you speaking softly to?' He said: 'Did you see him?' I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Whom do you think he looked like?' I said: 'Dihya al-Kalbī'. He said: 'You have seen something much better than that. This is Jibrīl.' She said: It did not take long until he said: 'Oh 'Ā'isha, Jibrīl wishes peace upon you.' I said: 'May peace be upon him, and may God recompense him as a guest.

55  Yazīd ibn Hārūn and Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ and al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, they said: Zakariyyā' ibn Abī Zā'ida related to us, on the authority of al-Sha'bī on the authority of Abū Salama on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said to me: 'Jibrīl wishes peace upon you.' I said: 'May peace be upon him, and God's mercy.'

56  Wakī' said: 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥabīb added, on the authority of al-Sha'bī, that the Prophet, GBGS, said: 'Excellent! Excellent!' Muṭī' ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥabīb added, on the authority of al-Sha'bī, what he heard from him, he said: 'Ā'isha said: 'He is welcome as a visitor and guest!'     47

57  'Affān ibn Muslim reported to us, Sha'ba related to us, he said: 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Qāsim reported to me, on the authority of al-Qāsim that 'Ā'isha was fasting for long periods.

58  Ḥajjāj ibn Muḥammad reported to me, on the authority of Sha'ba, on the authority of Sa'd ibn Ibrāhīm, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that she was fasting for long periods.

59  Ḥajjāj ibn Muḥammad reported to us, on the authority of Ibn Jurayj, he said: 'Aṭā' said: 'I and 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr used to come to 'Ā'isha when she lived in Jawf Thabīr.'[1] He said: I said: 'What was her seclusion (ḥijābuhā) those days?' He said: 'She was at that time in a Turkish tent (qubba) with a cover between us, but I saw her wearing a yellow-dyed dir' when I was a young boy.'

60  Kathīr ibn Hishām reported to us, Ja'far ibn Burqān related to us, he said: I asked al-Zuhrī about when a man gives his wife choice, and she chooses him. He said: 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr related to me, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said:

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1 وهى مجاورة فى جوف ثبير  The phrase could denote that 'Ā'isha was the narrator's neighbour in Jawf Thabīr, Thabīr is a mountain near Mecca. It could also be translated in accordance with Lane, *Lexicon* s.v. *jwr*, that she 'confined herself to a place of worship, during a period of days or nights, or at least during one whole day, fasting from daybreak to sunset, and occupying [herself] in prayer and religious meditation, without any interruption by affairs distracting the mind from devotion'.

God's Prophet, GBGS, came to me, and he said: 'I will propose something to you; you should not hasten with it, but first ask your parents for advice.' I said: 'What is it?' She said: Then he recited to me from: 'O Prophet, say to thy wives: "If you desire the present life and its adornment"' until 'surely God has prepared for those amongst you such as do good a mighty wage.'[1] 'Ā'isha said: 'In what do you order me to ask my parent of advice? I desire God and his Messenger and the abode of the hereafter.' This pleased the Prophet, GBGS, and satisfied him. He said: 'I will propose to your companions [co-wives] what I have proposed to you.' She said: 'Do not inform them about what I have chosen!' He did not do that. He said to them what he had said to 'Ā'isha, and thereafter he said: ''Ā'isha chose God and his Messenger and the last above.' 'Ā'isha said: We chose God's Messenger, GBGS, and we did not consider that a divorce.

61    Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Abī Murra al-Makkī reported to us, Nāfiʿ ibn ʿUmar related to us, he said: Ibn Abī Mulayka related to me, he said: When Ibn al-Zubayr related on the authority of 'Ā'isha, he said: By God, 'Ā'isha never lied to God's Messenger, GBGS.

62    Saʿīd ibn Mansūr reported to us, he said: Ibn Abī al-Zinād related to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, he said: 'Ā'isha said to me: Nephew, God's Messenger, GBGS, said to me: 'You cannot hide from me either when you are angry or when you are pleased.' I said: 'How do you know that, with my father may you be ransomed, and with my mother!' He said: 'As to when you are pleased, you say when you give your word: No, by Muḥammad's lord, and when you are angry you say: No, by Ibrāhīm's lord.' I said: 'You are right, God's Messenger!'

63    Muḥammad ibn Rabīʿa al-Kilābī reported to us, on the authority of Ismāʿīl ibn Rāfiʿ, on the authority of Isḥāq the blind, he said: I came in to 'Ā'isha and she secluded herself from me. I said: 'Why do you seclude yourself from me, when I cannot see you?' She said: 'Even though you cannot see me, I can see you.'

64    Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Farwa, he said: I heard ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the lame [al-Aʿraj], relating in his assembly in Medina, saying: God's Messenger, GBGS, supplied 'Ā'isha with 80 wasq of dates and 20 wasq of barley, but some say wheat, from Khaybar.[2]    [48]

65    Anas ibn ʿIyād and ʿAbdallāh ibn Numayr reported to us, they said: Hishām ibn

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1 *Qur'ān* 33:28-9, Arrbery's translation.
2 A *wasq* is a camel's load.

'Urwa related to us, on the authority of his father, he said:
'Āʾisha had a garment [*kisāʾ*] ¹ of silk, which she used to wear. She dressed
'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr in it.

66  Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Hishām ibn Ḥassān reported to us, on the authority
of Shumaysa, that she came in to 'Āʾisha; the clothes she wore were *sīd* (?),² thick
in texture, a *dirʿ*, a veil [*khimār*] and trousers [*nuqba*], which she had dyed in a
yellow colour.

67  Isḥāq ibn Yūsuf al-Azraq reported to us, Mālik related to us, he said: A woman
related to me, on the authority of her aunt, she said:
'Āʾisha used to wear yellow-dyed clothes.

68  Anas ibn 'Iyāḍ reported to us, on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd, he said: I heard
'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim say: 'Āʾisha used to dress in yellow-dyed clothes
when she was *muḥrima*.³

69  Abū Bakr ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Abī 'Uways, on the authority of Sulaymān ibn Bilāl,
on the authority of 'Amr ibn Abī 'Amr, he said: I heard al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad
relate that 'Āʾisha used to dress in clothes with the two reddish colours gold and
yellow when she was *muḥrima.*

70  Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Sufyān related to us, on the authority of 'Abd
al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Āʾisha,
that she used to wear yellow-dyed clothes.

71  'Abdallāh ibn Maslama ibn Qaʿnab reported to us, 'Abd al-ʿAzīz ibn Muḥammad
related to us, on the authority of 'Amr ibn Abī 'Amr, he said:
I asked al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, I said: 'People maintain that God's Messenger,
GBGS, forbade the two reddish colours yellow and gold.' He said: 'They lied, by
God, I saw 'Āʾisha dress in yellow and golden rings.'

72  'Ārim ibn al-Faḍl related to us, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim related to us that al-
Qāsim said: 'Āʾisha entered the state of *iḥrām* dressed in a yellow-dyed dirʿ.

73  'Ārim ibn al-Faḍl related to us, Ḥammād ibn Zayd related to me, on the authority of
Ayyūb, he said: Ibn Abī Mulayka related to me, he said: I saw 'Āʾisha wearing a

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1 كساء is a general word for garment; specifically, it could be, according to R. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des
vêtements chez les Arabes* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969) s.v. *ksw*: 'vêtement more en forme de manteau'.
2 وعليها ثياب من هذه السيد الصفاق
3 I.e. the state of *iḥrām*; when a pilgrim has entered the sacred territory of Mecca to perform the rituals of the pilgrimage;
*muḥrim* could also signify 'fasting'.

red-dyed dir'.

74    Al-Mu'allā ibn Asad reported to us, al-Mu'allā ibn Ziyād al-Qaṭa'ī related to us, Bakra bint 'Uqba related to us that she came into 'Ā'isha when she was sitting dressed in yellow-dyed clothes and asked her about henna. She said: 'A good plant and pure water!' She asked her about plucking hair from the face. She said to her: 'If you have a husband, then you may remove your eyebrows[1] and make them more beautiful than they are, do that!'

75    Ḥajjāj ibn Naṣīr reported to us, 'Alī ibn al-Mubārak related to us, he said: Umm Shayba related to us, she said: I saw 'Ā'isha wearing a yellow-dyed garment.

76    Ma'n ibn 'Īsā reported to us, Makhrama ibn Bukayr related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Amra, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that she said: A woman must wear three garments when she performs the prayer, a dir', an outer wrapping, and a veil [*khimār*]. 'Ā'isha used to unfasten her waist-wrapper and use it as an outer wrapping.

77    Ma'n ibn 'Īsā reported to us, Mālik related to us, on the authority of 'Alqama ibn Abī 'Alqama, on the authority of his mother, she said: Ḥafṣa bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān came in to 'Ā'isha, Mother of the believers. Ḥafṣa was wearing a thin veil. 'Ā'isha tore it while she was wearing it and dressed her with a thick veil.

78    Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm reported to us, Umm Naṣr related to us, she said: Mu'ādha related to me, she said: I saw 'Ā'isha wearing a yellow-dyed wrap.

79    Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Asadī related to us, Sufyān related to us, on the authority of Ibn Jurayj, on the authority of al-Ḥasan ibn Muslim, on the authority of Ṣafiyya, she said: I saw 'Ā'isha circulating in her house with veiled face.

80    Ḥujjāj ibn Naṣīr reported to us, Abū 'Āmir al-Khazzāz related to us, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Mulayka, he said: 'I saw 'Ā'isha in a red-dyed [*muḍḍaraj*] garment.' I said: 'What is *muḍḍaraj*?' He said: 'It is what you call rose-coloured.'

81    Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to me, Ḥabība bint 'Abbād al-Bāriqiyya related to us, on the authority of her mother, she said: I saw 'Ā'isha dressed in a red *dir'* and a black veil [*khimār*].

82    Sulaymān ibn Ḥarb and Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm reported to us, they said: al-Aswad ibn

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1 مقلتيك denotes 'your eyeballs', but here I guess it refers to the eyebrows.

Shaybān related to us, he said: Umm al-Mughīra, mawlā of al-Anṣār, related to us, she said: I asked Ā'isha about silk. She said: In the age of God's Messenger, GBGS, we used to dress in garments called al-siyarā', in which there was some silk.

83    Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd al-Azraqī al-Makkī reported to us, Dā'ūd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān related to us, on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd, he said: I heard al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad relate that he wore a garment [*kisā'*] of silk on a cold day; he dressed 'Ā'isha in it and she did not prevent him.

84    Ma'n ibn 'Īsā reported to us, Mālik ibn Anas related to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of his father, that 'Ā'isha dressed 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr in a garment of silk, which she had used to dress herself in.

85    Ma'n ibn 'Īsā and Muṭarrif ibn 'Abdallāh reported to us, they said: Mālik ibn Anas related to us, on the authority of Nāfi', client of Ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar, on the authority of al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, that Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath said to 'Ā'isha: 'Shall we not make you a fur, and give it as a gift to you? It is the warmest you could wear.' She said: 'I hate skin from animals that died a natural death.' He said: 'I will watch over it and make it to you from animals that were slaughtered in the manner prescribed by the law.' He made it and sent it to her; she used to wear it.

86    Khālid ibn Mukhallad reported to us, Sulaymān ibn Bilāl related to us, on the authority of 'Alqama ibn Abī 'Alqama, on the authority of his mother, she said: I saw Ḥafṣa bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr coming in to 'Ā'isha dressed in a thin veil (*khimār*), which did not cover the opening of her garment [*jayb*]. 'Ā'isha tore it while she was wearing it, and said: Do you not know what God revealed in the sūra of the light?[1] Then she asked for a veil, and dressed her in it. [50]

87    'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Aṭā' reported to us, on the authority of Ibn Jurayj, he said: It was reported on the authority of 'Ikrima, he said: 'Ā'isha and the wives of God's Messenger, GBGS, used to dye with henna when they were in the state of *iḥrām*, and that occurred after the Prophet's death, GBGS. They also performed the pilgrimage in yellow-dyed clothes.

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1 *Qur'ān* 24:31: 'And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers', or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands own, or such men as attend them, not having sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women's private parts; nor let them stamp their feet, so that their hidden ornament may be known. And turn all together to God, O you believers; haply so you will prosper', Arberry's translation. The jayb, which I have translated 'opening of her garment', is rendered 'bosom' in the quotation above. Whatever it is, it should be covered.

88    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Manṣūr ibn Salama related to us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet, GBGS, she said: We set off with the Prophet, GBGS. When we were in al-Qāḥa, yellow colour was running in my face from my head, from the perfume I had poured on my head when I left. The Prophet, GBGS, said: Your colour is truly lovely now, you fair one!

89    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, al-Thawrī related to us, on the authority of Mu'āwiya ibn Isḥāq, on the authority of 'Ā'isha bint Ṭalḥa, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet, GBGS, she said: I asked the Prophet, GBGS, about jihād. He said: Women, your jihād is the pilgrimage.

90    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Zinād reported to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn 'Urwa, on the authority of his father, he said: Often, 'Ā'isha recited a qaṣīda with sixty or a hundred verses.

91    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra related to us, on the authority of 'Abd al-Majīd ibn Suhayl, on the authority of 'Ikrima, he said: Ā'isha used to seclude herself from Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.[1] He said: But Ibn 'Abbās said: It was permitted for them to come in to her.

92    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna reported to us, on the authority of 'Amr ibn Dīnār, on the authority of Abū Ja'far, he said: Ḥasan and Ḥusayn did not go in to the wives of the Prophet, GBGS. But Ibn 'Abbās said: Regarding their going in to the Prophet's wives, it was permitted for them.

93    Muḥammad ibn 'Umar said: This was because they were grandchildren of the Prophet, GBGS. Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik ibn Anas said: If a man has married a woman, it is never permitted for either his male children or grandchildren to marry her [after him]; not them, or their sons, or their daughter's sons.[2] This is agreed upon.

94    Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Asadī reported to us, on the authority of Shu'ayb ibn al-Jaḥḥāb, on the authority of Abū Sa'īd, that someone came in to 'Ā'isha when she was sewing trousers for herself, and he said: 'Oh Mother of the believers, has God not made plenty of good?' She said: 'Leave me! He who does not honour old things will never appreciate new things.'

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1 Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are the sons of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib and Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad. The question here is whether a woman had to seclude herself from her husband's grandchildren.
2 If they were not allowed to marry her, she did not have to seclude herself from them, see *Qur'ān* 4:22-3.

95    Yazīd ibn Hārūn reported to us, Ibn ʿAwn reported to us, on the authority of al-Qāsim, he said: If the Mother of the believers was used to a person, she did not like to take leave of him.

96    ʿUbaydallāh ibn Mūsā reported to us, Usāma ibn Zayd reported to us, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Qāsim, on the authority of his mother, she said: I saw ʿĀʾisha wearing red garments as if they were sparks, when she was in the state of *iḥrām*.

97    Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Ḥumayd ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Aṣamm related to us, on the authority of his mother, she said: I saw ʿĀʾisha wearing a black veil from Jayshān [in the Yemen].

98    Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm reported to us, Umm Nahār related to us, she said: Umayna related to us, she said: I saw ʿĀʾisha wearing a yellow-dyed wrap [*milḥaf*] and a blackish veil from Jīshān.    [51]

99    ʿAbdallāh ibn Numayr reported to us, on the authority of Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, she said: I wish that I will be completely forgotten when I die.

100    Yaʿlā ibn ʿUbayd and Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ and Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, they said: Hārūn al-Barbarī related to us, on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr, he said: ʿĀʾisha announced at her deathbed: Do not follow my bier with fire, and do not put red velvet beneath me.

101    ʿUbaydallāh ibn Mūsā reported to us, Usāma ibn Zayd reported to us, on the authority of one of his companions, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, that she said when death arrived: I wish I had not been created! I wish I were a tree praising God and performing my duty.

102    Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Hishām ibn al-Mughīra related to us, Yahyā ibn ʿAmr related to us, on the authority of his father ʿAmr ibn Salama, that ʿĀʾisha said: By God, I wish I were a tree! By God, I wish I were a clod of soil! By God, I wish that God had not created me at all.

103    Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, ʿĪsā ibn Dīnār related to us, he said: I asked Abū Jaʿfar about ʿĀʾisha and he said: 'May God grant her forgiveness! Do you not know what she used to say? I wish I were a tree, I wish I were a stone; I wish I were a clod of soil.' I said: 'And what is that for her?' He said: 'Repentance.'

104　Al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn reported to us, Ḥassan ibn Ṣāliḥ related to us, on the authority of Ismāʿīl, on the authority of Qays, he said: ʿĀʾisha said on her death-bed: Indeed, I have caused mischief[1] after the death of God's Messenger, GBGS. Bury me with the wives of the Prophet, GBGS.

105　Muhammad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Asadī reported to us, ʿUmar ibn Saʿīd ibn Abī Ḥusayn related to us, on the authority of Ibn Abī Mulayka, that Ibn ʿAbbās came in to ʿĀʾisha before her death and praised her. He said: 'Rejoice, wife of God's Messenger! He did not marry any virgin but you and your excuse was revealed from Heaven.' Apart from him, Ibn al-Zubayr came in to her, and she said: 'ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās praised me, but I do not like to hear anyone praising me today. I wish I were completely forgotten.'

106　Muhammad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Asadī reported to us, Misʿar related to us, on the authority of Ḥammād, on the authority of Ibrāhīm, he said: ʿĀʾisha said: I wish I were a leaf from this tree.

107　Qabīṣa ibn ʿUqba reported to us, Sufyān related to us, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim, on the authority of al-Qāsim, that ʿĀʾisha used to fast uninterruptedly.

108　Qabīṣa ibn ʿUqba reported to us, Sufyān related to us, on the authority of al-Aʿmash, on the authority of Khaythama, he said: When ʿĀʾisha was asked: How are you?[2] She said: Good, praise to God.[3]

109　Mālik ibn Ismāʿīl reported to us, Zuhayr related to us, ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUthmān related to us, he said: ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUbaydallāh ibn Abī Mulayka related to me that Dhakwān, ʿĀʾisha's door-keeper, related to him that he came to ask for permission to visit ʿĀʾisha. When I came, her nephew ʿAbdallāh ibnʿAbd al-Raḥmān was sitting at her head. I said: 'ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās asks for permission to visit you.' Her nephew leant down, and said: 'ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbbās asks for permission to visit you.' She was dying, but she said: 'Let me off Ibn ʿAbbās, I do not need him or his praises.' He said: 'Mother! Ibn ʿAbbās is one of your most righteous sons, he wishes peace upon you, and bids you farewell.' She said: 'Then permit him to enter, if you want.' I let him in, and when he had wished peace upon her, and sat down, he said: 'Rejoice!' She said: 'For what?' He said: 'The only thing that is left before you meet with Muhammad, GBGS, and the beloved ones, is

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1 أحدثتُ *aḥdathtu* means 'I have originated an innovation that is disapproved in sunna and the Qurʾān.' This probably refers to her intervention in the Battle of the Camel, when she broke her seclusion. For this, she is not worthy of being buried next to the Prophet, who is buried in her house.
2 كيف أصبحتِ
3 صالحة والحمد لله

the spirit to leave the body. You were the one of God's Messenger's wives who was most beloved to God's Messenger, and God's Messenger loved only the good. Your necklace fell the night of al-Abwā' (?).[1] God's Messenger began to search for her [sic] in the morning when he had come to the house. People did not have water, and then God revealed that they should wipe themselves with clean sand.[2] That was because of you and the relief God has permitted to this umma. God revealed your innocence from above seven heavens; the Trusted spirit came with it. All God's mosques began to mention it and recite about it all night and all day long.' She said: 'Leave me, Ibn 'Abbās! By the one who has my soul in his hand, I wish I were completely forgotten.'

110  Aḥmad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Yūnus reported to us, Zuhayr related to us, Layth ibn Abī Sulaym reported to us, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sābiṭ related to us, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, that he came to 'Ā'isha for something about which she was angry with him. He said: 'Mother of believers, you are called Mother of believers because you are privileged; it was verily your name before you were born.'

111  'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Aṭā' reported to us, Ibn 'Awn reported to us, on the authority of Nāfi', that 'Ā'isha announced at her death bed that 'if something happens with me, it happens during this illness'.

112  'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Aṭā' reported to us, al-Nahhās ibn Qahm related to us, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, he said: 'Ā'isha said at her death-bed: Do not warm up a fire with me and do not carry me on red velvet.

113  Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Walīd al-Azraqī al-Makkī reported to us, Muslim ibn Khālid related to us, Ziyād ibn Sa'd related to us, on the authority of Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: I wish I were one of the plants of the earth and that I were not remembered at all.

114  Sa'īd ibn Muhammad al-Thaqafī reported to us, on the authority of Sāliḥ ibn Ḥayyān, on the authority of 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said to me: 'Ā'isha, if you want to keep to me, then it will be sufficient for you to attain from the world as much as a rider's provisions. Beware of the wealthy people's company, and do not regard your dress as too old[3] until you patch it.

115  Anas ibn 'Iyāḍ reported to us, on the authority of Ja'far ibn Muhammad, on the

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1 ليلة الأبواء

2 تيمّموا صعيدا طيبا  *Qur'ān* 4:43.

3 ولا تستخلقى ثوبا I cannot find form X, but form I denotes, among other things, that a garment is old and worn-out.

authority of his father, that 'Ā'isha said: After I have been wrapped up and embalmed, Dhakwān shall lower me into the pit and flatten the earth above me, and then he will be free.

116 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī al-Zinād related to me, on the authority of his father, he said: Ibn Abī 'Atīq came in to 'Ā'isha when she was heavy in sickness, and said: 'Oh Mother, how do you feel? Oh, could I but sacrifice myself for you!' She said: 'By God, it is death!' He said: 'In that case I will not do it!' She said: 'Never give up that!' She meant joking.

117 Ya'lā ibn 'Ubaydallāh reported to us, Hārūn al-Barbarī related to us, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, he said: 'Ā'isha announced at her death bed: Do not follow my bier with fire, and do not place red velvet beneath me.

118 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra related to us, on the authority of Mūsā ibn Maysara, on the authority of Sālim Sabalān, he said: 'Ā'isha died on the night of the 17th of Ramaḍān, after the *witr*-prayer. She had ordered that she would be buried the same night. People gathered and attended; I have never seen a night with more people. The inhabitant in *'awālī*[1] came down, and she was buried in al-Baqī'.

119 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra related to us, on the authority of 'Uthmān ibn Abī 'Atīq on the authority of his father, he said: The night when 'Ā'isha died, I saw that burning palm-branches in pieces of cloths[2] were carried with her in the night. I also saw the women in Baqī', behaving as if it were a festival.

120 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Jurayj related to us, on the authority of Nāfi', he said: I witnessed Abū Hurayra praying for 'Ā'isha at al-Baqī', and Ibn 'Umar is among the people one cannot dispute. Marwān performed the 'umra-pilgrimage that year, and he appointed Abū Hurayra as his deputy.

121 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Azīz related to us, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm, he said: Abū Hurayra prayed for 'Ā'isha in Ramaḍān in the year 58; she was buried after he had performed the witr-prayer.

122 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, 'Abdallāh ibn 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr related to

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1 العوالى , towns and villages in the vicinity of Medina.
2 الخِرَق is pieces of cloths and rags, but the meaning here is somewhat unclear.

us, on the authority of 'Uthmān ibn Abī al-Walīd, on the authority of 'Urwa, he said: I was the fifth in 'Ā'isha's grave of the five, 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, al-Qāsim ibn Muhammad, 'Abdallāh ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Abū Hurayra prayed for her after witr in the month of Ramaḍān.

123 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra related to us, on the authority of 'Uthmān ibn Abī 'Atīq, on the authority of al-Qāsim ibn Muhammad, he said: I went down in 'Ā'isha's grave, as did 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abdallāh ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr, and 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr.

124 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra reported to us, on the authority of 'Uthmān ibn Abī 'Atīq, on the authority of his father, he said: I saw the night when 'Ā'isha, may peace be upon her, died, that palm-branches were carried with her. They put pieces of cloth on her, which they immersed in olive oil and set on fire, and carried it with her.

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125 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ma'mar related to us, on the authority of al-Zuhrī, on the authority of 'Urwa, he said: 'Ā'isha was buried at night.

126 'Affān ibn Muslim related to us, Ḥammād ibn Salama related to us, Hishām ibn 'Urwa reported to us, on the authority of 'Urwa, that 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr buried 'Ā'isha at night.

127 Muhammad ibn 'Umar said: 'Ā'isha died on a Tuesday night, when seventeen days had passed of the month of Ramaḍān, year 58. She was buried the same night, after witr prayer; she was then seventy-six years old.

128 Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth reported to us, Ismā'īl related to us, on the authority of Abū Ishāq, he said: Masrūq said: If it had not been for a certain thing, I would have performed the wailing over the Mother of believers.

129 Ya'lā and Muhammad, 'Ubayd's two sons, reported to us, they said: Hārūn al-Barbarī related to us, on the authority of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, He said: A man came, and my father asked him about people's grief for 'Ā'isha. He said: There was [grief] among them. He said: verily, only those whose mother she was, grieved for her.

130 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, 'Abd al-Wāhid ibn Maymūn, 'Urwa's client, related to us, on the authority of Ḥabīb, 'Urwa's client, he said:

When Khadīja died the Prophet, GBGS, felt deeply sad. Then God sent Jibrīl, and he came to him with 'Ā'isha in a cradle. He said: 'Oh God's Messenger, this one will take away some of your grief, she has some of Khadīja's qualities.' Then he removed her. God's Messenger used to visit Abū Bakr's home often, saying: Umm Rūmān, treat 'Ā'isha well and remember me concerning her. As a result of this, 'Ā'isha enjoyed a special position among her family, but they did not know about God's command in regard to her. God's Messenger, GBGS, came to them one of the days he used to come to them, and he did not fail to come to Abū Bakr's house one single day from when he accepted Islam until he emigrated. He found 'Ā'isha concealed at the door of Abū Bakr's house crying sadly. He asked her [what the matter was] and she complained about her mother and said that she had reproached her. The eyes of God's Messenger filled with tears and he went in to Umm Rūmān. He said: 'Oh Umm Rūmān, have I not entrusted you with the care of 'Ā'isha, and asked you to remember me concerning her?' She said: 'Oh God's Messenger, she told the Trustworthy [Abū Bakr] about me and made him angry at us.' The Prophet, GBGS, said: 'Even though she did that!' Umm Rūmān said: 'No wrong and no shame on her ever.' 'Ā'isha was born in the beginning of the fourth year of the prophecy. God's Messenger married her the tenth year, in Shawwal, when she was six years old. He married her one month after Sawda.

131  Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī al-Zinād related to us, on the authority of Hishām, on the authority of his father, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said to me: ''Ā'isha, you cannot hide from me when you are angry and when you are pleased.' I said: 'How do you know that, God's Messenger?' He said: 'When you are pleased, you say "No, by Muhammad's lord", and when you are angry, you say "No, by Ibrāhīm's lord"'. She said: I said: 'By God, you speak the truth, God's Messenger, indeed, I avoid your name!' [55]

132  Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Dhi'b related to us, on the authority of al- Hārith ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, on the authority of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Thawbān, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, she said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said: ''Ā'isha's superiority over the women is like the superiority of *tharīd*[1] over all other food.

133  Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ibn Abī Ṭuwāla related to me, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik, on the authority of the Prophet, GBGS, he said: ''Ā'isha's superiority over women – and then he mentioned the same.

134  Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Ma'mar related to us, on the authority of al-

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1 الثريد is a meal consisting of crumbled bread and broth.

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Zuhrī, on the authority of Abū Salama ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, that: God's Messenger, GBGS, said one day: ''Āʾisha, this is Jibrīl, and he wants to wish peace upon you.' She said: 'And may peace be upon him, and God's mercy and blessings' – but I did not see him. He saw what I did not.

135 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, Isḥāq ibn Yahyā related to us, on the authority of ʿĪsā ibn Ṭalḥa, he said: ʿĀʾisha is the wife of the Prophet, GBGS, in Paradise.

136 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, Abū Bakr ibn ʿUbaydallāh related to us, on the authority of Rabīʿa ibn ʿUthmān, he said: God's Messenger ascended to heaven one night. Then he said to ʿĀʾisha: Indeed, you are more beloved to me than fresh butter with dates.

137 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, Fāṭima bint Muslim related to me, on the authority of Fāṭima al-Khuzāʿiyya, she said: I heard ʿĀʾisha say one day:
One day God's Messenger, GBGS, came to see me. I said: 'Where have you been today?' He said: You fair one, I have been in Umm Salama's house.' I said: 'Have you not been satiated with Umm Salama?' She said: Then he smiled and I said: 'God's Messenger, do tell me, if you stop for a rest in a valley, one side of which has never been pastured in, while the other one has, which one of the two would you choose?' He said: 'The one which has never been pastured in.' I said: 'And I am not like any other of your wives; each of them has dwelt in a man's house, except for me.' She said: God's Messenger, GBGS, smiled.

138 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, Ibn Abī Sabra related to me, on the authority of Mūsā ibn Maysara, on the authority of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Qarrāẓ, he said: Abū Hurayra's hand was in my hand; that is, the night when ʿĀʾisha, peace upon her, died.

139 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, on the authority of ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of Uthmān ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of his father, he said:
ʿĀʾisha died on a Tuesday night when nineteen days had passed of the month of Ramaḍān, year 58. Abū Hurayra performed the ritual prayer for her.

140 Muhammad ibn ʿUmar reported to us, on the authority of ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿUrwa, on the authority of ʿĪsā ibn Maʿmar, on the authority of ʿAbbād ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, he said: We stretched out a garment on ʿĀʾisha's grave and carried palm-branches in which there were pieces of cloth; we buried her at night after the witr-prayer, in the month of Ramaḍān.

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141 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, on the authority of 'Umar ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Raḥmān, ibn Abū Bakr, on the authority of his father, he said: I was present at 'Ā'isha's grave, we buried her at night.

142 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ja'far related to us, on the authority of Ibn Abī 'Awn, he said: 'Ā'isha said: I and Ṣafīya were vilifying each other, I vilified her father and she vilified mine. God's Messenger, GBGS, heard it and said: 'Ṣafīya, you are vilifying Abū Bakr, Ṣafīya, you are vilifying Abū Bakr!'

143 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallāh reported to us, on the authority of al-Zuhrī, on the authority of Ibn Musayyib, he said: God's Messenger, GBGS, said to Abū Bakr: 'Abū Bakr, do excuse me for reprimanding 'Ā'isha!' He said: Abū Bakr raised his hand and punched her chest fiercely. Then God's Messenger said: 'God forgive you, Abū Bakr! This is not what I wanted!'

144 Muhammad ibn 'Umar reported to us, Sufyān al-Thawrī related to us, on the authority of al-A'mash, on the authority of 'Umāra ibn 'Umayr, he said: One who heard 'Ā'isha, peace upon her, related to me: When she recited the verse 'And remain in your houses' she cried until her veil was soaked.[1]

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1 *Qur'ān* 33:33.

# Appendix 2

## Translation of the biography of 'Arīb

The mentioning of appreciated titbits of akhbār about 'Arīb[1]

1    'Arīb was an excellent singer and a poet with fine poetry. She had beautiful handwriting and diction. She was exceedingly charming, beautiful and elegant with a beautiful voice. Moreover, she was a talented lute-player with a superior command of composition, with knowledge of melodic modes[2] and strings[3] as well as the art of memorizing and reciting poetry and adab. None of her equals related to her, and no one like her has been seen among women after the old qiyān[4] of Ḥijāz, such as Jamīla, 'Azza al-Maylā', Sallāma al-Zarqā' and others who followed their path, though they are few. But they did not have some of the advantages that we have described, which belong to her equals among the caliphs' jawārī; they who grew up in the caliphal palaces, and were nourished by a comfortable life, far from the life in Ḥijāz and growing up among common people [al-'āmma], rude Arabs and rough characters. Authorities whose witnesses are enough have testified to this.

2    Muḥammad ibn Khalaf Wakī' reported to me, on the authority of Ḥammād ibn Isḥāq, he said: My father [Isḥāq[5]] told me: I have never seen a woman who is a better lute-player than 'Arīb, nor someone with better compositions, a more beautiful face and higher spirit; nor one who is more eloquent, has quicker answers or is a better player of chess and backgammon. In all, I have never seen a woman who combines so many good characteristics as she does. Ḥammād said: I told this to Yaḥyā ibn Aktham[6] when my father was still alive, and he said: "Abū Muḥammad [Isḥāq] was right, she was like that." I said: "Did you hear her?" He said: "Yes, over there." He meant in

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1 The following is a translation of 'Arīb's biography in the Dār al-kutub/al-Hay'a al-miṣriyya al-'āmmah edition of *Aghānī*, vol. 21:54-87.
2 النغم   For the technical terminology of 'Abbāsid music theory, I rely upon Sawa, *Music Performance*.
3 الاوتار could also be rendered instrumental music, according to Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* s.v. *wtr*.
4 For قيان och جوارى, see above, 61-62.
5 Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (150/767-235/850), leading musician at the courts of Hārūn and his successors until his death. Isḥāq was a defender and keeper of the ancient musical tradition, and plays a great role in *Aghānī*. The split between his 'ancient school' and his contemporary court musician prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī 'modern school', which treated the ancient tradition freely, was debated long after their death; see Farmer, History, 146ff.'Arīb is regarded as one of Isḥāq's followers.
6 Yaḥyā was the Grand Judge (qāḍī l-qudāt) of Baghdād under al-Ma'mūn, whose adviser and boon-companion he was, and for a few years under al-Mutawakkil, 237-40 / 851-55.

al-Ma'mūn's house.[1] I said: "Was she as skilful as Abū Muhammad told?" Yaḥyā said: "This is a question your father should answer, he knows more about her than I." I reported this to my father and he laughed, then he said: "Were you not embarrassed to ask the Grand Judge about such a thing?"

3    Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā reported to me, he said: My father related to me, he said: Isḥāq said to me: I had a harp player [*ṣannāja*] whom I liked, but Abū Isḥāq al-Mu'taṣim[2] aspired to her during al-Ma'mūn's caliphate. One day while I was in my house, someone came suddenly and knocked fiercely on my door. I said: 'See who it is!' They said: 'The Commander of the believers' [the caliph's title] messenger.' I said: 'My harp player is gone; you will find that someone has told him about her, and now he is sending for me concerning her.' When the messenger had departed from me, I went as far as to the door, feeling weak and heavy. I entered and wished peace upon him. He replied my greeting, looking at my altered facial expression, and said: 'Calm down.' I calmed down. Then he said: 'Sing a song!' He said also: 'Do you know whose song this is?' I said: 'I will listen to it, and then I will inform the Commander of the believers, God willing.' He commanded a jāriya behind a curtain and she sang, playing the lute, imitating the old singing. I said: 'Add for me another lute; it would make me more certain.' He added another lute and I said: 'This is a new song by female lute player.' He said: 'What made you say that?' I said: 'When I heard its softness, I knew it was new, from women's singing, and when I heard its excellent phrasing, I knew its composer was a lute player.' I had memorized its phrasing and feet. Then I asked for another lute, and I did not have doubts. He said: 'You are right; the song is by 'Arīb.'

4    Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: And Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī said: Al-Mu'tamid 'alā Allāh commanded me to collect her songs which she had composed. I took her notebooks and the books in which she had collected her songs. I wrote them down; they amounted to one thousand songs.

5    'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz reported to me, on the authority of Ibn Khurdādhbih that he asked 'Arīb about her production. She said: 'At this moment, it amounts to one thousand songs.'

6    Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: and Ḥammād ibn Isḥāq said that 'Arīb composed one thousand songs.

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1 Al-Ma'mūn, caliph 191-218/813-33.
2 Al-Mu'taṣim, caliph 218-27/833-32.

7    and Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Qarīṣ related to me that he collected her songs from the dīwāns by Ibn al-Muʿtazz and Ibn al-ʿUbays ibn Ḥamdūn,[1] and what he had from her jāriya Bidʿa, whom Banū Hāshim gave to her. He compared them, and they amounted to one thousand one hundred and twenty-five songs.

8    Al-ʿAttābī mentioned that Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā related to him, he said: I heard Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Hishāmī [2] say, when ʿArīb's production was mentioned: Her compositional method is like Abū Dulaf's poem[3] about Khālid ibn Yazīd, which goes: "Oh eye cry for Khālid / (as if he were as great as that of) one thousand men, whereas he is called only one man."[4] He meant that she had made a thousand songs on one theme, and they really count as one song. Ibn al-Muʿtazz also told this story on his authority. Nevertheless, this is an attack that is not allowable. In her production there are certainly both bad and feeble songs, but that does not detract from her. There is hardly any great singer, ancient or modern, whose production does not include exceptional as well as average songs, except for a few masters, such as Ibn Muḥriz and Maʿbad among the ancient and Isḥāq alone among the modern. Ibn Surayj was criticized in the same way in spite of his position. He heard that singers were saying: Ibn Surayj sings in ramal and khafīf,[5] his songs are appropriate for weddings and feasts. After he heard this he set music to the poem: "Because of her face, Nuʿm has made us love / the dwellings between al-Watāʾir and al-Naqʿ". He died after this, but his songs were still criticized. Isḥāq said about his father: My father composed six hundred songs; in two hundred of them he imitated the old songs and made utmost achievements.[6] Two hundred songs are average, like other people's singing, and two hundred are bad. I wish he had not performed them and accredited them; otherwise I would have been able to conceal them for his sake. He said this in spite of his father's elevated position in this craft and the fact that Isḥāq raised his good fame and preferred him to Ibn Jāmiʿ and others. If this is what Isḥāq said about his father, who else would have to apologize for making both good and bad songs? No one in any craft is exempted from situations in which he falls short of the intention. Perfection is only for the great God; imperfection is the nature He created in Adam's sons. If something is found in some of ʿArīb's songs, this does not mean that the rest should be rejected and be labelled defective and feeble. Isḥāq's

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1 Abū l-ʿUbays was a court singer from al-Mutawakkil's reign; see Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 325. The dīwān of Ibn al-Muʿtazz, 247-96 / 861-917, ʿAbbāsid prince, poet and author, is well-known.

2 Abū ʿAdballāh al-Hishāmī, who apparently did not like ʿArīb, was probably a son or nephew of the famous musician ʿAlī ibn Hishām, who was executed in 217/832, during the caliphate of al-Maʾmūn, ʿArīb's master. See Ibid., 37, 326.

3 قْوْل, i.e. saying. It is notable that *qāla* (he said) is constantly used for introducing a poem, and might be translated 'he/she composed a poem and recited it'; see Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes,* s.*v. qwl*.

4 يا عين بكى خالدا / ألفا ويدعى واحدا This translation was proposed to me by Geert Jan van Gelder, the wording between the brackets may also be, according to him: 'as if his loss were as bad as that of…'.

5 Rhythmic modes, see Sawa, *Music Performance*, 40ff.

6 Isḥāq's father is Ibrāhīm al-Mawsilī who was the leading court musician until his death in 188/804.

witness of her excellence is enough for her defender. He rarely testified in favour of anyone; no one was safe from his criticism and reproach, even if he was prominent with an excellence agreed upon, because of his [Isḥāq's] avariciousness of his position in this craft and his contempt for its practitioners. This has already been mentioned in the accounts about him and ʿAllawayh,[1] Mukhāriq,[2] ʿAmr ibn Bāna, Sulaym ibn Sallām, and Ḥusayn ibn Muḥriz, their predecessors and those who exceeded them, such as Ibn Jāmiʿ and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī – his disparagement towards them, and his readiness to confirm their faults in their singing and compositions. It is thus unnecessary to repeat this subject matter here. If his behaviour towards them is regarded in relation to his praising of her, it is the best proof for the injustice of someone reproaching her and the falseness of his words. The one who said this, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Hishāmī, had a reason for telling lies about her, which called him to say what he did. We will mention that later, God willing.

Another proof of the invalidity (of this criticism) is that when al-Ma'mūn wanted to test Isḥāq's knowledge of old and modern singing, he tested him with a melody which ʿArīb had performed and created. It had almost got his approval, if he had not thought a long time until he was certain, due to his knowledge of compositional styles, and his prominent acquaintance of melodic modes and their variations, and in rhythmic modes and their courses.

9   Yaḥyā ibn ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā reported this to me, he said: My father related to me, on the authority of Isḥāq: Concerning the reason for which al-Hishāmī regarded her with hostility, Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭāhir reported to me about it, he said: It was mentioned to Abū Aḥmad ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭāhir,[3] my uncle, that al-Hishāmī claimed that the best song ʿArīb composed was: "My companion, you have blamed me unjustly" and that the standing of her songs was as Abū Dulaf said about Khālid: "Oh eye cry for Khālid / (as if he were as great as that of) one thousand men, whereas he is called only one man". He said: However, the case is not like what was mentioned. ʿArīb has an outstanding and prominent production. He said this about her unjustly and by envy and refused to recognize the high estimation she deserves due to a remarkable story [khabar] about the two of them. We asked him about it, and he said: I took al-Hishāmī with me out to Sāmarrā'[4] after the death of my brother, Abū Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭāhir. I

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1 ʿAllawayh, or ʿAllūya, will appear again in this biography (kh. 42). He was a court musician from Hārūn al-Rashīd up to al-Mutawakkil; see *Aghānī*, 11:224-44.

2 Mukhāriq was one of the most famous court singers from Hārūn al-Rashīd (given to him by the Barmakids), up to al-Wāthiq; see H. Farmer, 'Mukhāriq,' in EI², vol 8.

3 Abū Aḥmad ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭāhir was grandson of al-Ma'mūn's commander Ṭāhir. His father was governor in Baghdad during al-Mustaʿīn: G. Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), 119. ʿUbaydallāh is portrayed in *Aghānī* as 'representing the ideal of the courtier and administrator possessing an all-round culture which included both the Arabian and the Greek sciences, poetic gifts and knowledge of musical theory and practice': Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 17.

4 Sāmarrā' was the ʿAbbāsid capital during 221-79/836-92.

entered with him to al-Mu'tazz when he was drinking and 'Arīb was singing.[1] He said to him: 'Ibn Hishām, sing!' He said: 'I have desisted from singing since the killing of my Lord al-Mutawakkil.'[2] Then 'Arīb said to him: 'By God, you did well to desist! Your singing had little meaning; it was neither skilful, faultless nor emotional.' She made all the people at the majlis laugh at him and he was ashamed.[3] After that he reviled her and blamed her compositions by saying: 'It amounts to a thousand songs in number, but only one in meaning.' But it is not as he said. She has a production in which she is close to the productions of the old masters; she made excellent and outstanding compositions.  Among them is "Has then my soul found peace or its wailing eased", "You said: My grief, the day you bid her farewell", "If you wish to do justice, he is your helper ", and "How dear to me is he who is my sickness!", "They consigned her in Damascus when…", "Do not harass me unjustly and wrongly", and "He who is devoid of  love scolded the yearning one".

10   I have copied the reports I mention and referred them to Ibn al-Mu'tazz,[4] from a book Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jarrāḥī, known as Qarīḍ, gave to me. He reported to me that 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mu'tazz had given it to him, from his collection and edition. I mention the stories about her I found good, as they are very rich. I have added what I have heard, as well as such which I have got to know in other ways, separate parts or collected. I have then referred each narrative to its narrator.

11   Ibn al-Mu'tazz said to me: al-Hishāmī Abū 'Abdallāh related to me, and 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz reported to me, on the authority of Ibn Khurdādhbih, they said: 'Arīb belonged to 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl, master of al-Rashīd's stables and conveyances [*marākib*]. He is the one who trained her, educated her and taught her singing.

12   Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: Someone else than al-Hishāmī related to me, on the authority of Ismā'īl ibn al-Ḥusayn, al-Mu'taṣim's uncle: She was the daughter of Ja'far ibn Yahyā.[5] When the Barmakids were detained, she was stolen as a child.

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1 Al-Mu'tazz was caliph 252-55/866-69.
2 Al-Mutawakkil was caliph 232-47/847-61.
3 For a detailed description of formal and informal 'Abbāsid majlis, see Sawa, *Music Performance*, 111: 'It was in the context of the majālis (plural of majlis) that the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the 'Abbāsids took place.'
4 Which book by Ibn al-Mu'tazz is not clear, but he apparently wrote a book which contained akhbār 'Arīb; as noticed in the following biography, most narratives are referred to him. Cf. Manfred Fleischhammer, *Die Quellen des Kitāb al-Aġānī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004).
5 Ja'far ibn Yahyā al-Barmakī; his father (see khabar 13) Yahyā was the tutor of prince Hārūn, and when he became caliph, his wazīr. He entrusted his sons Ja'far and Faḍl with important responsibilities. He was wazīr between 170/786 and 187/803, a period some called  "the reign of the Barmakids". Ja'far was known for his eloquence. When Hārūn al-Rashīd suddenly put an end to the Barmakids' supremacy, Ja'far, who had been very close to the caliph, was executed, while his father and brother Faḍl remained in detention until their deaths some years later.  Their property was confiscated; see D Sourdel, 'Al-Barāmika,' in EI[2], vol 1.

13 He said: 'Adb al-Wāhid ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khaṣīb related to me, he said: Someone I have trust in related to me, on the authority of Aḥmad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl al-Marākibī :[1] 'Arīb's mother was called Fāṭima. She was a harem inspector of Umm 'Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khālid.[2] She was a tidy girl. Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā saw her and fell in love with her. He asked Umm 'Abdallāh if she could marry him to her, which she did. When Yaḥyā ibn Khālid heard the news he rejected it, and said to him: "Must you marry someone whose father and mother are not known? Buy instead of her a hundred slave girls and throw her out!" He threw her out, and lodged her in a house in the quarters of Bāb al-Anbār,[3] without his father's knowledge. He entrusted her to the care of someone and visited her often. She gave birth to 'Arīb in the year 181 [797]. When she died she was 96 years old. He said: 'Arīb's mother died when Ja'far was still alive. He gave her to a Christian [naṣrāniyya] woman and appointed her wet-nurse to her. When the incident with the Barmakids happened, she sold her to the slave-trader Sinbis, and he sold her to al-Marākibī .

14 Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: and Yūsuf ibn Ya'qūb reported to me that he heard al-Faḍl ibn Marwān saying: When I looked at 'Arīb's feet, they reminded me of Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā's feet. He said: I heard someone narrate that the eloquent style in her books was mentioned to a scribe. He said: How could it be otherwise since she is daughter of Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā?

15 Jaḥẓa[4] reported to me, he said: I came into 'Arīb with Sharwīn the singer, and Abū al-'Ubays ibn Ḥamdūn. At that time I was a boy, dressed in tunic and girdle. She did not know me and asked who I was. Sharwīn informed her, saying: This is a young man from your family. He is the son of Ja'far ibn Mūsā ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khālid, and he can sing to the *ṭunbūr*.[5] She approached me and came close to my seat. She asked for a *ṭunbūr* and commanded me to sing. I sang some songs, and she said: "You are good, my son, may you become a singer! But if you perform between these two lions, you and your *ṭunbūr* will disappear among their lutes." She gave orders to give me fifty dinars.

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1 The son of 'Arīb's owner al-Marākibi is thus narrating here.
2 قَيِّمة According to Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes,* s.v. *qym*, the masculine *qayyim* is a 'gouverneur, administrateur, gardien, chef, inspector', and the feminine قيمة الجوارى is 'la gouvernant du harem'. Fāṭima's mistress was apparently the mother of Ja'far's nephew, 'Abdallāh ibn Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā, see Stigelbauer, *Sängerinnen*, 19.
3 Ja'far had a palace in East Baghdad, on the eastern Tigris bank, close to his father's house. Bāb al-Anbār was on the other side of the city; see Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, 243-45. map III and V.
4 Jaḥẓa, 224-324 or 326 / 839-936 or 938, musician and poet, was grandson of Mūsā ibn Yaḥyā, Ja'far's brother; see Sourdel, 'Al-Barāmika,' 1036, and Fleischhammer, *Quellen*, 34. He is a major source for *Aghānī*, and Abū al-Faraj studied with him: Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 16.
5 A long-necked lute, a pandore. For its history, see Farmer, ' Ṭunbūr.'

16    Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and Maymūn ibn Hārūn related to me, he said: ʿArīb related to
      me, she said: Al-Rashīd sent a messenger to her family, the Barmakids, asking them
      about their conditions. He gave orders not to inform them that he came on his behalf.
      She said: He went to my uncle al-Faḍl and asked him. Then my uncle recited:

>     song
>     They ask us about our conditions: "How are you?"
>     He whose star has fallen, how would he be?
>     We are a people whom the misery of Fate has afflicted
>     and we remain submitted to its evil accidents

ʿArīb mentioned that this poetry was by al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā, and she has two melodies
to it, one in the rhythmical mode of *thaqīl thānī* and one in *khafīf thaqīl*[1], both of
them in the melodic mode of *wuṣṭā*. But ʿArīb is wrong here; she might have heard
that al-Faḍl quoted poetry other than this, but later forgot it, and replaced it with this.
Concerning this poem, it is undoubtedly by al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk. After the
mentioned line, he laments Muḥammad al-Amīn:

>     We are a people whom the misery of Fate has afflicted
>     and we remain submitted to its evil accidents
>     We wish that al-Amīn will return
>     Every day, how far al-Amīn is from us![2]

It is a qasīda.

17    Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and al-Hishāmī related to me that: Her master went out to Baṣra.
      He educated her, trained her and taught her calligraphy, grammar, poetry and
      singing. She excelled in them all. Gradually, her skill increased until she was able to
      compose and recite poetry. Her master had a friend, he was called Ḥātim ibn ʿAdī,
      one of Khurāsān's military commanders.[3] It was also said that he was a secretary of
      ʿUjayf,[4] administrating the register of soldiers' stipends. Her master often invited
      him and was together with him. When a debt was imposed on him, he hid himself at
      his place. His eyes fell on ʿArīb, he wrote to her and she answered him. A
      relationship developed between them and ʿArīb was passionately in love with him.

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1 Second-heavy and light-heavy; see Sawa, *Music Performance* 42-43, n. 38. See this book for all further
Arabic musical terms.
2 Each line in the English translation corresponds to a hemistich in the Arabic text.
3 I.e. a commander from the *abnāʾ*, the sons of the early Khurasan army which helped the ʿAbbāsids obtain
power, and who were later found in various areas of the ʿAbbāsid empire; see e.g. Patricia Crone, *Slaves on
Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 66ff.
4 ʿUjayf ibn ʿAnbasa, ʿAbbasid army commander, prob. from Khurasan, d. 223/838.

She contrived to construct a ladder out of strings made of sinews. It was also said: from thicker strings. She hid it until she was ready to escape to him, a while after he had moved from her master's house. He had by then prepared a place for her. One night she rolled up her clothes, put them on her mattress and covered them with a blanket. Then she climbed down the wall so as to escape and set off to him. She remained with him for a while. He said: I have heard that when she came to him, he sent for her master asking him to lend him a lute with which she could accompany her singing. He lent him a lute, without knowing that she was with him, as he trusted him. Neither did he accuse him for anything which had to do with her. However, when 'Īsā ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl al-Marākibī , [1] that is, 'Īsā ibn Zaynab, lampooned his father, and blamed him for her, which he often did, he recited:

> What an excellent girls is 'Arīb![2] / She did a wonderful thing
> When the night was dark she mounted / a difficult and dreadful
> beast / She ascended attached to the Pleiades / or close to it / she
> waited patiently until / sleep had struck the guardian / She arranged
> her bedclothes / lest anybody would be suspicious / into a
> substitute, which, if called / would not found to be answering / She
> left, fear leading her / as a twig and a sand-hill[3] / She was like the
> yolk of an egg, if it were shaken / you would fear that it would
> break / She lowered herself to her lover / and he welcomed her as
> his beloved / A happy man, who has got his share of the Good Life
> in this world / Oh gazelle, whose eyes / enchant hearts / one part of
> whom consume / the other part in beauty and goodness / You were
> wolves' prey / You had fed a wolf / It is the same with the sheep, if
> / her shepherd is not mindful / He does not mind the plague / in the
> pasture-land if it is fertile / 'Abdallāh became a destitute cuckold /
> He has certainly beaten his face / and torn his shirt / tears have
> poured from him /and moistened the dyed hair

18  Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn Yūnus related to me: She became tired of him after this and escaped from him. She was singing with musicians she knew in Baghdad, covered in order to hide herself. One day al-Marākibī's nephew passed by the garden where she was singing together with musicians. He heard her singing and recognized it and immediately sent for his uncle. He stayed, and remained until his uncle came. Al-Marākibī grabbed her collar, seized her and hit her with a hundred lashes. Meanwhile she was screaming: 'Why are you killing me? I

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cannot endure you, I am a free woman! If I am a property, then sell me! I cannot endure being opressed!' The next day he regretted what he had done. He came to her, kissed her head and foot and gave her ten thousand dirham.

Later the news about her reached Muḥammad al-Amīn and he took her from him.[1] He said: Her story reached Muḥammad during his father's life and he asked him for her. However, he did not give him what he asked for, even if he never before had asked him for one of his servants. Because of that he had a grudge against him. When Muḥammad took over the caliphate, al-Marākibī came to kiss his hand while he was riding. He gave orders to prevent him and push him away, and the soldier[2] did so. Then al-Marākibī beat him and said to him: 'Do you prevent me from kissing my lord's hand?' When Muḥammad was descending from his horse, the soldier came to him and complained. Thus Muḥammad called for al-Marākibī and gave orders to behead him. However, when information about his case was requested, he reprieved him. Instead he detained him and claimed 500,000 dirham from what he had been allotted from the cavalry budget. He sent someone to take 'Arīb from his house together with servants who belonged to him. When Muḥammad was killed, 'Arīb fled to al-Marākibī and stayed at his place. He said: One of our friends recited to me something by Ḥātim ibn 'Adī whom she stayed with after she had fled to him, but then got tired of him and fled from him. The poem has several lines, among which are the following two:[3]

> Sprinkle water on my face, and mourn
> him who was killed by 'Arīb and not him who was killed in battle
> Would that, now that you have quickly killed me,
> You would be mine after death!

19  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: Concerning Ismāʿīl ibn al-Ḥusayn's transmission, al-Muʿtaṣim's uncle, it differs, he mentioned that: She fled from her master al-Marākibī's house to Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid al-Khāqānī, known as the Brute, one of Khurāsān's military commanders. He said: He was fair-skinned, blond and blue-eyed. About him 'Arīb has made a poem in hazaj and ramal, according to al-Hishāmī's and Abū al-ʿAbbās' transmissions:

> How dear to me is every blue-eyed  / blond and fair-skinned man
> whom my heart has been infatuated by / My infatuation cannot be condemned

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1 Al-Amin, caliph193-98/809-23.

2 الشاكرىَ  was a hired soldier in the *shākiriyya*, a private militia. During the ʿAbbāsid, al-Shākiriyya became a national military institution, under the caliph, whose soldiers were from various ethnic groups; see Khalīl ʿAthāmina, 'Al-Shākiriyya ' in *EI* [2], vol 9.

3 The four lines of poetry in the translation are actually two in the Arabic poem, as I have separated each hemistich.

20    Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: Ibn al-Mudabbir[1] related to me, he said: I went out with al-Maʾmūn to the land of the Byzantines, searching for wealth as young men do. We travelled with a military unit. When we had departed from Raqqa, we saw a group of women in covered litters on camels. We were a troop of companions; one of them said to me: 'In one of those litters is ʿArīb.' I said: 'Who bets me that I can pass alongside those litters and recite ʿĪsā ibn Zaynab's poem: What an excellent girls is ʿArīb! / She did a wonderful thing?' One of them bet me and an amount was settled. I went alongside it and recited the poem with loud voice, until I had recited all of it. Then a woman disclosed her head and said: 'Young man, have you forgotten the best and most delightful verse? Have you forgotten that he recited: "'ʿArīb has a wet vagina / She has been fucked in many ways". Go and collect what you have agreed upon!' Then she pulled the curtain aside, and I saw that she was ʿArīb. I hurried to my companions afraid that the servants showed might do me harm.

21    Ismāʿīl ibn Yūnus reported to me, he said: ʿUmar ibn Shabba said to us:
Al-Marākibī had a jāriya called Mazlūma, with an outstanding beautiful face. He sent her with ʿArīb to the public bath, or to whomever she visited of his family and acquaintances. Many times, she went with her to Ibn Hāmid, whom she had a liking for. He recited a poem about her:

> They did you wrong, oh Mazlūma [wronged]
> When they made you guard of ʿArīb
> If they had charged you justly and rightly
> they would not let you be free from a guard
> Could you prohibit the one who arouses suspicion from sinning
> when you are his object!
> How could the criminal be made avoiding sins
> by you, when you are the one who invites to sinning!
> If they want you to guard ʿArīb
> who will guard you from what is hidden in the hearts?

Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash has recited something with the same meaning to me, although it is not the same as the one I have mentioned. It is about a singer's female guard who was regarded as beautiful; I think it is by al-Nāshiʾ:

> May I sacrifice myself for you! If they treated you justly
> they would have prevented the eye from looking at you
> Have they not declaimed their admiration
> upon seeing the gaze in your eyes
> They sent you as a guard for us

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1 See below, khabar 51.

But who will be your guard?
You prevent our eyes from looking at someone else
Yet, could the eye look at someone else than you?

22  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ibrāhīm related to me, on the authority of Ḥammād ibn Isḥāq, on the authority of his father, and on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Baghawī, on the authority of Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm that when the news about ʿArīb reached Muḥammad al-Amīn he sent for her and her master [cf. khabar 18]. They were brought to him and she sang in the presence of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī:[1] "All peoples have a valuable jewel / And you are one of the conversable beauties". Muḥammad enjoyed it and asked for the song several times. He said to Ibrāhīm: 'Uncle, what do you think about it?' He said: 'My lord, it is beautiful. If she works with it for some time, and her fear calms down, her singing will be more beautiful.' He said to al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabīʿ:[2] 'Take her and bargain for her.' He did so but her master acted unjustly and made the sale binding for 100,000 dinars. Then Muḥammad's affairs collapsed and he was alienated from her and she from him. He had not given orders about sending the money for her to her master before he was killed, after he had deflowered her. She returned to her master, but then she fled from him to Ḥātim ibn ʿAdī. He mentioned the rest of the khabar as above.  He said in his khabar that she fled from her master to Ibn Ḥāmid. She was still at his place when al-Ma'mūn arrived at Baghdad. Al-Marākibī complained to him about Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid and he ordered him to come, and he came. He asked him about her but he denied, and al-Ma'mūn said to him: "You are lying; news about her have reached me." He commanded the commissioner of police to strip him in the police office and flog him until he returned her. He took him, but the news reached her. She then rode a hired donkey, and arrived when he was stripped in order to be flogged. Her face was uncovered, and she screamed: 'I am ʿArīb – if I am a property, sell me! If I am free he has no access to me.' The news about her was brought before al-Ma'mūn and he commanded that her case would be set right by the judge Qutayba ibn Ziyād. Her case was set right by him, but al-Marākibī approached him demanding her back. He asked him for clear evidence of his possession of her. He returned complaining of his injustice to al-Ma'mūn and he said: I have been demanded something no one is demanded concerning slaves. The one who buys a slave does not possess something like that! Zubayda[3] complained about his transgression, and she said: 'The worst thing that happened to me after the assassination of my son Muḥammad was when al-Marākibī attacked my house and took ʿArīb from it.' Al-Marākibī said: 'I took my property, as the price had not been paid to me.' Al-Ma'mūn gave orders to take her

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1 Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, 162-224/779-839, brother of Hārūn al-Rashīd, singer and poet.
2 Al-Faḍl ibn Rabīʿ was al-Amīn's wazir.
3 Queen Zubayda was al-Amīn's mother. She had her own palace close to al-Khuld.

to Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Wāqidī;[1] he had appointed him judge in the eastern bank [of Tigris]. He took her from Qutayba ibn Ziyād and gave orders to sell her immediately.[2] Al-Maʾmūn bought her for 50,000 dirham, and she made him feel utmost affection and love for her.

23  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim[3] related to me that al-Maʾmūn kissed her foot one day. He said: When al-Maʾmūn died, she was sold among his inheritance. No male or female slave was sold except for her. Al-Muʿtaṣim bought her for 100,000 dirham and freed her, and she became his mawlā.

24  Ḥammād ibn Isḥāq mentioned on the authority of his father that when she escaped from Muḥammad's house after he had been killed, she climbed down to the road from the Palace of Eternity [qaṣr al-khuld][4] on a rope and fled to Ḥātim ibn ʿAdī.

25  Jaḥza reported to me, on the authority of Maymūn ibn Hārūn, that al-Maʾmūn bought her for 50,000 dinars. He summoned ʿAbdallāh ibn Ismāʿīl [al-Marākibī] and gave them to him. He said: 'If I had not vowed that I would not buy a slave for more than that, I would have paid you more. However, I will entrust you with an office from which you will earn much more than this price.' He threw two ruby rings to him, with a value of 100,000 dinars, and bestowed on him a valuable robe of honour. He said: 'My lord, the living would take advantage of something like that, but when it comes to me, I am without doubt dead, as this jāriya was my life.' He left; afterwards he became confused and demented. He died 40 days later.

26  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā related to me, he said: al-Faḍl ibn Marwān's secretary related to me, he said: Ibrāhīm ibn Rabāḥ related to me, he said:
I was in charge of al-Maʾmūn's expenses. Isḥāq ibn Mawsilī described ʿArīb for him and he commanded him to buy her. He bought her for 100,000 thousand dinar, and al-Maʾmūn gave orders to convey it to him, and to convey another 100,000 dirham to Isḥāq. I did so, but I did not know how to register it. Therefore I reported in the register that the 100,000 were spent on a jewel, and the other 100,000 on the jeweller and the broker. After that al-Faḍl ibn Marwān came to al-Maʾmūn, he saw what I had

done and disliked it. He asked me about it; I said: 'Yes, it is right.' Then he asked al-Ma'mūn about it; he said: 'Is it necessary to give the broker and the jeweller 100,000 dirham?' He made a lot of fuss about the affair. Al-Ma'mūn didn't like it and called for me. I approached him and related to him that it was the money spent on 'Arīb and the gift to Ishāq. I said: 'What is more correct, Commander of the believers, what I did or should I have recorded in the register that it was spent on a gift to a male singer and the price for a female singer?' Al-Ma'mūn laughed and said: 'What you did is more correct!' Then he said to al-Faḍl: 'You Nabataean,[1] Do not protest against my secretary in anything!'

27  And Ibn al-Makkī said: My father related to me, on the authority of the servant Niḥrīr, he said: One day I entered the palace of the harem, and I saw 'Arīb sitting on a chair with her hair hanging down washing herself. I asked about her, and it was said: She is 'Arīb, our lord called for her today and deflowered her.

28  Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: And Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Baṣrī reported to me, that when she stayed in al-Ma'mūn's house, she contrived to get to Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid. She was passionately in love with him and wrote a song to him, which she sung. Later, she used stratagems to go out to him. She used to meet with him now and then until she got pregnant from him and gave birth to a girl. This reached al-Ma'mūn and he married him to her.

29  And Ibrāhīm ibn al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr reported to us, on the authority of his father, and al-Muzaffar ibn Kayghalagh related it to me, on the authority of al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr, he said: When al-Ma'mūn came to know about her affair with Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid, he gave orders to dress her in a coat of wool and seal her collar. He detained her in a dark shed one month without seeing the light. She was given bread, salt and water through under the door every day. Then he remembered her and felt sympathy for her. He gave orders to let her out. When the door was opened for her and she was taken out, she did not utter one word before she sang: "They concealed him from my gaze but his figure appeared / in my heart, a concealed one who cannot be concealed". Al-Ma'mūn heard of this and deemed it extraordinary. He said: She is incorrigible! Then he married her to him.

> Song
> If he could reveal to you what he has
> You would see the most beautiful censurable censurer
> They concealed him from my gaze but his figure appeared

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1 نبطي designates a Nabataean, which is here the name for an Aramaean Christian. It is also often employed as a term of abuse, for someone of base origin and not knowing Arabic well. Faḍl ibn Marwān was an Iraqi Christian and was later to vizier of al-Mu'taṣim: D. Sourdel, 'Al-Faḍl b. Marwān,' in EI[2] , vol 2,

in the heart, a concealed one who cannot be concealed

The rhythmic mode of 'Arīb's song is thaqīl awwal, the melodic mode is wuṣṭā.

30   Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: And Luʾluʾ, ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim's companion related to me, he said: Ahmad ibn Jaʿfar ibn Ḥāmid related to me, he said:
When my uncle Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid died my grandfather betook himself to his house. He looked for his heritage, and begun to investigate what he had left in inheritance. He took out thing after another from it, until he took out a sealed basket. He removed the seal and opened it. In it were short letters to him from ʿArīb. He examined them and smiled. A paper fell in his hand and he read it. Then he laid it down and went for an errand. I read it, and there was his song:

>   My woe over you, because of you / You have put doubts into truth
>   You claimed that I was faithless / That was indeed an injustice over me and lie
>   If what you said is true / Or if you had decided to leave
>   Then may God replace / my vile love with piety

According to al-Hishāmī, ʿArīb made these verses in raml and hazaj and the lyrics are hers.

31   Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿĪsā al-Khurāsānī related to me, on the authority of Yaʿqūb al-Rukhāmī, he said:
We were with al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Maʾmūn in Raqqa. Hāshim, a man from Khurāsān, was in command of his police. He came out to me and said: 'Abū Yūsuf, I will tell you a secret as I trust you, and it will be safe with you.' I said: 'What is it?' He said: 'I was standing at al-Amīn's head suffering from the heat when ʿArīb came out. She was standing with me, studying a book and I could not restrain from blowing her a kiss. She said: "Like the border of a garment!" By God, I did not understand what she meant!' I said: 'She said: "A lance thrust!"' He said: 'How could that be?' I said: 'She alluded to the poet's words: He shot the arrow at the udder of the camel and he followed it up with a lance thrust / like the border of a striped Yemenite garment.'[1]

32   and Ahmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir[2] told this story on the authority of Bishr ibn Zayd, on the authority of Ibn Ayyūb ibn Abī Shammar, that they were with al-Maʾmūn, and

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1 From a poem by al-Nābigha, about the beginning of the legendary pre-Islamic Basūs war. The poem and the akhbār about it are found in *Aghānī*, Bulāq 4:140ff ; see also J. W. Fück, 'Basūs,' EI[2], vol. 1. There are several variants of this legend; according to some the war started when Kulayb ibn Rabiʿ shot the udder of Basūs bint Munqidh's camel when she let it graze on his pasture (which was allowed by custom). The arrogant act incited Basūs' nephew al-Jassās (Kulayb's brother-in-law) to thrust his lance at Kulayb and kill him. This started a vendetta and a war that went on for forty years.
2 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893) occurs again in khabar 57.

Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid was with them, when ʿArīb sang for them. She sang: ʺHe shot the arrow at the udder of the camel and he followed it up with a lance thrust / like the border of a striped Yemenite garment". Then al-Maʼmūn said to her: 'Who blew a kiss to you, so that you said to him: "A lance thrust?"' She said to him: 'My lord, who should blow a kiss to me in your assembly?' He said: 'By my life, you have to tell me!' She said: 'Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid' Then he was silent.

33 Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and Muḥammad ibn Mūsā related to me, he said:
Al-Maʼmūn drank in the dawn one day with his boon companions. Among them were Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid and a group of singers. ʿArīb was with him sitting on the place of prayer. Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid blew her a kiss and she burst out singing: "He shot the arrow at the udder of the camel and he followed it up with a lance thrust /like the side of a striped Yemenite garment". In her singing, she meant to answer Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid by saying to him: 'A lance thrust.' Al-Maʼmūn said to her: 'Stop!' And she stopped. Then he approached his boon companions, and said: 'Who among you blew ʿArīb a kiss? By God, if he does not tell me the truth, I will behead him!' Muḥammad stood up and said: 'Commander of believers, I blew her a kiss, but forgiveness is the most pious deed!' He said: 'I have forgiven.' He said: 'And what made the Commander of believers understand that?' He said: 'She began to sing a song, and she never sings without indication. I knew that she did not sing this song if nothing had been hinted to her and, in this case, the only hint is the blowing of a kiss. Thus I knew that she answered: "A lance thrust"'.

34 Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn related to me:
ʿArīb was passionately in love with Abū ʿĪsā ibn al-Rashīd,[1] and someone else related that the only example she gave was ʿĪsā's beautiful face and beautiful singing and that she claimed that she had not been in love with someone else from Banī Hāshim, or loved sincerely any of the caliphs and their sons except for him.

35 Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and one of our jawārī related to me, that ʿArīb was passionately in love with the servant Ṣāliḥ al-Mundhirī, and she married him secretly. Al-Mutawakkil dispatched him to a place far away for a task. She composed poetry to him, with a melody in khafīf thaqīl, and it is:

> The beloved one is gone / against my will and without consent
> I acted wrongly when I left the one / for whom I will never find a substitute

He said: One day she sang it in the presence of al-Mutawakkil. When he asked her to repeat it, his jawārī started to wink and laugh. She turned to them without al-

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1 I.e. al-Maʼmūn's brother. He was a poet, scholar and composer, d. after 279/892; see Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 324.

Mutawakkil noting and said: 'You lesbians [*saḥḥāqāt*]![1] This is better than what you do!'

36 He said: and it was related to me by one of al-Mutawakkil's jawārī, that one day, she came in to 'Arīb, who said to her: 'I say, come here!' She came. He said: She said: 'Kiss me on this spot here and find the smell of Paradise!' She hinted at the side of her neck, and I did so. Then she said to her: 'For what reason?' She said: 'Ṣālih al-Mundhirī kissed me on that spot.'

37 Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Hishāmī reported to me, he said: Ḥamdūn ibn Ismāʿīl related to me, he said: Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Wāthiqī related to me, he said: One night, Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid said to me: 'I would like you to empty your tent [*miḍrab*] for me; I want to come to you and stay with you.' I did so, and he showed up. When he sat down, 'Arīb arrived and came in.

38 and Jaḥẓa related it to me, he said: Abū ʿAbdallāh ibn Ḥamdūn related to me, that: 'Arīb visited Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid and they sat together. Then he began to blame her, saying: You did that and that. She said to him: 'Muḥammad, is this your opinion?' Then she approached him and said: 'You wimp! Lett's get on with what we were about and what we've come for!'

39 and Jaḥẓa said in his khabar: 'Make my trousers my necklace, and attach my anklets to my earrings. Then write to me your apology on a scroll tomorrow, so that I will write my apology to you on three. Leave those pointless concerns! As the poet said: "Stop counting faults when we meet / Come here! I will not count and you will not count."' The rest of this poem is: "I swear, if you had been concerned about extending my hair  / to reach the fire of Hell, I would say: extend it". The lyrics are by al-Muʾammil, and the music by 'Arīb, in the rhythmic mode of khafīf ramal. 'Allawayh has ramal, and the melodic mode of  binṣir, according to the transmission of 'Amr ibn Bāna.

40 Abū Yaʿqūb, Isḥāq ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn al-Khaṣīb related to me, he said: Abū l- Hasan, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt[2] related to me, he said:
One day I was at my brother Abū ʿAbbās' house, and 'Arīb was there, sitting separated on the seat of honour. Her jawārī were singing among us, and behind their curtain. When the caliphs were mentioned, I said to my brother: ''Arīb said to me:

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1 Rowson translates *saḥḥāqa* as 'tribade', because the term refers to 'an activity rather than to choice of sexual partner'. *saq* means both female masturbation and 'genital rubbing between women', i.e. a female sexual activity that does not involve penetration, Rowson, 'Categorization,' 77, n. 36.
2 The Ibn al-Furāt brothers in this khabar, Abū al-Ḥasan and Abū ʿAbbās (d. 291/904), 'Arīb's host, both held important offices. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt (d. 312/924), was vizier under several caliphs, D. Sourdel, 'Ibn al-Furāt ' in EI[2], vol. 3.  Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn al-Furāt occurs again in akhbār 50 and 61.

Eight of them have fucked me, but the only of them I desired was al-Mu'tazz,[1] because he looked like Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Rashīd.' Ibn al-Furāt said to me: I turned to one of my nephews and said to him: 'What do you think about her desire today?' He laughed, but she noticed it, and said: 'What are you talking about?' I refused to answer her, and she said to her jawārī: 'Stop!' They did so and she said: 'They are free to go away, all of them, if you do not inform me about what you were talking about! They are free if I become annoyed about anything that has happened, even if it is despicable!' I told her the truth, and she said: 'So what? Regarding the desire, it is as it should be, but the instrument is not working.' Or she could have said: has become exhausted. 'Return to whatever you were doing!'

41  And al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Mawadda related to me, he said: Ibrāhīm ibn Abī al-'Anbas related to me, he said: My father related to me,[2] he said:
One day, we came in to 'Arīb to give her our greetings. She said: 'Stay at my house today so that I can offer you *lawzīnaja*[3] which Bid'a has made with her own hands from fresh almonds, and whatever we have left from the stipend.[4] After that, we will sing for you.' He said: I said to her: 'On one condition.' She said: 'What?' I said: 'Something I wanted to ask you for a long time, but have been too afraid.' She said: 'Do that, but I will answer you before you ask me, I already know what it is.' I was puzzled and said: 'Tell me!' She said: 'You want to ask me about my condition, what it is?' I said: 'By God, that is what I wanted!' She said: 'My condition is a hard penis and a fresh breath. If he, in addition, owns a commendable beauty and good looks that may be praised, his value will be raised, but the first two are necessary for me.'

42  and al- Ḥasan ibn 'Alī related to me, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Dhī al-Sayfayn, Ishāq ibn Kundājīq, on the authority of his father, he said:
'Arīb was passionately fond of me when I was young. One day she said to me: 'Ishāq, I have heard that you have got an invitation. Could you send me a share from it?' He said: I took a lot of food, and sent a lot of it to her. My messenger returned quickly from her, saying: 'When I arrived at her door and she got to know my errand, she commanded me to give her the food, and it was offered. However, she sent a messenger to you; he is with me.' I got confused and thought that she found what I

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1 Al-Mu'tazz, caliph 252-55/866-69. This caliph, whom 'Arīb was attracted to, could be the last of the eight caliphs she claims to have had sexual relationships with. The others would then be, except for al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim, al-Wāthiq, al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntaṣir, and al-Musta'īn. When al-Mu'tazz died, she was 72 years old. However, she had survived two more caliphs, al-Muhtadī and al-Mu'tamid, when she died at an advanced age at 277/890, in the caliphate of al-Mu'taḍid.
2 Abū al-'Anbas, 213-75/828-88, was a companion of al-Mutawakkil; known as a buffoon, he occurs again in khabar 47.
3 لوزينجة  is a kind of marzipan, see Manfred Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970-) s.v. *lwzynj*.
4 وما حضر من الوظيفة  *al-waẓīfa* was her 'salary', a stipend composed of many, food, etc, which poets and others, acquired  from the caliph, see Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*  s.v. *wẓf*.

brought her too little. The servant entered with something that was wrapped up in a napkin and a short letter. I read it, and it said: "In the name of God the merciful, Your barbarian, your fool! Do you think that I am a Turk, and the meanest of soldiers, as you send me bread, meat and sweets? May God forgive you, you whom I could have sacrificed myself for! I have dispatched you a gift from my cuisine. Learn that this, and similar deeds, are good manners. Do not use common people's manners as etiquette, as in that case reprimands and blames will overwhelm you, God willing." I disclosed the napkin and there was a tray and a cover made of gold thread spun in *'amal al-khilāf* (?).[1] In it was a porcelain plate with two thin bread cakes, whose ends were folded. Inside, there were two grilled francolin breasts, candied almonds, fresh dates and salt. Then her messenger departed.

43  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: al-Hishāmī Abū ʿAbdallāh related to me, on the authority of a man he mentioned, on the authority of ʿAllawayh, he said: One night, al-Ma'mūn commanded me and the remaining singers to come in to him early for his morning drink. We left early in the morning. I met al-Marākibī, ʿArīb's master – she stayed at his house at that time – and he said to me: 'You offender! Don't you have any compassion, mercy, or shame? ʿArīb is out of her mind, dreaming about you three times a night!' ʿAllawayh said: I said: 'The caliph's mother is an adulteress!'[2] I walked with him and upon entering, I said: 'Close the door; I know the chamberlains' and the doormen's nosiness better than anyone in God's creation!' ʿArīb was sitting on a chair cooking, with three cooking-pots of chicken. When she saw me, she stood up, embraced me and kissed me. She said: 'What do you prefer, to eat from these pots, or do you want something to be cooked for you?' I said: 'One of these pots is sufficient for me.' She served from one of the pots, placed it between us, and we ate. We asked for wine, and sat drinking until we were drunk, then she said: 'Abū al-Ḥasan, yesterday I made a melody to Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's poem.' I said: 'How does is it go?' She sang: 'I hope you will excuse me if I reject a person who is not sincere / if I treat him harshly nor when I am submissive to him'.[3] She said: 'It is not ready yet.' We repeated it together until it was ready. Then chamberlains came, broke al-Marākibī's door and took me out. I went in to al-Maʿmūn, and when I saw him, I came dancing towards him, clapping my hands while I was singing the song. He and everyone who was with him heard a song which they did not recognize, and they liked it. Al-Maʿmūn asked me about the song and I explained to him. He said: 'Come close and repeat it!' I repeated it for him seven times. The last time he said to me: ''Allawayh, take the caliphate and give me a friend such as the one in that verse!'

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1 منسوج على عمل الخلاف

2 According to the editor, this expression signifies that he does not take the appointment with the caliph seriously and prefers to meet with ʿArīb.

3 عذيري من الإنسان لا إن جفوته    صفا لي ولا إن كنت طوعَ يده

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I hope you will excuse me if I reject a person who is not sincere
if I treat him harshly nor when I am submissive to him
I am verily yearning for being close to a companion
who pleases me and is devoted even when I am angry at him

The metre is ṭawīl, the lyrics are by Abū al-ʿAtāhiya. The music is by ʿArīb, the rhythmic mode is khafīf thaqīl awwal, and the melodic mode wuṣṭā. ʿAmr ibn Bāna attributed it thus, but al-Aṣbagh attributed it to ʿAllawayh.

44  Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: and al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr related to me, he said: ʿArīb related to me, she said: In Muḥammad's [al-Amīn] days, I was 14 years old and composed songs.

45  Al-Qāsim said: ʿArīb competed with al-Wāthiq on the subject of a melody he composed. She composed a melody to the same poem which was better than his melody; this is from it: "I did not come intending to sin against you / Nay, I confess my sins, so forgive my error today". The rhythmic mode of her melody is khafīf thaqīl, while al-Wāthiq's melody is in ramal. Her melody is better than his. This is another: "I complain to God that I suffer grief I cannot dispel / My Lord is enough for me, I do not complain to anyone else". Her melody and al-Wāthiq's melody are both thaqīl awwal but her melody is better than his.

> Song
> I did not come intending to sin against you / Nay, I confess my sins,
> so forgive my error today / The one who asks for forgiveness is more
> entitled to pardon from a master / May your Lord protect you today
> from fear and dread

Al-Wāthiq's melody is in ramal, ʿArīb is khafīf thaqīl. Dhukāʾ Wajh al-Ruzza mentioned that Ṭālib ibn Yazdād had hazaj muṭlaq to it.

I complain to God about the grief I suffer
My Lord is enough for me, I do not complain to anyone else
Where are the times when I was  happy
in his shadow being close to you, my support
I ask God to make me rejoice with you one day
I have smeared my eyelids with sleeplessness
yearning for you, you do not know what I have suffered
due to you, or what grief is in my heart

'Arīb's melody is in thaqīl awwal, wusṭā. Al-Wāthiq's is in thaqīl awwal, binṣir.

46 Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: This was the reason for al-Wāthiq's turning against her, and her plotting against him. Al-Mu'taṣim's turning against her was due to a letter he found from her to al-'Abbās ibn al-Ma'mūn in Anatolia: If you kill the Lout there, I will kill the One-eyed over here tonight. That is al-Wāthiq, he did not sleep at night. Al-Mu'taṣim had appointed him as his successor in Baghdad.[1]

47 He said: and Abū al-'Anbas ibn Ḥamdūn related to me, he said: 'Arīb was angry at one of her jawārī, who has been mentioned; he told me her name. I came to her one day and asked her to forgive her. She said something that is among the sayings which could be counted as her sins: "Abū al-'Anbas, if you wish to see the fornication I committed in my youth, my impudence and boldness to venture upon every great crime without hesitation, then you should look at her, and become acquainted with her doings."

48 Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: And al-Qāsim ibn Zurzūr related to me, he said: Al-Mu'tamid related to me, he said: 'Arīb related to me that in her youth she was given a horse and she used to jump upon it without stirrups.

49 He said: and al-Asadī related to me, he said: Ṣāliḥ ibn 'Alī ibn al-Rashīd, known as Za'farāna [Saffron] related to me, he said: My uncle Abū 'Alī disputed with al-Ma'mūn on the subject of a song. Al-Ma'mūn said: 'Where is 'Arīb?' She came feverish, and he asked her about the song. She said what she knew about it, and he said to her: 'Sing it!' She turned around to get a lute, and then he said to her: 'Sing it without a lute.' She leaned towards the wall due to her fever and sang. A scorpion drew near her, and I saw that it stung her hand twice or three times but she did not remove her hand or become silent until she had finished the song. Then she fell down, unconscious.

50 Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: Abū l-'Abbās ibn al-Furāt related to me, he said: Tuḥfa, 'Arīb's jāriya said to me: 'Arīb had a headache due to a cold. Then she daubed the hair on the spot of the sickness with sixty mithqāls musk and amber and washed her hair daily, every Friday. After she had washed it she returned the water. Her jawārī divided the wash-water, and that which she combed out from it, in bottles, with the help of a scale.

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1 Thus, they intended according to this story to kill the caliph and his son so that al-Ma'mūn's son al-'Abbās would be become caliph, rather than his cousin, al-Mu'taṣim's son al-Wāthiq. Al-'Abbās's plot against al-Mu'taṣim is described differently in Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 16, 121ff. Al-'Abbās was executed on the caliph's order. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, 106, who relates this event in his accounts about 'Arīb, but with a strong reservation: "This is an enormity that is not tolerated from sons and brothers – how could it be tolerated from a slave singer!"

51   Ahmad ibn Jaʿfar Jaḥza related to me, on the authority of ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim, he said: One day I came into ʿArīb to give her my greetings. When I sat down to rest, the sky opened with an enormous rainfall. She said: 'Stay with me today, so that I and my jawārī may sing for you. Send for whom of your friends you like.' I gave orders concerning my riding animals, and they were returned. We sat conversing and she asked me about the caliph's majlis yesterday, who had been singing for us, and what singing we approved. I reported to her that the caliph's song was a melody that Bunān had made in the rhythm of mākhūrī. She said: 'How does it go?' I informed her that it goes as follows:

> The eyelids were unwilling but then
> Theyshot (even if they are) filled with sleeplessness
> He who loved sincerely wept in anguish
> The travelling people had departed
> He had a worry which made him restless
> Before, he did not have any worries.
> Now, his heart was near destruction
> by the burning fire of longing

She sent a messenger to Bunān and he came immediately, soaked by the rain. She commanded to bestow him with splendid gifts. He was bestowed with them and was served splendid food. He ate and sat drinking with us. She asked him about the song and he sang for her. She took an inkhorn and a piece of paper and wrote:

> The copious rainfall answered / and the drowned narcissus yelled
> Bunān has sung for us / about eyelids filled with sleeplessness
> Give me a filled cup / as if its bubbles were pupils

ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā said: we drank to this song the rest of our day.

52   Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn al-Marzubān[1] related to me, on the authority of ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Mawazī, he said: Al-Faḍl ibn al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Maʾmūn said to me: One day ʿArīb visited me together with a number of her jawārī. She showed up when we were drinking. We talked a while, and I asked her to stay at my place. She refused and said: 'A group of my well-mannered and genteel friends invited me; they are together on al-Muʾayyad island.' Among them are Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir,

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1 Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn al-Marzubān (d. 309/921) was a friend of Abū al-Faraj's family, Kilpatrick, *Book of Songs*, 17.

Sa'īd ibn Ḥumayd and Yaḥyā ibn 'Īsā ibn Manāra.[1] I have already decided to betake myself to them. I implored her to stay and she remained with us. She asked for an inkhorn and paper and wrote: 'In the name of God the merciful'. After that she wrote one line with three separate words, nothing more. They were: 'I wanted [*aradtu*]'; 'if it was not for [*walawlā*]' and 'I might [*wala'allī*]'.

She sent it away to them, but when the letter arrived they were incapable of answering it. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir took the letter and wrote below 'I wanted' 'if only', below 'if it was not for' 'what?', and below 'I might' 'please! They sent away the letter and she clapped her hands and sighed. She drank a ratl and said: 'Would I leave those people and stay with you? In that case, may God forsake me! Nonetheless, I will leave some of my jawārī behind here with you, which should be sufficient for you.' She did so; she left some of her jawārī behind, took some with her and went off.

53 Muḥammad ibn Khalaf reported to us, on the authority of 'Uthmān ibn Abī l-'Alā', on the authority of his father, he said: Al-Ma'mūn reproached 'Arīb and abandoned her for days. Then she got ill and he returned to her, and he said: How did you find the taste of abandonment? She said: 'Oh Commander of believers, if it were not for the bitterness of abandonment, I would not taste the sweetness of reunion. The one who censures the instigation of anger praises when benevolence takes its place.' He said: Al-Ma'mūn went out to his companions and told them the story, then he said: 'What do you think about these words – if they were al-Naẓẓām's,[2] would they not have been great?'

54 Muḥammad ibn Khalaf related to me, on the authority of Abū al-'Aynā', on the authority of Ahmad ibn Abī Du'ād,[3] he said: ''Arīb and al-Ma'mūn had an argument. Al-Ma'mūn said something to her that made her angry and she abandoned him for days. Ahmad ibn Abī Du'ād said: I went in to al-Ma'mūn and he said to me: 'Ahmad, judge between us!' ''Arīb said: 'I do not need his judgement or his intervention in our case.' She sung: 'We combine abandonment with reunion / No oneshould interfere and make peace between us'.

55 Muḥammad ibn Khalaf related to me, he said: Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān related to me, on the authority of Ahmad ibn Ḥamdūn, on the authority of his father,

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1 Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mudabbir (d. 279/892-93) was an official and a boon-companion of al-Mutawakkil; see Toorawa, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, 114-15. Many of his poems in Aghānī are dedicated to 'Arīb, whom he was in love with, according to Toorawa, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, 115. He also holds that 'Arīb had a love affair with Sa'īd ibn Ḥumayd, which is not mentioned in this biography. Sa'īd (d. 252/866) was a chancellory secretary (*kātib*) with a high office: Toorawa, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, 61.
2 Al-Naẓẓām, died between 220/835 and 230/845, Mu'tazilī theologian and poet, see J van Ess, 'Al-Nazzām,' inEI², vol. 5, eds. C.E Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1986).
3 Ahmad ibn Abī Du'ād (d. 240/854) was a Mu'tazalite judge and one of al-Ma'mūn's closest friends. He later became the Grand Judge: Pellat and Zetterstéen, A hmad b. Abī Du'ād', Ibid.

he said: I attended a gathering with al-Ma'mūn in the land of the Byzantines, after the last evening prayer, a dark night with thunder and lightning. Al-Ma'mūn said to me: Ride away immediately, on a horse that is kept ready at the stable and set out for Abu Ishāq's camp, that is al-Mu'taṣim, and hand over my letter to him about this and that.[1] He said: Hence I rode away, but I could not keep a candle with me. I heard the hoof beats of a mount and was alarmed. I prepared to protect myself against it until my stirrups and the stirrups of that mount struck each other. At that moment a flash of lightning illuminated the face of the rider. It was 'Arīb! I said: ''Arīb?' She said: 'Yes, Ḥamdūn?' I said: 'Yes.' Then I said: 'From where, at this moment?' She said: 'From Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid.' I said: 'What did you do at his place?' She said: 'Idiot! 'Arīb comes from Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid at this time, she leaves the caliph's camp and when she returns to it you say to her: "What have you done at his place?" Do you think I have prayed the *tarāwīh* prayer with him? Or recited from the Qur'ān to him? Or studied fiqh together with him? Fool, we have reproached each other, conversed with each other, we have become reconciled, we have sung, fucked with each other, and then we departed!' She embarrassed and provoked me, and we broke up. I handed over the letter and returned to al-Ma'mūn. We embarked on talking and discussing poetry. By God, I intended to relate to him what she had said, but then I was afraid of him and said: First I will give him a hint with a piece of poetry. I recited to him:

> Salute the ruins of the camping-site of the hospitable woman,
> a sociable woman, who makes the best man of a people equal to the worst. /If they, who spend the night at the highland
> by Ṭayy's two mountains and the lowland of al-Ḥabl,
> remain sitting with her until the shadow becomes short,
> so, when they depart, everyone of them would have had a reunion with her[2]

Al-Ma'mūn said: 'Lower your voice, so that 'Arīb does not hear you! She could get angry and think that we are talking about her.'
I refrained from what I wanted to tell him, may God do good to me for that.

56   Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥakīmī related to me, he said: Maymūn ibn Hārūn reported to me, he said: Ibn al-Yazīdī said to me:[3] My father related to me, he said:

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1 The caliph al-Ma'mūn and his brother al-Mu'taṣim fought together in the Byzantine lands; Ṭabarī mentions the year 216/831 in *History*, vol. 32, 187.
2 There is another variant of the poem in Ibn Qutayba, *Nisā'*, 106, which differs slightly:

أَلِمّا على دارٍ لواسعةٍ الحبل / ألوفٍ تُسَوّى صالحَ القومِ بالرِّذل / يبيتُ بها الحُدّاثُ حتى كأنّما / يبيتونَ فيها من مدافعَ من نَخل / ولو

شَهِدت حُجّاجَ مكةَ كلَّهم / لراحُوا وكلُّ القوم منها على وَصل

3 The Yazidī family was a family of scholars and poets; Abū al-Faraj devotes a section in volume 20 to them.

We drew out with al-Ma'mūn when he went off to the land of the Byzantines. I saw 'Arīb in a litter. When she in turn saw me, she said to me: 'Yazīdī, recite to me some of your poetry, so that I may make a melody to it.' I recited to her:

> What is the matter with my heart, enduringly beating
> when I see the flashing of the lightning
> from Jordan or Damascus
> As he whom I love is there, on the horizon
> For there is the dearest of all people
> to me; the lie is contrary to the truth
> He is the one who governs my slavery
> and I do not desire to be freed as long as I live

He said: She sighed so deeply that I thoughts her ribs had broken. I said: 'By God, that was a passionate sigh!' She said: 'Be silent, you wimp, I am more passionate!' By God, she looked with a disquieting gaze on the assembly where every one of twenty noble leaders claimed her for themselves.

57 Muḥammad ibn Khalaf related to me, he said: Ahmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir related to me, he said: Ahmad ibn Ḥamdūn related to me, he said: There was a disagreement between 'Arīb and Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid. He loved her with all ecstasy of love but because of the dispute they almost came to rupture their relationship. She had more in her heart from him than he from her.[1] She met with him one day and said to him: 'How is your heart, Muḥammad?' He said: 'As miserable and wounded as possible, by God.' She said to him: 'Replace it, then you will get over it.' He said to her: 'If misfortune were optional, I would have done that.' She said: 'Then your weariness has lasted for long.' He said: 'I am compelled to endure; have you not heard al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf's poem:

> An enduring weariness together with hope of the beloved one
> is better for him than resting in resignation
> If it were not for your high-mindedness I would never have
> reproached you / and you would have been like anyone else for me'

He said: Her eyes shed tears; she forgave him and granted him her good will. They became reconciled and returned to an even better relationship.

58 Jaḥẓa related to me, he said: Abū al-'Abbās ibn Ḥamdūn said to me when we were talking about 'Arīb's singing: Her singing is not such which is credited for its

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1 وكان في قلبها أكثر ممّا في قلبه منها

quantity, because much of it is rubbish and her compositions are simple. I said to him: And whom do you know among all the singers in the 'Abbasid Empire, whose compositions are faultless, so that she could be like him? Then I started to enumerate her good and prominent compositions that I knew, and he agreed. I enumerated almost one hundred songs, such as these melodies: 'Oh 'Azza, do you want an old man still young at heart?', 'The reign of a generous one will comfort you for what passed ', 'He yelled: You have reproached unjustly', 'Fate laughed for a while and shone forth', and others. Then he said to me: 'Arīb did not leave behind any woman who was as able as she in singing, transmitting and composition. I said to him: No, and not many men either. Composed by 'Arīb is: 'Oh 'Azza, do you want an old man still young at heart?' Ahmad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ammār reported to me parts of this khabar, on the authority of Maymūn ibn Hārūn.

59    Ibn al-Mu'tazz mentioned that 'Abd al-Wāhid ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Khaṣīb related to him on the authority of someone he trusts, on the authority of Ahmad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ismā'īl al-Marākibī, he said: 'Arīb said to me: Your father performed the pilgrimage with me. He was weak and sat behind me on the camel. On the road I looked for Bedouins so that I could ask them to recite poetry, and I wrote down anecdotes and other things I heard from them. An old Bedouin was interested in us and I asked him to recite a poem. He recited: 'Oh 'Azza, do you want an old man still young at heart? / yet youthfulness might be something else than young age'. I had not heard it before and found it good. I said: 'Recite the rest of the poetry for me!' He said to me: 'It is single.' I liked his verse and treated him with benevolence. I memorized the verse and made a melody to it in thaqīl awwal. My master did not notice this because of his weakness. When it was evening the same day he said to me: 'How beautiful it was, the verse the Bedouin recited to you, when he said: it is single. Recite it for me if you remember it! I recited it for him, and informed him that I had made a song from it. Then I sang it to him and he gave me one thousand dirham because of it; he was very happy about the song.

60    Ibn al-Mu'tazz said: Ibn al-Khaṣīb said: The same narrator narrated to me that after this event he attended Abū 'Īsā ibn al-Mutawakkil's assembly and from here is Ibn 'Ammār's transmission on the authority of Maymūn attached. I have combined the two transmissions except that Maymūn ibn Hārūn mentioned that they were at Ja'far ibn al-Ma'mūn's house, and that Abū 'Īsā was with them. 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā was there, and Bid'a, 'Arīb's jāriya, sang for them. 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā declared that the composition was made by someone else than 'Arīb. He declared that she did not claim to have composed it, and he insisted in this. Therefore Ja'far ibn al-Ma'mūn stood up and wrote a letter to 'Arīb, without our knowledge, asking her about the song and whether she could write its story to him, which she did. She wrote to him with her own handwriting: 'In the name of God the merciful, Blessed be those who

have a family and may the miserable bachelor have what he searches for. I, the miserable, am alone and solitary without any associate, while you are as you are. You have taken my friends and them, who used to delight me.' She meant her two jawārī, Bidʿa and Tuhfa. 'You are feasting, playing and singing while I do the contrary, may God do you good and preserve you. You asked me, may God extend your life, about something a person interfered in; the story about this song is so and so.' She told her story with the Bedouin as I have told it without diminishing a letter from it. The answer arrived at Jaʿfar ibn al-Maʾmūn; he read it and laughed. Thereupon he threw it to Abū ʿĪsā and Abū ʿĪsā threw it to me; he said: 'Read it!' ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā was sitting next to me and he wanted to get hold of the letter but I prevented him. I stood apart and read, which he disapproved of. He said: 'What is this?' We hid the issue from him to avoid uproar, as he hated her. May God grant us and him forgiveness.

61    Ibn al-Muʿtazz said: Abū l-Khaṭṭāb al-ʿAbbās ibn Ahmad ibn al-Furāt related to me, he said: My father related to me, he said: One day we were at Jaʿfar ibn al-Maʾmūn's home drinking, and ʿArīb was there. Then someone sang:

> Oh full moon, you have been dressed so that you resemble
> the face of this shining and bright beauty.
> I see you passing away and waning
> while her beauty lasts for days, it does not depart

ʿArīb laughed and clapped her hands. She said: 'There is no one other than me on this earth who knows about this song!' Nobody among us dared to ask her about it except me. So I asked her and she said: 'I will tell you the story about it; the main character of this story is dead, or else I would not have told it. Abū Muḥallim came to Baghdad and stayed at a khan close to the poor Ṣāliḥ's [1] house. One day Umm Muḥammad, Ṣāliḥ's daughter, looked down and saw him urinating. She liked his equipment and wanted to get together with him. She made herself a pretext to achieve this, by sending him a request to lend her money. She let him know that she had got into straits and that she would return the money to him in one week. He sent her ten thousand dirham and swore that if he had more in his possession, he would have sent it to her. She appreciated this and initiated a relation with him and made the loan a reason for meeting him. She let him in at night and I used to sing for them. One night, we drank in the moonlight. Abū Muḥallim looked at the moon, and then he asked for an inkhorn and a piece of paper. He wrote his poem on it: 'Oh full moon, you have been dressed so that you resemble / the face of Umm Muḥammad, Ṣāliḥ's daughter' and the other verse. He said to me: 'Make a melody to it!' I did so; we liked the song and drank to it. Umm Muḥammad said in the end of the majlis:

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'My sister, you have done something brilliant with this poem, nevertheless it will remain a disgrace for me for ever!' Abū Muḥallim said: 'I will change it.' Instead of Umm Muḥammad, Ṣālih's daughter, he wrote: 'this shining and bright beauty'. I sang it the way he changed it and people learnt it from me. Yet, if Umm Muḥammad were alive, I would never have told you this!' The lyrics are by the great genealogist Abū Muḥallim. The music is by ʿArīb, thaqīl awwal muṭlaq in the course of wusṭā, according to al-Hishāmī's and other's transmissions. Abū Muḥallim's name is ʿAwf ibn Muḥallim.

62 Hāshim ibn Muḥammad al-Khuzāʿī reported to us, on the authority of Maymūn ibn Hārūn, he said: ʿArīb wrote to Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid, whom she was in love with, asking him to visit her. He wrote to her: 'I fear for myself.' Thereupon she wrote to him:

> If you fear what I fear
> And you claim that you do not have the courage
> Then, why should I hold on to my youthful passion
> when the day for our meeting is not destined to come

He came to her immediately. ʿArīb has ramal in these two lines, as well as in two lines following them, which are not mentioned in the khabar. Shāriya has khafīf ramal, all this comes from Ibn al-Muʿtazz' transmission. The other two verses are:

> You have considered my excuse, but you don't give one yourself
> You have worn out my body but you don't feel anything
> You are accustomed to joy and left me alone
> The tears from my eye will not cease

Maymūn mentioned in this khabar that Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid wrote to her censuring her about something he disliked. Then she wrote back to him asking to apologize, but he did not accept.[1]

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1 ʿArīb's biography continues with five songs and akhbār about them. However, ʿArīb is not mentioned again, as the akhbār are about Bashshār and Abū Nuwās, and thus I have not included them.

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