LOVE POETRY BY ARAB WOMEN A SURVEY

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Abstract

Poetry by Arab women has often been neglected to a point, that many thought of it as hardly playing any role at all in the Arabic literary heritage, an exception being pre-Islamic *marāṭī*. This contribution tries to assess the importance of medieval love poetry by women in relation to Bauers far reaching conclusions about male love poetry in his *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*, etc. and its outline of Arab medieval “Mentalitätsgeschichte”.

The contribution that female love poetry offers to understand medieval Arab society is disappointing for two reasons:

1. It is very much inspired by the everyday, almost banal vicissitudes that come with love;
2. It hardly contains any *wasf* of the beloved, the means by which the poet(ess) might have been able to construct the necessary perspective to understand the emotional implications of love and passion and the intellectual reflection on it.

An intriguing feature of Thomas Bauers recent publication, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt*¹ is the absence of a Conclusion. This decision has probably been taken with a purpose. It is as if it is left to the reader to determine whether or not the author succeeded in his undertaking, which is to present an analysis of late Abbasid love poetry in order to work out a “Mentalitätsgeschichte” of the Abbasid period. Nothing less than that.

In his introduction the author creates two opposite ends, the observer and the observed, in this case, the modern reader and a number of love poems from the Abbasid period. This opposition is certainly meaningful.

¹ Bauer, Th., *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt, Eine literatur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie des arabischen Gazal*, Wiesbaden, 1998. Henceforth LLAW.

Another opposition he creates is that between the “pre-modern” world and our actuality, be it modern or even post-modern. This opposition allows the author to address a few fundamental mistakes in the image “modernity” conveyed of pre-modern Islamic society, by using epithets as “medieval” or “courtly”. Bauer argues that the use of such adjectives leads to false conclusions and will blur our understanding of history significantly. One of the examples of misunderstanding he mentions is the tendency, often observed in Arabic Studies, to assume, that the main day-to-day concerns of an Arab or a Muslim in that period had to do with matters of religion.

As one of the factors that underly such misunderstandings Bauer mentions the problem of communication: all too easily a modern writer assumes, that the Abbasid poet composed his poem in order to communicate with us, modern readers, whereas Bauer emphasises the obvious fact that this poet only meant to communicate with certain members of his own contemporary society. This faulty attitude among modern readers—Bauer rightly argues that to us an Abbasid poet has nothing to say—presupposes a kind of universality between concepts that humans have or create, a universality that Bauer argues against.²

It is far beyond the intentions of this contribution to review Bauers subtle and well wrought monography and it is not difficult to agree with many of the author’s observations and comments³. On the other hand one might be tempted to place a question mark here and there. It is quite clear, that the procedure of throwing all poetical themes and

² The problem that Bauer tackles is an intriguing one, especially in the context that he is writing in, because the *corpus* of poetry that he tries to analyse and classify—love poetry—seems to defy cognitive reasoning by its very nature; in modern (post Romantic) times love poetry seems to be the declared domain of affections, whims and other individual feelings, that defy intellectual description. Somehow we may have come to regard this domain as emotional, unpredictable and non-intellectual, but at the same time modern culture would make us believe, that the phenomenon of love and its derivative—love poetry—is universal in form and nature. Bauer denies both:

1. His object (love and love poetry) can be classified through an intellectual analysis;
2. He rejects claims of universality for cultural-historic, mainly Western notions like “courtly love” or concepts like “the Middle Ages”.

If we add this to Bauers assumption, mentioned earlier, that essentially a poet from the Abbasid period had nothing to say to us—a denial of transcultural, time transgressing communication—the very effort of analysing and classifying love poetry and love’s concepts seems pointless.

³ For a summary see *LLAW*, pp. 14-17.

motifs together, everything that a poet of a bygone era had to say, on a huge universal pile of meanings and concepts that we—moderns—can understand and appreciate, and to determine that as a means of communication is grotesque. One might on the other hand wonder whether the ambition to communicate is so prominent and whether Abbasid poets with each and every poem tried to communicate *at all*, even with their contemporaries. As a child of his time he creates for other children of his time, but the creative process does not always have to be one of communication: it cannot be excluded that a poet might feel the urge to create, invent and convey something brilliant and unique, just for the sake of it.

And even so: communication has to do with distance and distance is a relative concept. Some cultural spheres are more distant and outlandish than others, even contemporary ones. And although we should avoid to overestimate, many or most of the scholars in Arabic studies know and understand more about Abbasid society than they would about Ceaucescu's Bucharest, rave parties or the everyday life of the modern student.

If we were to apply Bauers proposal of how to deal with this *corpus* of poetry to his own work, then the author himself should be considered to have fallen in his own trap, because what else could he have done than what he actually did: choose and translate (i.e. communicate the meaning of) the poems of his choice and analyse and interpret them from the perspective that he, a "modern", is interested in. From a theoretical side it is very useful to take Bauers views into consideration, but if these views were to lead to an undesirable polarization, I would prefer to be found in the universalist camp.

Bauer stresses the relationship of the *lyrical* in Abbasid love poetry to its social and historical context as defined by a subtle pattern of actions and reactions, expectations and unexpected turns between the poet and his *client*, the consumer of poetry. What Bauer intends to do is to (re)construct a *mentalitätsgeschichtliche Entwicklung* in this poetry, that mirrors a wakening awareness in the individual as well as in society. It is a hazardous undertaking, because one might argue: does the particular reflect the general; does a limited—although in its context important—human activity in the field of elite culture, i.e. the creation of poetry, reflect a major and abstract development like the "Sammelbegriff" *Mentalitätsgeschichte*?

One thing to ensure that his statements are of a general character is the authors choice for *agrād* to filter the themes and motifs in this

corpus: poetical categories like *madīḥ*, *wasf*, *ḥabar* and *lawm* are likely to have been productive in the communicational patterns between poet and public in that age. These categories as genres may seem unbalanced to a modern reader, but they are well known in contemporary, indigenous literary theory.

A large number of poems that Bauer discusses are situated in the realm of the metropolitan, affluent, homosexual or rather paederastic scene, an exclusive domain of men. It may well be, that many of the intellectual and “mentality historic” innovations that Bauer detects in this poetry originate in this context, setting further the boundaries of the tradition of *ḥiğāzī* love poetry, but one might wonder whether Bauers corpus reflects the practice of love poetry and a possible development of accompanying spiritual values in every day life, on household level urban medieval Arab cities.

If Bauers observation is right—if significant changes in mentality and esthetical/ethical points of view occurred in upper class, late Abbasid Arab society—then the more trivial utterances are probably voiced by a complementary part of society: women. These voices may well be of various natures, associated with the court as well as with the market place, and they do not necessarily reflect deep underlying changes; they might just as well be ambitious literary compositions as well as marginal poetical utterances that reached us merely by accident.

A great help to enable us to have a closer look at love poetry by women is the collection edited by ‘Abd A. (sic) al-Muḥannā (Beirut, *Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya*, 1990), the *Muḡam al-Nisā’ al-Šā‘irāt fī l-Ġāhiliyya wa l-Islām*⁴, with the promising subtitle *ḥuṭwa naḥwa muḡam mutakāmil*. As a source this is not a definitive collection, but it brings together an impressive number of poems by women from a considerable number of sources. Alongside it I used some sources that were at hand at this moment like the *A‘lām al-Nisā’* by Kaḥḥāla⁵ and the *Balāġāt al-Nisā’* by Ṭayfūr⁶.

For the lack of a critical and complete edition of love poetry by women, that which is presented here can neither be considered a general overview of this kind of poetry nor an attempt to contribute to the

⁴ Henceforth *Mu*.

⁵ ‘U. R. Kaḥḥāla, *A‘lām al-Nisā’*, Damascus, 1959.

⁶ Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Balāġāt al-Nisā’*, ed. Aḥmad al-Alfī, Cairo, 1908; the new (censored) edition by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Handāwī, Cairo, 1997.

field of gender studies; in the best of cases it sets some boundaries to other generalisations.

A limit to this selection of poems by women is, that I decided to exclude most of the poems attributed to women in al-Andalus, because some of these have been studied already⁷.

Another self imposed limit is the exclusion of innumerable quotations by women on a wide variety of subjects—also on “love”—that abound in *adab*-literature (no tautology intended) : to single out *poetry* for this contribution has a practical reason (size) but also a more theoretical one. It may be, that short lines of poetry could act as a vehicle for the contents, presented here, as well as (witty) utterances in prose would, but I think nonetheless, that poetry just demands that bit more of reflection to distinguish it from prose. For that reason one might expect some more reflection underlying these pieces of poetry. Apart from that, we may argue, that in Arabic culture *šīr* of course had an added value to it.

Finally: the main body of material presented here consists of poetical utterances *by* women, not *about* women. A recent publication, *Verse and the Fair Sex*, subtitled *Studies in Arabic Poetry and in the Representation of Women in Arabic Literature*⁸ limits itself to what it says it will do: the representation of women in Arabic poetry. This fairly well coincides with my own view on the contribution of women to Arabic literature at the time this useful contribution appeared: I felt that after the *Ġāhiliyya* and the prominent role of women in the field of *marāṭī*, a few poetesses were accounted for in Sezgin's Band II of *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (pp. 623-625; 704-705), but that that was it: no female contribution to literature to speak of, at least in a quantitative sense.

The opposite may well be the case: the last decades have seen a considerable number of sources of female literature being published in the Arab world. My earlier experience in ferriting out *marāṭī*, tells me, that it is worthwhile to leaf through these sources, because a lot of material is probably still to be found.

First of all it is useful to divide the poems presented here into groups. To avoid any premature classification of these poems along literary

⁷ See Schippers, A., “The Role of Women in Medieval Andalusian Arabic Story-Telling”, *Verse and the Fair Sex* (F. de Jong ed.), Utrecht, 1993, pp. 139-152; especially the bibliographical footnotes on pp. 140-141.

⁸ See note 6.

lines, I chose to superimpose an arrangement according to the main topic of a particular poem, its predominant theme. Within each group I have tried to work along a rough chronological order, mainly based on the kind of environment that a particular poem is situated in. If this is a Bedouin environment the poem will probably be older than a poem located in an urban or a courtly setting. This is clearly not the most elegant approach, but ultimately a closer analysis of inter-relationship between poems and of possible clues to a relative chronology can only be achieved once we have an idea of how these clues might look like. The chronology proposed here does not have any ambition of being definitive.

Love as a Concept

The first group of poems that will be considered here might be called “maxims” (*ḥikam*); their theme is love but the perspective is philosophical or reflective as opposed to “based on experience”.

I.1

Although divorced by a man she passionately loved, a Bedouin woman called Umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Muḥāribiyya⁹ says:

1. I see love as indestructable and those who¹⁰ loved were not able to destroy it, even though they were in bygone ages
2. And each and every one of them has felt all of it to be in his heart; they tell that in their poetry
3. What else is love if not the hearing by an ear¹¹ and a glance (an accidental word or glance) and negligence by the heart of all that is being said and remembered
4. If it were otherwise, then love would vanish and the one who loves would wear it down, even if it (love) were made of stone.

1. *Arā l-ḥubba lā yafnā wa lam yufnihi l-ulā aḥabbū*¹²

2. *Wa kulluhumū qad ḥālahu fī fiʿādihi*

3. *Wa mā l-ḥubbu illā samʿu uḍnin wa naẓratun*

4. *Wa law kāna šayʿun ghayru/ahu faniya l-hawā*

*wa qad kānū ʿalā sāliḥi l-dahri
bi-aḡmaʿihi yakūnu ḍālika fī l-šʿri
wa ḥannatu qalbin ʿan ḥadīṭin
wa ʿan ḍikri
wa ablāhu¹³ man yahwā wa law
kāna min ṣaḥri*

⁹ *Mu.*, p. 299; *Balāḡāt* (1997 ed.), p. 312.

¹⁰ Both spelled *al-ulā* and *al-ūlā*; for this variety in spelling see Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, Cambridge, reprint 1975, I, p. 271C.

¹¹ *Balāḡāt* reads ʿaynin for *uḍnin*.

¹² *Mu.* reads *uḥinū*.

¹³ *Balāḡāt* reads *balāhu*.

From a considerable distance this woman points to the conflict between the inevitability of love and the frustration that goes with it. The generalisation is made effective by her view of this conflict as a stable factor through all generations.

The idea of the subtle balance of equanimity, threatened by lurking passion, is brought forward by this unknown Bedouin woman. When asked about the meaning of love she says¹⁴:

I.2

1. The beginning of love is an inclination with which the lover's mind gets astray until he faces death as a kind of play
2. It starts with a glance that is thrown or a jesting remark that is sparkled in the heart like a flame
3. Like a fire it starts with a sparkle, but when it is burning, it will blaze away all the collected (of the) firewood

1. *Al-ḥubbu awwaluhu maylun tahīmu bihi*
2. *Yakūnu mabda'uhu min naẓratin 'aradāt*
3. *Ka-l-nāri mabda'uhā min qidḥatin fa-idā*

- nafsu l-muḥibbi fa-yalqā l-mawta ka-l-la'ibi*
- aw mazḥatin uš'ilat fī l-qalbi ka-l-lahabi*
- taḍarramat aḥraqat mustağma'a l-ḥaṭabi*

Both women mention the accidental look or word that makes people fall in love, But this second poem offers a much more dynamic description of what happens, once the (innocent?) defenceless victim is being toppled. As opposed to I.1 this poem sounds much more like a warning against consuming passion.

One might think, that good judgement, sharp intelligence or proven courage could well contribute to an effective defense against the threat to the subtle balance, but history has shown this hope to be false, because love's folly will affect even the best in society as in the words of this woman of Qays¹⁵:

I.3

1. There is no intelligent man among people whose opinion is praised, but who then falls passionately in love, who is not foolish in his love
2. And there is no hero who tasted the hardship of life, but who then falls in love tasting the hardship being in love

1. *Wa mā kayyisun fī l-nāsi yuḥmadu ra'yuhu*
2. *Wa mā min fatan mā dāqa bu'sa ma'īšatin*

- fa-yawğadu illā wa hwa fī l-ḥubbi aḥmaqu*
- fa-ya'saqu illā dāqahā wa hwa ya'saqu*

¹⁴ *Mu.*, p. 313; Ibn Qayyim, *Aḥbār al-Nisā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā, Beirut, 1985, p. 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

Umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk is being told, that the pain of unfulfilled love can only be healed by another love affair, by distance and solitude or by time, the great healer¹⁶:

I.4

1. I asked the lovers who have borne the agonies of this love since times long past
2. In these words: what makes love go away after it has settled between the sides and the chest
3. And they answered: the healing of love is love for someone else, which makes it come to an end or a long absence in being apart
4. Or despair until the soul forgets after it strived for passion; despair is a help to endurance

1. <i>Sa'altu l-muḥibbīna llaḏīna taḥammalū</i>	<i>tabārīḥa hāḏā l-ḥubbi min sāliḥi l-dahri</i>
2. <i>Fa-qultu lahum mā yuḏhibu l-ḥubba ba'damā</i>	<i>tabawwa'a mā bayna l-ḡawāniḥi wa l-ṣadri</i>
3. <i>Fa-qālū šifā'u l-ḥubbi ḥubbun yuzīluhu</i>	<i>min āḥara aw na'yun ṭawīlun 'alā haḡri</i>
4. <i>Awī l-ya'su ḥattā tadḥala l-naḡsu ba'damā</i>	<i>raḡat ṭama'an wa l-ya'su 'awnun 'alā l-ṣabri</i>

Experience

Once the lovers are united, it may become clear that not all dreams come true and hardship in their relationship can be their fate, as this Bedouin woman sighs in her complaint¹⁷:

II.1

1. Every day there is enmity and reproach; our time passes on while we are furious
2. If I only knew why I was chosen for this in stead of another being, or is that the way lovers are?

1. <i>Kulla yawmin qaṭ'atun wa 'itābu</i>	<i>yanqaḏī dahrnā wa naḡnu¹⁸ ḡidābu</i>
2. <i>Layta širī ana ḥuṣiṣtu bi-hāḏā</i>	<i>dūna ḏā l-ḥalqi am kaḏā l-aḥbābu</i>

Note that this woman does not blame the choice of others (i.e. an arranged wedding) for her plight, but fate, and that she leaves open the possibility of lovers always ending this way.

But some may have reason to be satisfied, looking back on all the happiness enjoyed in love, like 'Išriqa l-Muḥāribiyya who says in the best of *fahṛ* tradition¹⁹:

¹⁶ Al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, ed. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, s.d., II, 86-87) ; Kaḥḥāla, *A'lām an-Nisā'*, II, pp. 357-358.

¹⁷ *Mu.*, p. 338.

¹⁸ The text reads NḤN.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

II.2

1. I ran with the other lovers in the arena of passion and I outran them in the contest, though I went (litt.: came) with ease
2. If ever did other lovers dress in the garments of passion or undress themselves (from them), they were only the clothes I had worn out
3. If ever they drank a cup of love, be it bitter or sweet, what they drank was what I spilled

1. Ġaraytu ma'a l-ʿuṣṣāqi fī ḥalbatī l-hawā	<i>fa-fuqtuhumū sabqan wa ġi'tu ʿalā rislī</i>
2. Fa-mā labisa l-ʿuṣṣāqu min ḥulalī l-hawā	<i>wa lā ḥala'ū illā l-ṭiyāba llatī ublī</i>
3. Wa lā šaribū ka'san minā l-ḥubbi murratan	<i>wa lā ḥulwatan illā šarābuhum faḍlī</i>

In the *ʿIqd al-Farīd*²⁰ we find this story about two “contesting” slave girls: a man had married a new wife besides the one he was already married to. The slave girl of the new wife passed by the door of the slave girl of the other saying nastily:

II.3

1. The two feet are not equal, the sound foot and the foot that has been affected by Time so that it has become stiff

1. <i>Wa mā yastawī l-riġlāni riġlun ṣaḥīḥatun</i>	<i>wa riġlun ramā fihā l-ẓamānu fa-šallat</i>

On another occasion she adds:

1. Nor are the two garments equal, a garment that is worn out and another in the hands of the sellers, new

1. <i>Wa mā yastawī l-ṭawbāni ṭawbun bihi l-bilā</i>	<i>wa ṭawbun bi-aydi l-bā'ʿina ġadīdu</i>

But then the slave girl of the earlier spouse passes by the one of the new wife citing these verses by Abū Tammām:

1. Carry around your heart wherever you want in (the field of) love, but your heart will only belong to your first love
2. Many a house on earth will a man become familiar with, but his longing will always be for his first dwelling

1. <i>Naqil fu'ādaka ḥaytu šī'ta minā l-hawā</i>	<i>mā l-qalbu illā li-l-ḥabībī l-awwalī</i>
2. <i>Kam manzilin fī l-arḍi ya'lafuhu l-fatā</i>	<i>wa ḥanīnuhu abadan li-awwalī manzilī</i>

In a most remarkable poem, expressing understanding of male psychology, Asmā' *ṣāḥibat* Ġa'd b. MHĠ^c al-ʿUdrī explains to her husband after her marriage, why she hid her love from him before they married²¹:

²⁰ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, ed. ʿAbd al-Maġīd al-Tarḥīnī, Beirut, 1983, VII, p. 110.

²¹ *Mu.*, p. 15.

II.4

1. I hid love because I thought you would shy away; I said (to myself) : he is a hero who wants the distance of a friend
2. In case you would have rejected me or said: It's just a teenage girl, who is (now) struck by the distress of love, but she will recover
3. That's why I kept secret what love was inside me and in my liver and in my heart of hearts: a distress—you should know—that was strong

1. <i>Katamtu l-hawā innī ra'aytuka ḡāzī'an</i>	<i>fa-qultu fatan bu'da l-ṣadīqi yurīdu</i>
2. <i>Fa-in taṭraḥannī aw taqūlu fatiyyatan</i>	<i>yaḍribuhā barḥu l-hawā fa-ta'ūdu²²</i>
3. <i>Fa-waraytu 'ammā bī wa fī l-kibdi wa l-ḥašā</i>	<i>mīna l-waḡdi barḥun fa-lamanna ṣadīdu</i>

The "Romantic" Escape

There is a tension between the inescapable nature of love and the threat it holds to equanimity. Experience shows, that the outcome of the initial infatuations may not always be paradise. Furthermore the whole situation is dominated by the possible doom of boredom and mutual enmity between partners. The escape from this tension between (semi) consciousness that love teases and threatens and that it pleases and hurts can be realized by what could be called "the romantic escape", the idealisation of the lovers role and his behaviour within the existing or desired relationship.

We find the expression of this—almost modern—idealisation of love in the answer of a girl to her lover's denial when she had asked for his permission to visit him when he was in the war against the Ḥārīḡites under al-Muhallab²³:

III.1

1. A lover is not someone who fears punishment, even if in his love his punishment would be the Fire
2. On the contrary: a lover is the one whom nothing can repel or make stick to his dwelling, because in whom he loves is his dwelling

1. <i>Laysa l-muḥibbu llaḏī yaḥšā l-'iqāba wa law</i>	<i>kānat 'uqūbatuhu fī ilfihī l-nāru</i>
2. <i>Balī l-muḥibbu llaḏī lā ṣay'a yamna'uhu</i>	<i>aw yastaqirru²⁴ wa man yahwā bihi l-dāru</i>

The ideal lover behaves contrary to the social *ma'rūf*, he takes formidable risks because of a "belief" in a higher good. Only against the background of this courage (or: recklessness) can the subject (here: the

²² The metre (*tawīl*) would require: *wa/fa-yaḍribuhā barḥu l-hawā fa-ta'ūdu*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

²⁴ The text reads *tastaqirru*.

poetess) declare that she is willing to take the same risk: throw herself into the situation for better or for worse.

Most of these poems, except the one connected to the war against the Hārīgites, are hard to date, but they seem to be *ḡāhili* or early Islamic: not only are they attributed to women who bear “old” names, but some of them also reflect a Bedouin state of mind. And though some can be called “elegant”, their diction does not show the same playfulness as one expects in poetry of the Abbasid age.

Still these poems reflect a more or less “modern” state of mind. The idea of the individual as a victim to love, which we are probably inclined to associate with “cheap” modern romanticism, seems not to be absent from this early period in Arabic literature. Moreover these poems bear witness to some extent of individuality in this emotional state of mind: to point to love as a problem shared with every other individual, even with the sturdiest of men, expresses a frame of mind that can be called individualistic.

The “romantic” idea comes to a full expression in the allusion to recklessness to which love’s folly can lead: ultimately to objectionable social behaviour by the individual that transgresses accepted borders and will readily undergo any punishment, even the unreasonable: hell.

Various Aspects of Love

Passion

So falling in love is a threat to the inner equilibrium of the individual. The strain within the individual may be caused by the tension between passionate desire and doubt whether body and soul will endure this tension, calculating that the object of desire is a human being and therefore unpredictable in behaviour and unreliable in relationships.

Probably few will know that Ishāq al-Mawṣilī’s pet name was Ġuml. In this poem the passion, that Zahrā’ al-Kilābiyya expresses for him, reaches extreme dimensions²⁵:

IV.1

1. My passion for Ġuml, though I hide it, is like the joy of a sick one in healing after being seriously ill

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

2. Or like the grief of a woman, bereft of child, when death snatched one of her (children) away or like the longing of someone absent, away from the familiar ones (= homesickness)

1. *Wağđi bi-ğumlin ‘alā annī uğamğimuhu*
2. *Aw wağđu taklā ašāba l-mawtu wāhidahā*

wağđu l-saqimi bi-bur’in ba’da idnāfi
*aw wağđu muğtaribin min bayni ullāfi*²⁶

In this poem, compelling, touching for its simplicity Badr al-Tamām bint al-Ḥusayn tries to persuade her lover, using her ardent passion as an argument²⁷:

IV.2

1. Your beauty among mortals is my excuse and the thought of you keeps me awake at night
2. If I would forget and if my love for you would not wander my thoughts, then my love for you would not be real
3. Will your heart not soften, now that you are leaving me, and does it not give in to the weakened, sleepless patient?

1. *Ġamāhuka bayna l-warā ‘ūdīrī*
2. *Fa-lā šahha wudduka lī in salaw(tu)*
3. *A-mā lāna qalbuka yā hāğirī*

wa dīkruka fī laylatī sāmīrī
wa lā ġāla hubbuka fī ḥāğirī
wa lā raqqa li-l-mudnafi l-sāhīnī

And in the same vein she says:²⁸

IV.3

1. Your threat precedes your promise and your denial prevents your generosity²⁹
2. Your image visits me in my sleep, but it is thanks to your fantasy, not thanks to you
3. Why do you not give in to the humility and the meekness of your slave and thus stick to your promise?

1. *‘abdū wa’iduka qabla wa’dik*
2. *Wa yazūru ṭayfuka fī l-karā*
3. *Lima lā tariqu li-ğulli ‘abdik*

wa yağūlu man’uka dūna rağdik
fa-bi-ḥamdi ṭayfika lā bi-ḥamdik
wa ḥuğū’ihi fa-taği bi-‘ahdik

When passion turns into helplessness, first doubts may occur. But then, even when forsaken, the poetess would follow her lover. Striking in the next poem is, that the poetess seems to have overcome all kinds of shame and does not hesitate to explicitly address others publicly. The

²⁶ Note the use of *wağđ* in four different meanings!

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29 ; Ibn al-Dumyātī, *al-Mustafād min Dayl Tārīḥ Bağdād*, ed. Qayṣar Abū Farah, Beirut, 1971 (*Tārīḥ Bağdād*, p. 19), p. 266. where she is named as bint al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Dabbās. In Kaḥḥāla, *A’lām*, I, p. 121: “... bint al-Ḥasan...”.

²⁸ *Mu.*, pp. 28-9.

²⁹ This translation of verse 1 was suggested to me by Mr. Hafid Bouazza.

social position of the poetess—apparently at the Abbasid court—may on the other hand have been helpful in protecting her against slander. Umm al-Kirām (?) bint al-Mu‘taṣim bi-llāh says³⁰:

IV.3

1. You folk! Wonder about what the heat of love has provoked:
 2. If it were not for him, the moon of darkness would not have come down from its upper region to the ground
 3. He whom I love is enough for me; if he would forsake me, my heart would follow him
1. *Yā ma‘šara l-nāsi a-lā fa-‘ḡabū* *mimmā ḥanathu law‘atu l-ḥubbi*
 2. *Lawlāhu lam yunzal bi-badri l-duḡā* *min ufqihi l-‘ukwiyyi li-l-turbi*
 3. *Ḥasbī bi-man aḥwāhu law annahu* *fāraqanī tāba‘ahu qalbī*

Umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Muḥāribiyya is subject to serious doubts whether she will be able to endure her own passion. Starting off in the best of *aṭlāl* traditions she complains³¹:

IV.4

1. Oh you rider in the morning towards his aim; hold still that I may tell of some of the things I feel
 2. Never have people suffered from passion that encompassed them, or my love for him was above that which they felt
 3. All I want is his pleasure, but how will I endure until the end of time in pleasing and loving him
1. *Yā ayyuhā l-rākibu l-ḡādī li-ṭiyyatihi* *‘arriḡ abuttaka ‘an ba‘di llaḏī aḡidu*
 2. *Mā ‘alaḡa l-nāsu min waḡḏin taḍammanahum* *illā wa waḡḏi bihi fawqa llaḏī waḡḏū*
 3. *Ḥasbī riḏāhu wa annā fī masarratihi* *wa wuddiḥi āḡira l-ayyāmi aḡtahidu*³²

The same theme is expressed by Rābi‘a bint Ismā‘īl, though some degree of despair seems to shine through³³:

IV.5

1. My provisions are little; I don’t see them taking me through. Is it for the provisions I am weeping or for the length of my journey?
 2. Are you burning me with fire, oh end of all my wishes? But where is my hope in you? Where is my love?
1. *Wa zādī qalīlun mā arāhu muballighī* *a-li-l-zādi abkī am li-ṭūli masāfatī*
 2. *A-taḥriqunī bi-l-nāri yā ḡāyata l-munā* *fa-ayna raḡā‘ī fika ayna maḥabbatī*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 307; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ed. Yūsuf al-Šayḥ Muḥammad al-Biqā‘ī, Beirut, 1998, V, p. 103.

³¹ *Mu.*, pp. 299-300.

³² The text in *Mu.* reads *annī* . . . etc. This would yield the following translation: “It is my fate to content him and that I will strive to please and to love him until the end of time”.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 92

And Ḥasnā', a *ḡariya* of Yaḥyā b. Ḥalid al-Barmakī asks³⁴

IV.6

1. How can there be salvation for me, when I am surrounded by a sea of love which has no shore
2. The meeting (of lovers) grabs you and you are saved by it (sc. from drowning), or separation may occur and you sink (to drown)³⁵

1. <i>Wa kayfa manḡāya wa qad ḥaffa bī</i>	<i>bahru hawan laysa lahu šaṭṭu</i>
2. <i>Yudrikuka l-waṣlu fa-tanḡū bihi</i>	<i>aw yaqa'u l-ḥaḡru fa-tanḥaṭṭu</i>

The ambiguity of passion is nicely expressed by Ḥayra Umm Ḍaygham al-Balawiyya. Passion is all consuming but leaves the lover with an unsatiable hunger for more, in this case another night of passion³⁶

IV.7

1. A drop of sweet [...] water that is refused/enjoyed³⁷ from the hands of servants [and] which I long for is not
2. more pleasant than his mouth; If only you tasted it when the night turns to light and its stars vanish
3. Would the night of the plain return to us, (a night) for which all nights would be given, the best and the worst
4. If this night would return likewise then I swear: I will fast on the hot days

1. <i>Fa-mā nutfatun min mā'i [BHMYN] 'adbatun</i>	<i>tumanna'u/tumatta'u min aydi l-suqāti arūmuhā</i>
2. <i>Bi-atyaba min fihi law annaka duqtahu</i>	<i>idā laylatun aṣḥat wa ḡāba nuḡūmuhā</i>
3. <i>Fa-hal laylatu l-baṭḥā'i 'ā'idatun lanā</i>	<i>fadathā l-layālī ḥayruhā wa damīmuhā</i>
4. <i>Fa-in hiya 'adat miṭluhā fa-aliyyatan</i>	<i>'alayya wa ayyāmu l-ḥarūri aṣūmuhā</i>

The famous Faḍl al-Šā'ira complains about passion when she replies to a letter:³⁹

IV.8

1. Endurance is failing and emaciation has the better of me; home is near but you are far away
2. I'm complaining to you or complaining about you, because that is all the tormented can do

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55

³⁵ The text in *Mu.* reads *maḡyāya* and *ḥaffa* but this should be *manḡāya* and *ḥaffa* as in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Mustazraf min Aḥbār al-Ġawānī*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ta (m) mām, Cairo, s.d., p. 16. This source also gives the correct rhyme-word *tanḥaṭṭu* in stead of the hideous *tatta'izu* in *Mu.*

³⁶ *Mu.*, pp. 81-82.

³⁷ BHMYN is the reading in *Mu.* *A'lām*, I, p. 394 and *Balāḡāt* (1997 edition) have *min mā'I NHŠ' DBH*. The poetess is called Ḥayra bint Abī Ḍaygham al-Balawiyya.

³⁸ *Tumatta'u* is the reading in *Mu.*; *tumanna'u* in *A'lām* and *Balāḡāt* (1997 edition).

³⁹ *Mu.*, p. 210.

3. I'm seeking my refuge in my love, exclusive to you (i.e. in you as my only love) to prevent the one who envies me to have his way by what you do

1. <i>Al-ṣabru yanquṣu wa l-saqāmu yazīdu</i>	<i>wa l-dāru dāniyatun wa anta ba'īdu</i>
2. <i>Aṣkūka am aṣkū ilayka fa-innahi</i>	<i>lā yastaṭī'u sūwāhumā l-maḡhūdu</i>
3. <i>Innī a'ūdū bi-ḥurmatī bika fī l-hawā</i>	<i>min an yuṭā'a ladayka fīyya ḥasūdu</i>

Faḍl almost sounds modern about the ambiguity of passion in this passage that she wrote to one of her lovers:⁴⁰

IV.9

1. Yes, for God's sake, I *am* in love with you; will you—let me never lose you!—return this?
2. In whose heart are you pictured and in whose eye is the image of (actually) seeing you when you are absent?
3. Have trust in a passion the like of which you show; all the more so because in me there is sickness to which you are the doctor

1. <i>Na'am wa ilāhī innanī bika ṣabbatun</i>	<i>fa-hal anta yā man lā 'adimtu muṭību</i>
2. <i>Lī-man anta minhu fī l-fu'ādi muṣawwaru</i>	<i>wa fī l-'ayni nuṣbu⁴¹ l-'ayni ḥīna taḡību</i>
3. <i>Fa-tiq bi-wadādin anta muḡhiru miṭlihi</i>	<i>'alā anna bī suqman wa anta ṭabību</i>

Sometimes the poetess may envisage the most serious of consequences if she is left behind like in the case of Qurrat al-'Ayn al-Mu'taṣimiyya who asks her lover for forgiveness⁴²:

IV.10

1. Look at me with an eye of forgiveness for my fault and do not leave me in fear of what happens to me
2. Your spirit and mine are intertwined in unity; how could I leave the one in leaving whom is my death

1. <i>Unzur ilayya bi-'ayni l-ṣaffi 'an zalālī</i>	<i>lā tatrukanniya min amrī 'alā waḡālī</i>
2. <i>Rūḥī wa rūḥuka maqrūnānī fī qaranīn</i>	<i>fa-kayfa aḡḡuru man fī haḡrihi aḡālī</i>

In contrast to these fierce poems of passion, we find an anonymous woman, who quietly expresses her love and devotion in these charming words⁴³:

IV.11

1. The best thing you can offer me is sincerity, as long as I live, and (your) love like the water from clouds, undiluted
2. The last thing for me when I go to sleep is you and you are the first thing (for me) when I rise

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁴¹ Text reads *nuṣba*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

1. <i>Qisāra/uka minnī l-naṣḥu mā dumtu ḥayyatan</i>	<i>wa wuddun ka-mā'i l-muzni ḡayru maṣūbi</i>
2. <i>Wa āḥiru ṣay'in anta lī 'inda marqadī</i>	<i>wa awwalu ṣay'in anta 'inda hubūbī</i>

The Iraqi poetess Šuhda bint Aḥmad al-Baḡdādiyya knows how to use ancient poetic Arabic diction elegantly as a kind of parody to express her passion and to point at the two inevitable causes of this passion, stemming from within and from accidental glances of her loved one. This poem offers many problems of interpretation, mainly by the changing of grammatical persons. I established this line of interpretation, but cannot exclude other possibilities⁴⁴:

IV.12

- A. The poetess begs her companion to a quiet place and warns him for the devastating seductional effect of female glances (1-5)
 - B. She recalls a love affair that she was part of herself (6-8)
 - C. She succumbs to passion (9-10)
 - D. The melancholic part: let my love not be forgotten after our goodbye; I suffer dearly, but my tears keep me going (11-16)
1. Take me to the place where the soft wind blows and make the two Nu'mān-trees into your resting place
 2. And when the eyes launch the attack of their spell and shoot (their arrows) from all sides of the fortress of deadly fate
 3. Then take care lest your heart be hit by a glance as its bull's-eye, because the eye-looks are the bane of your heart
 4. (the looks) of every slender woman being swayed by the supple joy of youth like a ben-tree
 5. White-skinned women who make jewels superfluous (*ḡanayna*) by their beauty; therefore women are called *ḡawānī*
 6. They (the men) live in the (wadi) 'Aqīq region and move with their passion a heart that almost flies from pounding
 7. I burdened it (viz. my heart) with the weight of love but it could not bear and I summoned it to be obedient in rejecting it, but it disobeyed me
 8. A vanguard ransacked it (stole it) on the "Day of the Two Trees", a vanguard that "descended with the whole tribe of Ḡaṭafān"
 9. How long will my heart indulge in passion and (how long) will my eyes persist with shedding their tears
 10. When his teeth smile with a glistening shine, they urge the tears of the eye to flow
 11. You driver of camels, will you ever in your life make an evening journey along the pastures of the pasturing cattle
 12. So that you could remind those who have forgotten how I used to be familiar with the tribe's protected territory; what was new of it became worn out by the one who wore me out

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142; al-Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-Ḡulasā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Āṣūr, Cairo, s.d., pp. 55-56

13. I remembered the agitation⁴⁵ of our farewell and my eye loosened the bridle to forever crying
14. I did not fear the thirst of fate when it occurred to me since I had the equal of a flowing stream (of tears) with me
15. If starvation touches me, its leather bucket will offer me food or when thirst torments me, it will spill water and quench my thirst
16. When the swords talk to their sheaths, its words will be deep red by it

1. <i>Mil bī ilā maḡrā l-nasīmī l-ʿānī</i>	<i>wa ḡal maḡlaka dawḡatay nuʿmānī</i>
2. <i>Wa idā l-ʿuyūnu šananna ḡārata siḡriḡā</i>	<i>wa ramayna ʿan ḡiṣnī l-manūnī ḡawānī</i>
3. <i>Fa-ḡfaz fuʿādaka an yuṣāba bi-naṣratin</i>	<i>ʿaraḡan fa-ʿāfatu ḡalbika l-ʿaynānī</i>
4. <i>Mīn kulli ḡāʿilati l-wiṣāḡi yahuzṣuḡā</i>	<i>mariḡu l-ṣabābi l-ladnī ḡazza l-bānī</i>
5. <i>Bīḡun ḡanīna bi-ḡusnīḡinna ʿanī l-ḡulā</i>	<i>wa li-ḡāka asmāʿu l-niṣāʿi ḡawānī</i>
6. <i>Sakanū l-ʿaḡīḡa wa ḡarakū bi-ḡurāmīḡim</i>	<i>ḡalban yakādu yaḡīru bi-l-ḡafaḡānī</i>
7. <i>ḡammaltuḡu ṡiḡla l-ḡawāʿi fa-lam yuṡīḡ</i>	<i>fa-aḡaṡuḡu fī ṡarḡiḡi wa ʿaṣānī</i>
8. <i>Salabathu yawma l-dawḡataynī ṡaḡʿatun</i>	<i>nazalat bi-ḡāḡā l-ḡayyī min ḡaṡaḡānī</i>
9. <i>ḡattāma tuḡriṡu fī l-ṣabābati adluṡi</i>	<i>wa tulīḡḡu min ʿabarātīḡā aḡḡānī</i>
10. <i>Wa idā tabassama ṡaḡru barḡin munḡīḡin</i>	<i>aḡrā dumūʿa l-ʿaynī bi-l-ḡamalānī</i>
11. <i>Yā ḡāḡiṡa l-nukrānī ḡal laka rawʿatun</i>	<i>bi-l-ʿumrī ʿinda masāriḡi l-ruʿyānī</i>
12. <i>Fa-tuḡakkira l-nāṣīna ʿaḡḡi bi-l-ḡimā</i>	<i>fa-ḡādīduḡu ablāḡu man ablānī</i>
13. <i>Wa ḡakartu mayḡāna l-waḡāʿi fa-arsalat</i>	<i>ʿaynī ilā amadi l-bukāʿi ʿīnānī</i>
14. <i>Lam aḡṣa min ṡamaʿi l-ḡawāḡiṡi id ʿarat</i>	<i>wa maṡī nazīru l-ḡādwalī l-rayyānī</i>
15. <i>In massanī saḡabun ḡarānī ḡarbuḡu</i>	<i>aw ḡallanī ṡamaʿun FRY fa-saḡānī</i>
16. <i>Wa idā l-suyūḡu taḡaddaṡat li-ḡūḡūnīḡā</i>	<i>fa-ḡadīṡuḡā minḡu bi-aḡmara ḡānī</i>

These are the images that this poetess is using: her heart is moved by her lovers passion (6b), a conquest she compares with a raid by the tribe of ḡaṡaḡān (8), unbearable passion that can only be quenched by tears (9 and 13-14), every time she meets her lover (10).

The following peculiar story may show, that sometimes uncompromising passion could lead someone to end up in the wrong place: Sarī l-Saḡaṡī, the mystic (d. in Baghdad 253/867) tells this story about a slave girl he heard in prison, chained with her hands to her neck, saying:⁴⁶

IV.13

1. My hand is chained to my neck, though it neither deceived nor stole	
2. Within me there is a heart, that I feel is burning	
1. <i>Tuḡallu yaḡi ilā ʿunuḡi</i>	<i>wa mā ḡānat wa mā saraḡat</i>
2. <i>Wa bayna ḡawānīḡiḡ kabitun</i>	<i>uḡiṣsu biḡā qadi ḡīṡaraḡat</i>

When he asked about her, he learned that she was insane and was locked up for treatment (*ḡubisat laʿallahā ṡaṡluḡ*). But when she heard this she said smiling:

⁴⁵ I vocalise *mayḡān* as a *maṣḡar* of *māda*, though it should be *mayadān*. The reading *mayḡān/mīḡān* seems pointless here.

⁴⁶ *Mu.*, pp. 343-344; al-Ibṣīḡi, *al-Mustaṡraf*, Beirut, Muʿassasat ʿIzz al-Dīn, 1991, pp. 253-4.

IV.14

1. Oh you people, it is not that I have gone mad, but I am drunk while my heart is sober
2. Why did you chain my hand though I committed no greater crime than for my shame exposing myself in my love for him
3. I am dazzled by the love for a loved one from whose door I do not seek to be leaving
4. Someone who loves a master and contents himself with that, bears no blame

1. <i>Mašara l-nāsi mā ġunintu wa lākin</i>	<i>ana sakrānatun wa qalbiya šāḥī</i>
2. <i>Lim ġalaltum yadī wa lam āti dānban</i>	<i>ġayra hatkī fī ḥubbihi wa ftiḍāḥī</i>
3. <i>Ana maftūnatun bi-ḥubbi ḥabībīn</i>	<i>lastu abġī ‘an bābihi min barāḥi</i>
4. <i>Mā ‘alā man aḥabba mawlā l-mawālī</i>	<i>wa rtaḍāhu li-nafsihi min ġunāḥi</i>

The reason why her master had her locked up in prison was, that he had bought her as a singer, but that she used to weep a lot which kept the whole household awake. When al-Saqatī asked how all this came about, her master told that she sang this song to her own lute play:

IV.15

1. Be sure that I have never broken a bond and that I have never made murky a love after it has been clear
2. I have filled my flanks and my heart with love so how can I be consoled, you cause of my comfort, and be at ease
3. Oh you whose like of a master I do not have, do you think you could be pleased to have me as a slave at your door?

1. <i>Wa ḥaqqika lā naqadtu l-dahra ‘ahdā</i>	<i>wa lā kaddartu ba‘da l-ṣafvi waddā</i>
2. <i>Mala’tu ġawāniḥī wa l-qalba waġdā</i>	<i>fa-kayfa aqirru yā sakanī wa ahdā⁴⁷</i>
3. <i>Fa-yā man laysa lī mawlan siwāhu</i>	<i>turāka raḍitanī bi-l-bābi ‘abdā</i>

al-Saqatī then offers to buy her, but lacks the money to pay the price. When she hears this she says:

IV.16

1. I have been enduring until I can no longer bear my love for you anymore
2. I could not bear anymore being chained and cuffed and contempted by you
3. My plight was not hidden for you, oh you my heart’s wish and my treasure
4. You could have freed me from slavery and could have payed my bail today

1. <i>Qad taṣabbartu⁴⁸ ilā an</i>	<i>‘ila min ḥubbika ṣabrī</i>
2. <i>Dāqa min ġallī wa qaydī</i>	<i>wa mihānī minka ṣadrī</i>
3. <i>Laysa yuḥfā ‘anka amrī</i>	<i>yā munā qalbī wa ḍuḥrī</i>
4. <i>Anta qad tuṭtiqu riqqī</i>	<i>wa tafukku l-yawma asrī</i>

⁴⁷ For *ahda’u*.

⁴⁸ *Mu.*, p. 344 reads *taḥaṣṣartu*.

As stories go she is of course set free by her master, but the story ends unhappily: she meets her former master again during the *ṭawāf* in Mekka. Her heart breaks and she dies, as does her former master of course. The two are buried in the same grave, according to al-Saqaṭī who is a witness to all this.

The whole story may well be fiction, but it illustrates the deadly effect that unanswered passion may have, according to contemporary imagination.

Vulnerability and Fear of Betrayal

Lovers (probably especially women) were in a vulnerable position. One of the dangers they faced was, that their true feelings would become exposed in society, even by their own carelessness. This was all the more dangerous in case the lover left you for another, as in this case where Umm al-‘Alā’ says:⁴⁹

V.1

1. Woe, when I let my love for you subsist and took no other lover so that the love in me for you was evident
2. I talked about you openly amidst people until my openness damaged me, woe to those I was open to
3. You were like the shade of a branch: while it shaded me and it delighted me, lo!, it was shaken by storms
4. So it became someone else’s and its shadows turned around, away from me and it left me with the glow of the heat (or: gossip)

1. <i>A-laḥfa abī lammā adamtu laka l-hawā</i>	<i>wa aṣḥaytu ḥattā l-waḡdu bī laka zāhīru</i>
2. <i>Wa ḡāhartu fika l-nāsa ḥattā aḍarra bī</i>	<i>muḡāharatī yā waḡḥa fīman uḡāhiru</i>
3. <i>Fa-kunta ka-fay’i l-ḡuṣṣni baynā yuḡillunī</i>	<i>wa yuḡḡibunī iḍ za’za’athu l-a’āṣiru</i>
4. <i>Fa-ṣāra li-ḡayrī wa ṣadārat zīlāluhu</i>	<i>ṣiwāya wa ḥallānī wa laḥḥa l-hawāḡirī</i> ⁵⁰

But of course the lover who left could expose the intimate relationship, as a kind of added damage, so to speak, after separation. Umayma *imra’at* b. al-Damīna found herself in this unpleasant situation, after being blamed by her husband:⁵¹

V.2

1. You have broken your promise to me and you have made those who used to blame (me) because of you, take malicious pleasure in me
2. You have put me in the open for the people and then you left me alone for them (to see) as a target to be aimed at, while you were safe

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301; al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, ed. M. al-Aṣma‘ī, Beirut, s.d., II, p. 293.

⁵⁰ A case of *iqwā’*.

⁵¹ *Mu.*, p. 23.

3. If words could hurt the body, then on my body the wounds from the words of blamers would be openly visible

1. <i>Wa anta llaḡī aḥlaftanī mā waʿadtanī</i>	<i>wa ašmatta bī man kāna fika yalūmu</i>
2. <i>Wa abraztanī li-l-nāsi ḥumma taraktanī</i>	<i>lahum ǧaraḍan urmā wa anta salīmu</i>
3. <i>Fa-law kāna qawlun yaklumu l-ǧisma qad badā</i>	<i>bī-ǧismiya min qawli l-wuṣāti kulūmu</i>

From this short poem by (Maǧnūn's) Laylā l-ʿĀmiriyya it seems that women were in this respect in a more vulnerable position than men:⁵²

V.3

1. Never was Maǧnūn in a state or I was like he was
2. But he disclosed the secret of our love, whereas I dwindled away in secret

1. <i>Lam yakuni l-maǧnūnu fī ḥālatin il</i>	<i>lā wa qad kuntu kamā kānā</i>
2. <i>Lākinnaḥu bāḥa bi-sirri l-hawā</i>	<i>wa innanī qad ḡubtu kitmānā</i>

And in the same vein:

V.4

1. The fool of ʿĀmir speaks openly about his love, but I hid it and so died of passion
2. When on Judgement Day it is proclaimed: "Who has died from love?", then I will be the only one to step forward.

1. <i>Bāḥa maǧnūnu ʿĀmirin bi-hawāḥu</i>	<i>wa katamtu l-hawā fā-muttu bi-waǧḡi</i>
2. <i>Fa-idā kāna fī l-qiyāmati nūḏī</i>	<i>man qatīlu l-hawā taqaddamtu waḥḡi</i>

Another example of how damaging the openness of one of the lovers can be is this poem by Sāmīr:⁵³

V.5

1. By God, you breaker of bonds, in whom can we have trust among the people we love (our lovers) after you?!
2. Woe! Would that you had never mentioned my name, when lovers mention the ones they love
3. Would that I had not been blinded by a well educated secretary, a refined and intelligent dandy
4. With that tongue of yours you were ("carrying me around"?)⁵⁴ for a while, without me knowing that it was just flattering

1. <i>Bi-llāhi yā nāqiḍa l-uhūdi bi-man</i>	<i>baʿdaka min aḥli wuddinā naṭiqu</i>
2. <i>Wā sawʿatā mā staǧabta lī abadan</i>	<i>in ḡakara l-ʿāšiqūna man ʿašiqū</i>
3. <i>Lā ǧarranī kātibun lahu adabun</i>	<i>wa lā ẓarīfun muḥaḍḍabun labiqu</i>
4. <i>Kunta biḡāka l-lisāni muḥtamilī (?)</i>	<i>dahrān wa lam adri annaḥu malaqu</i>

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵³ Al-Suyūṭī, *Mustazraf*, p. 28

⁵⁴ The text in the *Mustazraf* reads *muḥtalimī*, but that reading does not yield any meaningful sense. I am reluctant to propose the reading *muḥtamilī*.

Conflicts with Others

So on the one hand a lover faces a psychological crisis, being torn by passion and its ensuing effect of uncertainty, on the other the mere fact of participating in a love affair, especially when the identity of the beloved is publicly known, causes a complicated social reaction: the phenomenon of the *wāšūn*, the *reproachers* or *blamers*. It is difficult to ascertain what the role of these individuals may have been in the reality of social context. In early *riḡā'* blamers often trigger the reaction of wailing, expressed by the *martiya* itself. They are the fictional or non-fictional, maybe even ritual impetus for the poetess to transgress the limit set by *ṣabr*, acknowledging the legitimacy to enumerate the qualities of the deceased. For medieval Arabic society a socio-anthropological approach may well yield a number of valuable theories concerning function, origin and context of these *wāšūn* in the context of love poetry, but that is beyond the scope and purpose of this contribution. It may well be, that the *wāšūn* are a fiction, serving to underline the vulnerability of the love-sick, but at the same time they might function as a trigger to aggravate the agonising dilemma between equilibrium and folly and the impossibility of retreat. In this sense they would act as the threshold after which the victim of love can consider him/herself to be beyond shame and salvation: the truth has come out in the open.

The complaint by Su'dā l-Asadiyya sounds very realistic. Her anguish is caused by both internal and external circumstances.⁵⁵

VI.1

1. My beloved! Do not hurry that you may understand my reasoning: I have had enough of the torment and strain inside of me
2. Of the tears that torture me and of the sighing by which (?) my soul almost became liquid of passion
3. You overwhelmed my soul in broad daylight whilst I could not bear to have a conflict with (?) my family, neither in earnest nor in jest
4. They will not prevent me from dying by saying tomorrow [that it was] from fear of this shame that I am in a grave alone
5. Do not forget to go there and then touch my resting place and we will (together) complain about the torment I bore

1. *Ḥabībīya lā ta'ḡal li-taḡhama ḥuḡḡatī*
2. *Wa min 'abarātīn ta'tarīnī wa zafratīn*
3. *Galabta 'alā nafsī ḡihāran wa lam uṭiq*
4. *Wa lan yamna'ūnī an amūta bi-za'mihim*
5. *Fa-lā tansa an ta'tī hunāka fa-taltamīs*

1. *kafāniya mā bī min balā'in wa min ḡahdi*
2. *takādu lahā nafsī tasīlu minā l-waḡdī*
3. *ḡilāḡan 'alā aḡlī bi-haḡlīn wa lā ḡiddī*
4. *ḡadan ḡawfa ḡāḡā l-'ārī fī ḡadaṭīn waḡdī*
5. *makānī fa-naṣkū mā taḡammaltu min ḡahdī*

⁵⁵ *Mu.*, p. 122.

When the love affair is over it can become all the more painful to fall victim to the *wāšūn* as we can see in this poem by Ḥayra Umm Ḍayḡam al-Balawiyya⁵⁶. She had fallen in love with her nephew, but was kept away from him by her family. She seems to be saying, that love will survive, though it may be hidden for a while.

VI. 2

1. I kept away from you; As soon as I did so, those stealthy looks would start gloating over us
2. Let the blamers not be joyful about the separation; it may be, that the lover's absence becomes long, while the heart stays honest (true)
3. The morning of separation between both lovers will come, but love is with the heart, its sides folded over it

1. <i>Hağartuka lammā an hağartuka aṣbaḥat</i>	<i>binā šummatan tilka l-uyūnu l-kawāšihu</i>
2. <i>Fa-lā yafraḥi l-wāšūna bi-l-ḥağri wa rubbamā</i>	<i>aṭāla l-muḥibbu l-ḥağra wa l-ğaybu nāšihu</i>
3. <i>Wa tağdū l-nawā bayna l-muḥibbayni wa l-hawā</i>	<i>ma'a l-qalbi maṭwiyyun 'alayhi l-ğawāniḥu⁵⁷</i>

The lover that has been lost can become a threat too, because the intimacy once shared could now be disclosed. Umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Muḥāribiyya said when she started to forget her lover from the Banū l-Ḍibāb⁵⁸:

VI.3

1. I had found comfort for the love of the Ḍibābī for a while, but all the follies of an ignorant one were to return
2. A soul's friend said: I am concerned about you. By my life's sake you are right: we are both cause for concern
3. But the one who deserves most concern is he who does not offer faith nor keep the secrets after he has gone
4. Woe that you destroyed my love; if only my heart had not seduced the one that it could not take revenge on

1. <i>Ta'azzaytu 'an ḥubbī l-ḍibābiyyi ḥiqbatan</i>	<i>wa kullu 'amāyā ḡāhilin sataṭūbū</i>
2. <i>Yağūlu ḥalīlu l-naḡsi anti muribatun</i>	<i>kilānā la-'amrī qad ṣadaqta/i murībū</i>
3. <i>Wa ayyabunā man lā yu'addi amānatan</i>	<i>wa lā yahfaẓu l-asrāra ḥīna yağībū</i>
4. <i>A-lahfan bi-mā ḡayya'ta wuddī wa mā ḥafā</i>	<i>fi'ādī bi-man lam yadri kayfa yuṭībū</i>

The legendary passionate love affair between Ġamīl and Buṭayna may have been famous fiction, but the following poem suggests that it

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82. The same poem is attributed to Ḥulayba l-Ḥaḍariyya, *ibid.*, p. 74. See also al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, II, p. 83.

⁵⁷ Alternative reading is *ma'a l-qalbi id tuṭwā 'alayhi l-ğawāniḥu*.

⁵⁸ Kaḥḥāla, *A'lām*, II, 358; al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, II, p. 87.

had some dark sides as well. What happened exactly is not very clear, but whatever it was, it caused Buṭayna to say:⁵⁹

VI.4

1. My people threatened to kill me and to kill him. I said: kill me but free him from his crime
 2. And after killing me do not make pain follow him: he has been hurt enough from the vehemence of the love he met
1. *Tawaʿadanī qawmī bi-qatlī wa qatlihi* *fa-qultu qtulūnī wa aḥriḡūhu*⁶⁰ minā l-*ḍanbi*
 2. *Wa lā tutbiʿūhu baʿda qatlī aḍḡyatan* *kafā bi-llaḍī yalqāhu min ṣiddati l-ḥubbi*

The “blamers” were apparently in a powerful position. Reading the story of Ḥadīḡa bint Aḥmad b. Kulṭūm al-Muʿārifiyya and her lover Abū Marwān ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ziyādat Allāh it is not clear how these characters actually succeeded, but they managed to keep the lovers apart. The poetess still calls on her lover to persevere:⁶¹

VI.5

1. They made us split up, but when we came together, they tore us apart by lies and false accusations
 2. What they do to us today is in my opinion like what the devil does to mankind
 3. Woe for you; even worse: woe against you if you go away Abū Marwān
1. *Farraḡā baynanā falamā ḡtamaʿnā* *mazzaḡūnā bi-l-zūri wa l-buhtāni*
 2. *Mā arā fiʿlahum binā l-yawma illā* *miṭla fiʿli l-ṣaytāni bi-l-insāni*
 3. *Lahfa nafsi ʿalayka bal lahfa nafsī* *minka in binta yā Abā Marwāni*

This caution for the “blamers” is meaningful, because all too easily society despised a woman as being loose; see for instance what Umm Ḥammāda l-Hamdāniyya puts in the mouth of a woman advising her⁶²:

VI.6

1. I complained to her about love, but she said: you lied to me; do I not see the strong men “dressed” in what they got from you?
2. Take it easy: that passion and love may not wear out your bones lest they become visible
3. And lest whispering from the blame of love will affect you and your bones will become mute so that they will not be able to answer the Caller⁶³

⁵⁹ *Mu.*, p. 27.

⁶⁰ The context clearly indicates this reading, but it violates the metre.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67; Suyūṭī, *Nuzha*, p. 50.

⁶² *Mu.*, p. 291.

⁶³ This may well be an allusion to Q. 50, 41-2: *wa stamiʿ yawma yunādī l-munādī . . . ḍālika yawmu l-ḥurūḡi*.

1. <i>Šakawtu ilayhā l-ḥubba qālat kaḍabtanī</i>	<i>a-lastu arā l-aḡlāda minki kawāsiyyā</i>
2. <i>Ruwaydaki ḥattā yabtalī l-šawqu wa l-hawā</i>	<i>ʿizāmaki ḥattā yartaḡina bawādiyyā</i>
3. <i>Wa yaʿḥudaki l-waswāsu min lawʿati l-hawā</i>	<i>wa taḡrasa ḥattā lā tuḡba l-munādiyyā</i>

Even later in al-Andalus the *wāšūn* still seem to have had their role in love affairs, like we can conclude from this poem by Muhǧa bint ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ġarnāṭiyya with a fierce attack on the blamers⁶⁴

VI.7

1. When the blamers have rejected anything except our separation, when they will not have any revenge with me nor you
2. And (when) they have let loose on our ears every possible attack and (when) my protectors and helpers have become small in number
3. Then I will drive them away from your eyes, from my tears and my breath with the sword, with flood and with fire

1. <i>Wa lammā abā l-wāšūna illā firāqanā</i>	<i>wa mā lahumū ʿindī wa ʿindaka min lārī</i>
2. <i>Wa šannā ʿalā asmāʿinā kulla ġāratin</i>	<i>wa qalla ḥumātī ʿinda dāka wa anšārī</i>
3. <i>Gazawtuhumū min muqlatayka wa admuʿī</i>	<i>wa min nafasī bi-l-sayfi wa l-sayli wa l-nārī</i>

Absence

Absence of the beloved is of course an omnipresent theme in love poetry. One of the most striking poems by a woman on the theme of separation, at least for its beginning, is probably this mixed up text that is attributed to two poetesses: al-Ḥansāʾ bint al-Tayḥān and Umm Ḥālid al-Ḥaṭʿamiyya:⁶⁵

The first version has 7 vss., all rhyming in—*āmi*. Two vss. rhyming in *-āmu*, that are attributed to the same poetess, are integrated in the version of Umm Ḥālid, causing *iqwāʾ*. Vs. 5 in the version by al-Ḥansāʾ is missing in Umm Ḥālid's, whereas the latter has an extra verse (vs. 7 of 8 vss.) that has a rhyme in *-āmi*, but which does not fit the theme of this poem. This leaves us with the following poem by al-Ḥansāʾ bint al-Tayḥān:

VII.1

1. Has someone made a vow to kill me if the eye sees the shining of a bright cloud in the valley, the valley of the Tihāma
2. May a pouring raincloud not cease, wandering about, one that is led to the people of Gaḍā by its rein
3. That Ġaḥwaš may drink from it and that he may see its lightning with the eyes of a white headed hawk from the North

⁶⁴ *Mu.*, pp. 243-244; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, V, p. 206.

⁶⁵ See *Mu.*, pp. 76 (taken from *Balāḡāt*, p. 194) and 291-292 (taken from al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, II, p. 10).

4. Myself and my people (in return) for Ġaḥwaš, his words and his teeth that shine from the toothbrush!
5. Ah! My love for the Ḥafāḡī Ġaḥwaš emaciated my body (away from me) so it is a worn-out garment of leanness
6. I swear that I love Ġaḥwaš as much as 'Afrā' loved b. Hizām⁶⁶
7. I'm exactly like her except that I am urging myself towards the moment of Death

1. <i>A-muntadarun qatli ini l-ʿaynu ānasat</i>	<i>sanā bāriqin bi-l-ḡawri ḡawri Tihāmi</i>
2. <i>Fa-lā zāla munhallun minā l-ḡayṭi rā'ihun</i>	<i>yuqādu ilā ahli l-Ḡaḏā⁶⁷ bi-zimāmi</i>
3. <i>Li-yašraba minhu Ġaḥwašun wa yašimuhu⁶⁸</i>	<i>bi-ʿaynay quṭāmiyyin aḡarra ša'āmī</i>
4. <i>Bi-naḡsī wa ahli Ġaḥwašun wa kalāmuhu</i>	<i>wa anyābuhu l-lā'ī ḡalā bi-bašāmi</i>
5. <i>A-lā inna waḡḏi bi-l-Ḥafāḡiyyi Ġaḥwašun</i>	<i>barā l-ḡisma minnī fa-hwa niḡwu saḡāmi</i>
6. <i>Wa uqsimu innī qad waḡadtu bi-Ġaḥwašun</i>	<i>ka-mā waḡadat 'Afrā'u bi-bni Hizāmi</i>
7. <i>Wa mā ana illā miṭluḥā ḡayra annanī</i>	<i>mu'aḡḡilatin naḡsī li-waḡṭi ḥimāmi</i>

A poem by Barra l-ʿAdawiyya reflects a Bedouin spirit in its *qašida*-like opening. The first hemistich of the last verse echoes the traditional ending of a *martiya*.⁶⁹

VII.2

1. You two, friends of mine, when you go up and down the country in which my soul fell in love, remember me then
2. And do not stop doing that if someone there blames me in spite of the rage of the reproachers, if you both excuse me
3. My heart is emaciated after long steadfastness; the stories of Yaḥyā turn my tresses to grey
4. I will guard for Yaḥyā my love as long as the east wind blows, even if they would purposely cut my tongue for it

1. <i>Ḥalīlayya in ašʿadtumā aw habaṭtumā</i>	<i>bilādan hawā naḡsī bihā fa-dkurāniyā</i>
2. <i>Wa lā tadaʿā in lāmanī ṭamma lā'imun</i>	<i>'alā suḡuṭi l-wāšina in ta'durāniyā</i>
3. <i>Fa-qad šaffa ḡalbī ba'da ṭūli taḡalludin</i>	<i>aḡādītu min Yaḥyā tušbu l-nawāšiyā⁷⁰</i>
4. <i>Sa-aʿā li-Yaḥyā l-wudda mā habbatī l-šabā</i>	<i>wa in qaṭaʿu fī ḡaka ʿamdan lisāniyā</i>

Although the next poem by the wife of Yazīd b. Sinān starts with the characteristic themes and diction of the *martiya*⁷¹, which would suggest

⁶⁶ The data *Mu.* gives lead to some chaos: the 'Afrā' that al-Ḥansā' is referring to here is identified as Bint Muhāšir b. Mālik (d. 50 A.H.), well known for her love for 'Urwa b. Hizām. Elsewhere (*Mu.*, p. 182) we find 'Afrā' bint 'Aqqāl (?) al-'Uḍriyya who belonged to (*šāḥiba*) 'Urwa b. Hizām (d. 28 A.H.). If we exclude the possibility that al-Ḥansā' is referring to the future, we could hardly call her a *šā'ira min šawā'ir al-Ġāhiliyya* as *Mu.* does.

⁶⁷ The text in *Mu.* reads *al-Qaḏā*.

⁶⁸ The text in *Mu.* reads *yashummuhu*

⁶⁹ *Mu.*, pp. 30-1; *Balāḡāt* (1908-edition), p. 199.

⁷⁰ The rhyme word is faulty: the other verses consistently rhyme in *-āniyā* whereas this one has *-āšiyā*.

⁷¹ In a way this is a fine blend of the beginnings of three *marāṭi*: Hind bint Ḥudayfa (*taṭāwala laylī li-l-humūmi . . .*), Su'dā bint al-Samardal (*. . . wa abītu laylī kullahu lā aḡā'u*)

a pre-Islamic date, the poetess apparently was a contemporary of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, the fifth Umayyad caliph (d. 705/86)⁷². This poem illustrates the passion caused by separation.

VII.3

1. This night is long, my eye is loosing tears, my grief is keeping me awake and my heart is full of pain
2. In the dark I am bearing out the night and pasture its stars and my heart is suffering in the dark, full of fear⁷³
3. When from among them (viz. the stars) a bright star is missing, I notice while it is setting with my own eyes another one while it is rising
4. When I remember what was between us I find my heart breaking from passion
5. Every lover thinks of his beloved; hoping and craving for a meeting with the other each day
6. Oh You, Owner of the Throne, relieve the passion you seen in me, because You are the One to guard my interests and Who listens
7. I have called upon You in happiness and grief for a sickness that burns between my ribs

1. *Taṭāwala hādā l-laylu fa-l-‘aynu tadma’u*
2. *Fa-bittu uqāsī l-layla ar’ā nuḡūmahu*
3. *Idā ḡāba ‘anhā kawkabun fī maḡībihi*
4. *Idāmā tadakkartu lladī kāna baynanā*
5. *Wa kullu ḡabībīn dākīrun li-ḡabībīhi*
6. *Fa-dā l-‘arṣi farriḡ mā tarā min ṣabābatī*
7. *Da‘awtuka fī l-sarrā’i wa l-ḡurri da‘watan*

1. *wa arraqanī ḡuznī fa-qalbī muwaḡḡa’u*
2. *wa bāta fu’ādī ‘āniyan yatafazza’u*
3. *lamahtu bi-‘aynī āḡaran ḡina yaṭla’u*
4. *waḡadtu fu’ādī li-l-hawā yataqaṭṭa’u*
5. *yuraḡḡi liḡāhu kulla yawmin wa yaṭma’u*
6. *fa-anta llaḡi tarā umūri wa tasma’u*
7. *‘alā ‘illatin bayna l-ṣarāsifi talḡa’u*

A slave girl uttered this poem, that was overheard by Abū Bakr (al-Šiddīq)⁷⁴:

VII.4

1. I loved him from even before the breaking of the amulets of my childhood, because he walks proudly, bending like a soft reed
2. As if the light of the full moon is a habit to his face: he is one of the Banū Hāšim and ascends high in their nobility

1. *Wa ‘ašīqtuhu min qabli qaf’i tamā’imī*
2. *Wa ka’anna nūra l-badri sunnatu waḡḡihi*⁷⁵

1. *mutamāyisan miṭla l-qadībi l-nā’imī*
2. *yanmī wa yaṣ’adu fī du’ābati hāšimī*

Abū Bakr then asks her about the identity of her beloved and she answers:

and al-Ḥansā’ (*innī ariḡtu fa-bittu l-layla sāhiratan ar’ā l-nuḡūma wa mā kulliftu riṣyatahā*), Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibt ich den Kummer meines Herzens, Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau (MPKH)*, pp. 128-9.

⁷² Mu., pp. 110-111 and 333.

⁷³ The text reads *yatafarra’u* (“is falling to pieces”), but I do not trust this reading. More probably: *yatafazza’u*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 350; Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya, *Aḡbār al-Nīsā’*, pp. 219-220.

⁷⁵ The text in Mu. reads *waḡḡi*; in *Aḡbār al-Nīsā’*: *waḡḡihi*.

VII.5

1. I am the one with whose heart passion plays and who weeps for the love of Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim

1. *Wa ana llatī laʿība l-ḡarāmu bi-qalbiḥā fa-bakat bi-ḥubbi muḥammadi bni l-qāsimi*

Subsequently he buys her and urges Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim b. Ḡaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib to marry her with this woman-unfriendly remark: *Hāʾulāʾi fītan al-rīḡāl: fa-kam māta bi-hinna karīm wa ʿaṭība ʿalayhinna salīm* (“These are the real trials of men: many a noble one did die by them, and many a safe one “became ruined”).

In his *Mustazraf*⁷⁶ al-Suyūṭī mentions Taymāʾ, a slave girl of Abū l-ʿAbbās Ḥuzayma b. Ḥāzim al-Nahšālī, who wrote to her master while he was travelling in Syria:

VII.6

1. May Taymāʾ be the ransom of the evil that you beware of
Because you are her heart, her ears and her eyesight
2. Now that you have travelled, you left me distress
and with it there is for me no purpose left in pleasure
3. Did you remember your bond with me in your absence as much
as sorrow, distress and worry have emaciated me?

1. *Tafḍika taymāʾu min sūʾin tuḥāḍiruh* *fa-anta muḡḡatuhā wa l-samʿu wa l-baṣaru*
2. *La-in raḥalta laqad abqayta lī ḥazanan* *lam yabqa lī maʿahu fī l-aḍḍatin waṭaru*
3. *Fa-hal tadakkarta ʿahdī fī l-maḡībi kamā* *qad šaffanī l-hammu wa l-aḥzānu wa l-fikaru*

Separation can cause the one who stays behind to become the target either of blame or of the arrows of sorrow, like in this poem by ʿArīb al-Maʾmūniyya, said to be of Barmakī origin⁷⁷. When her lover, whom she married in secret, was sent far away on an errand by al-Mutawakkil:

VII.7

1. My beloved has gone, despite of me, not with my agreement
2. I have mistakenly left the one for whom I have not met a substitute
3. For his absence from my sight I have become a shooting mark in my life

1. *Ammā l-ḥabību fa-qad maḍā* *bi-l-raḡmi minnī lā l-riḍā*
2. *Aḡṭaʾtu fī tarkī li-man* *lam alqa minhu ʿuwaḍā*
3. *Lī-buʿdihī ʿan nāziʾirī* *širtu bi-ʿayšī ḡaraḍā*

⁷⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *Mustazraf*, p. 12

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175; al-Iṣfahānī, *Aḡānī* (Dār Ṣādir), pp. 21, 72.

Faḍl al-Šāʿira however sees through the nicety of words. When her beloved says he will be travelling, she answers:⁷⁸

VII.8

1. You lie to me about love, if you now shake your hand before travelling: the hand of separation with the hand of endurance and strength
2. Do not mention love and passion: if your soul would really have been struck with passion, it would endure the distance as well⁷⁹

1. <i>Kaddabtanī l-wudda in šāfaḥta murtaḥilan</i>	<i>kaffa l-firāqi bi-kaffi l-ṣabri wa l-ḡaldi</i>
2. <i>Lā taḍkuranna l-hawā wa l-šawqa law fuḡḡat</i>	<i>bi-l-šawqi nafsuka la-taṣbir ʿalā l-buʿdi</i>

In the next example separation has become a loss that the poetess believes to be insurmountable: Ḥabš, a *mawlāt* of al-Aḥnaf, starts a dialogue with her house—*mirabile dictu*—and the camel driver, who assisted the leaving party. She says:⁸⁰

VII.9

1. They went away with my heart and left distress behind, the horse-riders, and they left the land deserted
2. Oh You, house, is my beloved still within or did he leave? Where is the one inside you who was a resting place for me?
3. The house answered weeping: Alas! I have become a home to gazelles
4. I called on their camel driver as the party had already left: stay and tie the camels down
5. He answered while his tears were flowing: Who is the victim of this separation? I said: I am!

1. <i>Sārū bi-qalbī wa awdaʿū šaḡanā</i>	<i>ahlu l-maṭāyā wa awḥašū l-waṭanā</i>
2. <i>Yā dāru fika l-ḥabību am zaʿanā</i>	<i>ayna llaḍī fika kāna lī sakanā</i>
3. <i>Aḡābati l-dāru wa hya bākiyatun</i>	<i>wā ḥarabā širtu li-l-ḡibā waṭanā</i>
4. <i>Nādaytu ḥādiyahum wa qad raḥalā</i>	<i>l-rakbu aqīmā wa aʿqilā⁸¹ l-budunā</i>
5. <i>Aḡābanī wa l-dumūʿu ḡāriyatun</i>	<i>man ḍā qatilu l-firāqi qultu anā</i>

Ḥafṣa bint al-Ḥāḡḡ al-Rakūniyya from Granada uses this playful poem to make her beloved hurry to her⁸²:

⁷⁸ *Mu.*, p. 208.

⁷⁹ There is a difficult problem of interpretation here: the text reads *law fuḡḡat bi-l-šawqi nafsuka law taṣbir ʿalā l-buʿdi*. In translation: “if only your soul would be struck by passion, if only you/your soul would endure the distance”. With this translation Faḍl would wish for her lover to be really in love (which is consistent with verse 1) and make her self dependent on her lover’s endurance, which she evidently does not want to express. For these reasons I prefer to read *la-taṣbir* as an apodosis. The metre (*basīl*) allows this reading.

⁸⁰ Suyūṭī, *Mustazraf*, p. 16.

⁸¹ The metre calls for a *hamzat qaṭʿ*.

⁸² *Mu.*, p. 55; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, V, pp. 109-10.

VII.10

1. I visit you or you visit me, because my heart always bends to what you desire
2. My teeth are a sweet and cool waterwell and the my locks are an extensive shade
3. I hope that you will be thirsty and struck by sunlight when the resting place delivers me to you
4. Hurry with your answer because it is not nice to reject Buṭayna, oh Ġamīl

1. *Azūruka am tazūru fa-inna qalbī*
2. *Fa-ṭaġrī mawridun ‘aḍbun zuḷālun*
3. *Wa qad ammaltu an tazmā wa tadḥā*
4. *Fa-‘aġġil bi-l-ḡawābi fa-mā ḡamīlun*

- ilā mā taštahī abadan yamīlu*
- wa far’u ḡu’ābatī zillun ḡalīlu*
- iḏā wāfā ilayka biya l-maḡīlu*
- ibā’uka ‘an Buṭaynata yā Ġamīlu*

Memory

Absence and separation lead to cherished memories. So for instance this poem by the early Islamic poetess Ḥawla bint Ṭābit al-Anṣāriyya, the sister of Ḥassān, who composed this poem on ‘Ammāra b. al-Walīd b. al-Muġīra with whom she was in love⁸³. The poem has a *qaṣīda*-like beginning and—like some other love poems—shows features that we know from *marāṭī*, e.g. the *ḡayl* and “negative praise”—i.e. praise with negations of bad qualities—in 4b and 5b. It seems to be a love poem, though, and not a *martīya*, according to the introduction: *wa qālat tuṣ-abbibu fih*:

VIII.1

1. You both my friends, my sleeplessness has hit me, my eye has not slept, not even a little
2. My drink is not easy to swallow and I do not complain to anyone about what I feel (is in me)
3. How can you taunt me for a man, easy going, with whom my heart rejoices
4. His looks are like the shine of a full moon; he is not a coward nor difficult to approach⁸⁴
5. Belonging to the tribe of Āl Muġīra, not weak, nor a coward or a liar
6. My eye saw him one day and afterward it never saw another

1. *Yā ḡalīlayya nābanī saḡadī*
2. *Fa-ṣarābī mā uṣīḡa wa mā*
3. *Kayfa talḡūnī ‘alā raḡūlin*
4. *Mīṭlu ḡaw’i l-baḡrī ṣūratuhu*
5. *Min banī Āli l-Muġīrati lā*
6. *Naẓarat yawman fa-lā naẓarat*

- lam tanam ‘aynī wa lam takadi*
- aštakī mā bī ilā aḡadi*
- ānisin taltadḡuhu kabidī*
- laysa bi-l-zummayli wa l-nakidi*
- ḡāmilin niksīn wa lā ḡaḡidi*
- baḡdahu ‘aynī ilā aḡadi*

⁸³ *Mu.*, p. 80.

⁸⁴ The text is grammatically faulty with: *laysa bi-l-zummaylati l-nakidi*. I suggest to read: *laysa bi-l-zummayli wa l-nakidi* comp. I. Goldziher, “Bemerkungen zur arabischen Trauerpoesie”, *WZKM*, XVI (1902), p. 309.

The memory of a pleasant moment is expressed by Ḥayra Umm Dayḡam who apparently was on the brink of giving in to passion⁸⁵:

VIII.2

1. We found ourselves suddenly behind the clan; we were no longer amongst them nor were we mixed up with the enemies
2. And at night two sweet smelling cloaks of happiness shielded us from the dew and ripe that fell from the night
3. By mentioning God's name we drove away from us our youthful folly when our hearts were pounding inside us
4. We went away from the intention of purity but maybe we quenched the thirst of our souls by just sipping

1. <i>Waṭabnā ḥilāfa l-ḥayyi lā naḥnu minhumū</i>	<i>wa lā naḥnu bi-l-aḏā'i muḥtaliḏāni</i>
2. <i>Wa bitnā yaqīnā sāqīta l-talli wa l-nadā</i>	<i>mina l-layli burdā yumnatīn 'aṭirāni</i>
3. <i>Naḏūdu bi-ḏikri llāhi 'annā mina l-ṣabā</i>	<i>iḏā kāna qalbānā binā yaḡḏifāni</i>
4. <i>Wa naṣḏuru 'an amri l-aḡḏifi wa rubbamā</i>	<i>naqa'nā ḡatila l-nafsi bi-l-raṣaḡfāni</i>

In some cases like the one of this woman of the Banū 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a the memory of a pleasant time can become something she would rather forget⁸⁶

VIII.3

1. May rain and water pour down over days that affected us with passion, coming from where the dry winds sometimes come
2. They (the winds) appear to us arising from the passes of mount Ḍumr⁸⁷ as if their foremost parts are higher than oak trees (?)
3. A dry wind in which my body takes pleasure when it blows like a wind from Ḥaḡramawt that offers⁸⁸ musk and sweet smells
4. O you dear traveller by night in weakness, that affected us between al-Dirā'ayn⁸⁹ and al-Aḥrāb (?) who was it (that travelled) (?)
5. I imagined him to be a king—o this beloved image!—belonging to mankind or to the jinn's
6. What do you remember from the Yamani land without remembering the one who was in Ġawzān⁹⁰ that night?!
7. Willingly I cheat myself (to refrain) from remembering you, like the sober one cheats the drunk

1. *Saqyan wa ra'yan li-ayyāmin tuṣawwiqunāmin ḥaytu ta'ti riyaḥu l-hayfi ahyānā*
2. *Tabdū lanā min tanāyā l-ḍumri ṭālī'atan ka'anna a'lāmahā ḡallalna siḡānā*

⁸⁵ *Mu.*, p. 82.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁸⁷ Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-Buldān*, Beirut, 1990, III, p. 527: *ḡabal yudkar ma'a Ḍā'in fi bilād Qays*.

⁸⁸ *Hunā* does not make much sense here. Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-Buldān*, Beirut, 1990, III, p. 5 reads *haḡā*, which does not help. Maybe read *hanā* as a *muḡaffaf* -form for *hana'a*.

⁸⁹ See Yāqūt, *loc. cit.*

⁹⁰ Ġawzān is a *qarya fi mihlāf* (province) *Bu* (?) *'dān* in Yaman: Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-Buldān*, II, p. 211.

3. *Hayfun yaladdu lahā ġismī idā nasamat ka-l-ḥaḍramiyyi hanā miskan wa rayḥānā*
4. *Yā ḥabbadā ṭāriqun wahnun alamma binā bayna l-ḍirāʿayni wa l-aḥrābi man kānā*
5. *Šabbahu lī mālikan yā ḥabbadā šabhan immā mina l-insi aw mā kāna ġinānā*
6. *Mādā tudakkiru min arḍin yamāniyyatin wa lā tudakkiru man amsā bi-ḡawzānā*
7. *ʿAmdan uḥādīʿu nafsi ʿan tadakkurikum kamā yuḥādīʿu šāḥi l-ʿaqli sukrānā*

A sad *ġāriya* remarks⁹¹:

VIII.4

1. We were like a couple of Qaṭā birds in a desert area, living a carefree life, wonderful, pleasant and without sorrow
2. They were hit by the fortune of time and driven apart; I have never seen anything more lonesome than someone on his own

1. *Wa kunnā ka-zawġin min qaṭan fi mafāzatin ladā ḥafḍi ʿayšin muḡḡibin mūniqin raġdi*
2. *Ašābahumā raybu l-zamāni fa-ufriḍāwa lam ara šayʿan qaṭṭu aw awḥaša min fardi*

A *ġāriya* who was sold by her master because of her insubmissiveness wrote to him from afar⁹²

VIII.5

1. Verily if your far away heart burns, then my heart is cracking up
2. By the Lord of heaven, you must know, my master, in me there is desire for you
3. Find yourself comfort⁹³ over “us” with what you find in us, even if we are emaciated by passion
4. My soul is warm for you (i.e. it is burning me), passionate, and my eye is weeping, shedding tears (i.e. spending coolness)
5. Our death is in the hand of fates (?) as is our life close to each other (?) and my return⁹⁴
6. O fates, wherever you, my master, may be, my heart is now submissive to him (i.e. you)
7. So, peace be upon you from me, as long as the sun rises

1. *La-in kawā qalbuka l-šašūʿu fa-l-qalbu minnī bihi šudūʿu*
2. *Wa bī wa rabbi l-samāʿi fa-lam ilayka yā sayyiḍi nuzūʿu*
3. *Iʿziz ʿalaynā bimā tulāqī finā wa in šaffanā l-walūʿu*
4. *Fa-l-nafsu ḥarrā ʿalayka walḥā wa l-ʿaynu ʿabrā lahā dumūʿu*
5. *Fa-mawtunā fi yadi l-ṭanāʿi wa ʿayšinā l-qurbu (?) wa l-ruġūʿu*
6. *Wa ḥayṭamā kunta yā manāyā fa-l-qalbu minnī bihi ḥuṣūʿu*
7. *ʿUmma ʿalayka l-salāmu minnī mā kāna šamsuhā ṭu/alūʿu*

Rejection of the Candidate

If the poetess would reject a candidate for his looks or out of pure contempt, then that of course is a fatal disgrace. In such a case we

⁹¹ *Mu.*, p. 345.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 349-50.

⁹³ I read *iʿziz* (I) instead of *aʿziz* (IV).

⁹⁴ Probably a *hysteron proteron*.

would be close to the genre of *hiğā'*-poetry. There are however factors by which the theme of rejection may still be closely associated with love poetry, so for instance in a case of the inability of the poetess to marry for external reasons like the negative view of her family towards the candidate. And of course rejection may even be part of the game of love as such.

These are a few examples of classic *hiğā'*. Umm Ğa'far bint 'Alī l-Hāšimiyya had been having a relationship with a nephew of hers. After this ended Šālīḥ b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Hāšimī proposed to her. He was rejected, so he said to her in anger:⁹⁵

IX.1

1. You, pain in my heart, eyesore that you are
2. You slush of vomit in diarrhea, you waste of a fool
3. Are you, people, ordering me to marry her? Then where, where is my right hand?!
(sc. to swear that I won't)
4. Her husband was by her behaviour in a thicket of horns (instead of only wearing two)

1. <i>Yā šawṣatun fī fu'ādī</i>	<i>wa yā qadan fī ġufūnī</i>
2. <i>Yā qayyatun fī sulāḥin</i>	<i>yā faḍlata l-ma'fūnī</i>
3. <i>A-ta'murūnī bi-tazwiġihā</i>	<i>fa-ayna ayna yamīnī</i>
4. <i>Wa zawġuhā kāna minhā</i>	<i>fī ġayḍatin min qurūnī</i>

Umm Ğa'far answers saying:

IX.2

1. Make your anger turn away from us: for me you are no equal party
2. You possess neither earthly things nor religion (decency?)
3. You [health of], you diarrhea of a fat bellied man
4. I have given him the slave as a mate⁹⁶ with all his sturdy stick
5. You want my possessions with a weak mind and persevering stupidity

1. <i>Aḡġ bi-ġayzika 'annā</i>	<i>fa-lastā lī bi-qarīnī</i>
2. <i>Wa lasta šāḥiba dunyā</i>	<i>wa lasta šāḥiba dīnī</i>
3. <i>Yā šihhata . . .</i> ⁹⁷	<i>yā salhata l-mabṭūnī</i>
4. <i>A'ṭaytuhu [?] l-'abda ba'lan</i>	<i>bi-kullī 'ūdīn maṭīnī</i>
5. <i>Tarūmu milkī bi-'aqlīn</i>	<i>wāḥīn wa ḥumqīn ḥarūnī</i>

If the correct way of getting married implies, that the partners would not have had an opportunity to meet and to get to know each other,

⁹⁵ *Mu.*, pp. 288-289; *Balāġāt*, pp. 209 (1997 edition), 114-115 (1908 edition).

⁹⁶ The text has *maṭīyyatuhu l-'abdu*, which results in a faulty metre. Just as a playful suggestion: *a'ṭaytuhu l-'abda*.

⁹⁷ Text broken.

then the wedding and consummation could sometimes become a bitter disappointment, like these two women apparently experienced:

‘Uṣayma bint Zayd al-Nahdiyya⁹⁸

IX.3

1. They say ‘Uṣayma did not touch/take her dowry as if the one who gave to ‘Uṣayma jewelry was (only) playing
2. If they would experience what I have been through they would shrug behind me and no-one would strive for that dowry
3. As if the winds from Sa‘īd b. Sālim are the winds of a stretch of land on which the hyena’s have pissed
4. If from that (land), bounty would be given, I would be locked away during the nights as long as someone who wishes things calls upon God⁹⁹

1. *Yaqūlūna lam ta’ḥud ‘uṣaymatu mahrahā*
2. *Wa law mārasū mā kuntu fihī la-uhriḡū*
3. *Ka-anna riyyāḡhan min sa‘īdi bni sālīmī*
4. *Fa-in wafīlat minhu fa-innī ḡabīsatur*

1. *ka’anna llaḡī yaḡlī ‘uṣaymata lā‘ibu*
2. *warā’ī wa lam yaḡlub ilā l-mahri ṡālibu*
3. *riyyāḡhu ṡibbatīn bālat ‘alayhā l-ṡa‘ālibu*
4. *ṡwāla l-layālī mā da‘ā llāha rāḡibu*

And ‘Amra bint al-Nu‘mān b. Baṣīr al-Anṣāriyya said bitchily when al-Ḥārīt b. Ḥālid proposed to her¹⁰⁰

IX.4

1. The old men and the young of Damascus are dearer to me than the men from the Ḥiḡāz
2. They have a stench like the stench from the armpits of goats, impossible for musk and frankincense to get rid of

1. *Kuhūlu Dimaṣṡin wa ṡubbānuhā*
2. *Lahum ḡaḡarun ka-ṡunāni l-tuyū*

1. *aḡabbu ilayya minā l-ḡāliyyah*
2. *si aṡyā ‘alā l-miski wa l-ḡāliyyah*

The Andalusian poetess Nazhūn is merciless in her rejection of an ugly man who proposed to her:¹⁰¹

IX.5

1. Bring an excuse for me (to get away) from an ill-tempered lover, stupid in his advice and his behaviour
2. He desires a meeting (with me) with something that, would he come to desire a slap in the face for it, he would not be stricken for it (i.e.: that does not even deserve a slap in the face)
3. With a head that needs plastering (litt: putty¹⁰²) and a face that needs a veil

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181; *Balāḡāt*, p. 203 (1997 edition) ; p. 109 (1908 edition).

⁹⁹ It is interesting to observe, how images of *riṡā’* are incorporated: on the topos of “... for ever and ever” see Borg, *MPKH*, pp. 171-3.

¹⁰⁰ *Mu.*, p. 193.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁰² So in Dozy, R., *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*: putty, kit (“mastic”).

1. <i>ʿAḍriyya min ʿāṣiqi anūkin</i>	<i>ṣafīhi l-iṣārati wa l-manzaʿi</i>
2. <i>Yarūmu l-wiṣāla bi-mā law atā</i>	<i>yarūmu bihi l-ṣafa lam yuṣfāi</i>
3. <i>Bi-raʿsin faqīrin ilā kiyyatin</i>	<i>wa waḡhin faqīrin ilā burquʿi</i>

In the case of Umm Ṣarīʿ (al-Ṣarīḥ) al-Kindiyya the problem that she and the rest of her family seem to have with her husband is more of a psychological kind¹⁰³:

IX.6

1. It is as if the house on the day you are in it is a pit over us, filled with smoke
2. If only you were on the ship of the Banī ʿIbād, deported ; we wouldn't see you and you wouldn't see us
3. If only you were away in India, away from us, [and would that we had a friend so that he would treat us gently (?)]
4. If the gifts from him would stop (?), I would be given them hundredfold (?) he would scold us (?)]

1. <i>Kaʿanna l-dāra yawma takūnu fihā</i>	<i>ʿalaynā ḥuḍratun muliʿat duḡānā</i>
2. <i>Fa-laytaka fī ṣafīni banī ʿibādi/a (?)</i>	<i>ṭarīdan lā narāka wa lā tarānā</i>
3. <i>Wa laytaka ḡāʾibun bi-l-hindi ʿannā</i>	<i>[wa layta lanā ṣaḍīqan fa-ḡtanānā</i>
4. <i>Wa law anna l-nuḍūra takuffu minhu</i>	<i>la-qad aḥdaytuhā (uḥḍituhā.ʿ) miʿatan ḡaḡānā]</i>

Danānīr was much more subtle and diplomatic when she rejected Abū l-Šaʿtā's proposal in these words:¹⁰⁴

IX.7

1. Abū l-Šaʿtā' has a hidden love in which there is no power (to resist) for the accused (i.e. me)
2. Oh heart hold back from him and oh you whom love follies: sit down and (then) stand up (to leave?)
3. Adequate words reached me from him; the media of lovers are words
4. A hunter that is trusted by his gazelles like gazelles of the Holy Places (where hunting is prohibited?)
5. If you (really) are in love, then pray to God that your wishes be fulfilled, Abū l-Šaʿtā', and fast
6. If God is merciful, He will sort out your appointment on the Day of the Gathering in the garden of eternal life (Paradise)¹⁰⁵
7. Where I will meet you (when you will be) as a fullgrown youthful boy in whom all good things have become perfect

1. <i>Li-Abī l-Šaʿtāʾi ḥubbun kāminun</i>	<i>laysa fihi nahḍatun li-l-muttaḥim</i>
2. <i>ʾĀ fuʾādī fa-zdaḡir ʿanhu wa yā</i>	<i>ʿabaṭa l-ḥubbi bihi fa-qʿud wa qum</i>

¹⁰³ *Mu.*, p. 298. See for this woman also al-Ḥaṭīb: *Šarḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa li-Abī Tammām*, Beirut, s.d., II, pp. 201-2 and *Balāḡat* (1997 edition), p. 213. Vss. 3b and 4 are hard to interpret.

¹⁰⁴ *Mu.*, pp. 88-9.

¹⁰⁵ This poem is not easy to understand. The damage in my edition of verse 6 does not help. I read *lamma*. This verse might well be a pun on the name of Abū l-Šaʿtā': "*lamma llāhu šaʿtahu*", "may God repair the disorder of his affairs".

3. *Zāranī minhu kalāmūn šaʿibun*
4. *Šaʿidun taʿmanuhu ġazlānuhu*
5. *Šallī in aḥbabta an tuṭṭā l-munā*
6. *Lima mīʿaduka yawma l-ḥašari fi*
7. *Haytu alqāka ġulāman yāfiʿan*

*wa wasīlātu l-muḥibbīna l-kalīm
miṭla mā taʿmanu ġazlānu l-ḥaram
yā Abā l-Šaʿtāʿi li-llāhi wa šum
ġannati l-ḥuldi ini llāhu raḥīm
nāšīʿan qad kamilat fihi l-nʿam*

An anonymous woman ridicules her husband at his weakest spot: impotence¹⁰⁶

IX.8

1. Abū Šālīḥ loves to fuck, but his dick does not obey him
2. He has taken out the “avarice” from its “plentiful partner”¹⁰⁷ and it turned out to be beyond hope
3. If only he had in his ass what I have in my pussy! If only another man than he would take me in his possession

1. *Yuḥibbu l-nikāḥa Abū Šālīḥin*
2. *Wa qad amsaka l-buḥla min kaffihi*
3. *Fa-yā layta mā fi ḥiri fi stihi*

*wa laysa yuṭawʿuhu ayruh
fa-ašbaḥa lā yurtaḡa ḥayruh
wa mallakanī raḡulun ḡayruh*

Another story about an impotent man runs like this:¹⁰⁸

IX.9

Abū l-Baydāʿ, an impotent, wanted to marry two women. When the clan assured him, that one was enough for him, he insisted. They agreed to let him marry one and evaluate things after a week. If not satisfied he could marry another then. They picked for him a bedouin woman and after a week they asked him how he had been on the first day. “Fantastic” he replied. “And on the third?” they asked. “Don’t ask me!”. His wife then replied from behind the curtain:

1. Abū l-Baydāʿa jumped into the pitfall (“lasso”)
2. Until he was led into a nice house/tent
2. In it was a gazel, well playing coyness, frightened
4. He worked on it until his sweat flowed continuously
5. The key was broken and the lock remained closed

1. *Kāna Abū l-Baydāʿa yanzū fi l-wahaq*
2. *Ḥattā idā udḥila fi baytin aniq*
3. *Fīhi ġazālun ḥasanu l-dalli ḥariq*
4. *Mārasahu ḥattā idā rfaḍḍa l-araq*
5. *Inkasara l-miftāḥu wa nsadda l-ġalaq*

¹⁰⁶ *Balāġāt* (1908 edition), p. 115.

¹⁰⁷ I can think of at least three other interpretations of this passage. The reading “*umsika*” would double that number.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, VII, p. 154.

A woman might not only reject someone who proposed to her, but also a husband regretting to have separated from her, like in this case al-ʿUryān b. al-Aswad when he asked his divorced wife to consider returning. She wrote:¹⁰⁹

IX.10

1. If you are in need of something then ask something else in stead, because the gazelle that you lost is occupied

1. *In kunta dā ḥāḡatin fa-ṭlub lahā badalan* *inna l-ḡazāla llaḏī ḡayyaʿta maṣḡulu*

But her husband wrote:

1. She who has occupations, let Allah protect her, we have been enjoying her and the bond is still present
2. We have just discovered a new side of reappraising her: because in the nights and in the ensuing days there is length (i.e.: they are boring)

1. *Man kāna dā ṣuḡulin fa-llāhu yaklaʿuhu* *wa qad laḥawnā bihi wa l-ḥablu mawṣūlu*
 2. *Wa qad qaḏaynā mina stiṭrāfihi ṭarafan* *wa fī l-layālī wa fī ayyāmihā ṭūlu*

Regret and Separation

Umm Ḥālid al-Ḥaṭʿamiyya¹¹⁰

X.1

1. O Soul that has been led by love, if you now strive to evade (him), then certainly something awful has led you astray
2. So turn away from him, because something has come in between: he has been distracted by a relationship of old, other than the one with you

1. *Ayyatuhā l-nafsu llati qādahā l-hawā* *amālaka in rumti l-ṣudūda ʿazīmu*¹¹¹
 2. *Fa-taṣarifī ʿanhu fa-qad ḥīla dūnahu* *wa alhāhu waṣḥun min siwāki qadīmu*

One of the judges in al-Bahnasā had to handle a case of divorce in which the husband did not agree. The wife would not let herself be persuaded and said:¹¹²

X.2

1. When al-Allid (?) started to violate his bond with me and wanted the cloth of “togetherness” to be torn
2. I left him and freed my hand from his and I read to me and to him the verse: “But if they [both] separate . . .”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, p. 133.

¹¹⁰ *Mu.*, p. 292.

¹¹¹ The metre is *ṭawīl*, but the first short in the ʿaḡuz is missing.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 327; al-Suyūṭī, *Nuḡha*, p. 97.

¹¹³ A case of *iqṭibās*. Arberry’s translation of Sūra 4, 129: “But if they separate, God will enrich each of them of His plenty; God is All-embracing, All-wise”.

1. *Lammā ġadā l-Allīdu (?) ‘ahdī nāqīdan* *wa arāda tawba l-waṣli an yatamazzaqā*
 2. *Fāraqtuhu wa ḥalaṭu min yadihi yadī* *wa talawtu lī wa lahu “wa in yatafarraqā”*

In this case of separation the woman nicely tricks her husband:¹¹⁴

X.3

A man from Kūfa was sent on a mission (*ḍuriba l-ba‘t*). He went away to Azarbaijan and led a *ġāriya* and a horse with him although he was married to his niece. He wrote to her in order to make her jealous:

1. Tell “Umm al-Banīn” that we have nothing to wish for; beardless heroes see to our wishes
 2. As far away (from you) as “the two “mankib”-stars” (sc. one in Orion, the other in Pegasus) when they pass, while the far away “bayḍā” star is like it is adorned with a string of pearls (?)
 3. The first because of the battles with the enemy, the second for my own sake when the army retreats
1. *A-lā abliḡū Umma l-Banīna bi-annanā* *ḡanīnā wa aḡnatnā l-ḡaṭārīfatu l-murdu*
 2. *Ba‘du manāṭi l-mankibayni idā ḡarā* *wa bayḍā’u ka-l-timṭālī zayyanahā l-iqdu*
 3. *Fa-hādā li-ayyāmi l-‘aduwrī wa hādīhi* *l-hāḡati nafsī ḥīna yanṣarifu l-ḡundu*

When his letter had reached her and she finished reading it, she said: “Boy, give me the ink pot!” and she wrote in reply:

1. Return his greeting to him¹¹⁵ and tell him: beardless heroes see to our wishes, so breathe your last breath!
 2. By his grace the caliph left them to stay, the young men as reservists in the army, and sent your lot to battle
 3. When I want, a strong boy sees to my wishes¹¹⁶ and I undo him from rose water
 4. And if a young man from among them wants to stretch out his hand to a soft belly or curved buttocks
 5. And if you are not attending to the needs of your people, then we will attend to them far, far away
1. *A-lā aqrihi minnī l-salāma wa qul lahu* *‘unīnā bi-fityatin ḡaṭārīfatin murdi¹¹⁷*
 2. *Bi-ḡamdi amīri l-mu‘minīna aqarrahum* *ṣabāban wa aḡzakum ḥawālifa fī l-ḡundi*
 3. *Idā ṣṭu ḡannānī ḡulāmūn muraḡḡalun* *wa nāzaṭuhu min mā’i muṭṣari l-wardi*
 4. *Wa in ṣā’a minhum nāṣi’un madda kaffihi* *ilā kabidin malsā’a aw kafalin nahdi*
 5. *Fa-mā kuntumū taqḍawna min ḥaḡi ahlīkum* *ṣuhūdān qaḍaynāhā ‘alā l-na’yi wa l-bu’di*

After reading her letter the man returned home with his horse and his *ġāriya*, and he asked his wife whether she had really done what she said. She answered that she didn’t. The man then left her his *ġāriya* as a present and returned on his mission.

¹¹⁴ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *Iqd*, VII, p. 114.

¹¹⁵ Unreadable and difficult to fit to the metre.

¹¹⁶ Or: “sings to me”.

¹¹⁷ The first line is taken from the *Kulāb al-Maḥāsīn wa l-Aḍḍād* (pseudo-Ḡāḥiz), ed. van Vloten, Leiden, 1898, p. 229.

All in One

There is one woman—relatively unknown—from whom we still have a number of love poems and in whose love poems many of the aforementioned themes occur: Umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Muḥāribiyya¹¹⁸

Passion

XI.1

1. Oh you rider in the morning towards his aim; hold still that I may tell some of the things I feel

etc. See IV.4

XI.2

1. The healing from love is kissing and embracing and the rubbing of belly against belly
2. And such heavy moving (in and out), that tears get in the eyes and the groping of shoulders and horns (?)

1. *Šifā'u l-hubbi taqbīlun wa ḍammun*
2. *Wa rahḡun tahmulu l-ʿaynāni minhu*

wa ḡarrun bi-l-buṭūni ʿalā l-buṭūni
wa aḥḍun bi-l-manākibi wa l-qurūni

Separation and regret

XI.3

1. May (for him) after (he left) me any gift by a free woman among mankind be untrustworthy nor a noble neighbour that lives close by
2. With him I was like *Ḍū l-Kalb* (The Dog Owner) who did not stop to fatten his dog until its eyes became weak and it assaulted him
3. When the only thing he offered was stupidity, I did not find the like of him whose eye would burn my flesh to the point of overcooking

1. *Lā ya'munan ba'di ʿaṭiyyatu ḥurratin*
2. *Wa kuntu wa iyyāhu ka-ḍi l-kalbi lam yazal*
3. *Fa-lammā abā illā l-ḥamāqata lam aḡid*

mina l-nāsi aw ḡarun karīmun yuḡāwiruh
yusamminuhu ḥattā smadarra yusāwiruh
lahu miṭla mā yakwī fa-yundīḡa nāziruh

On love as a concept

XI.4

1. I see love as indestructable . . .

etc. See I.1

¹¹⁸ *Mu.*, pp. 299-300.

To love and to regret . . .

XI.5

1. I had found comfort for the love of the Ḍibābī for a while, but all the follies of an ignorant one were to return . . . etc. (See VI.3)

Conclusion

Any conclusion drawn from the small amount of material presented here must be preliminary. But also preliminary conclusions may have a value of their own.

Maybe we should start by assessing what we did not find in these love poems by women: the most prominent phenomenon that is absent are lengthy descriptions in the *wasf* or *maḏīḥ*, descriptions of the beloved, of men (or women). Where Bauer is able to extract an extensive catalogue of *wasf* elements from the poetry he discusses, they are scarce here, limited to the following passages:

IV.2: a general reference to beauty: *ḡamāluka* . . .

IV.9: a general reference to the lovers "mental picture"

IV.12 vs. 10 and VII.1 vs. 4: white teeth

VII.3 s. 3: metaphoric use of "star"

VII.4 and VIII.1: elegant walk and remarkable face to emphasize the nobility of the beloved

XI.3 (last verse): the (former) lover's burning look

Another thing that is missing is what I would call "the broad outlook", generalisations of emotions, or affections attributed to the *condition humaine*. The nearest these women take us to such a theme or expression is in a few general remarks about the nature of love: I.1, I.2 and I.3. In II.2 the poetess touches lightly on a general outlook, but only in hindsight when evaluating her own love career.

Another instance where a poetess seems to break through to a wider perspective is in III.1: she creates the image of the ideal heroic uncompromising lover whom no obstacle will turn away from his beloved. But then again she says so in a concrete situation, in which she feels turned down by her lover in her request to visit him.

Bauer witnesses enough expressions of this relationship between love and the *condition humaine* to justify the very purpose of his monography: to discuss the Mentalitätsgeschichte of the late Abbasid era. The same cannot possibly be done on the basis of the poems that are being

presented here, neither for the late Abbasid nor for any other era. It might however be necessary to make an exception for love poetry by women in al-Andalus: developments there often turn out to be different from those in the heartlands of Arab/Islamic culture.

To typify the presented poems we might turn to Hempfers *Gattungstheorie*, a classical work on poetic kinds. In its last chapter ("Zusammenfassende Thesen", pp. 221-8) the author presents some useful clues as to how genres can be defined.

If we follow his lead the first question would be: can we consider the presented texts as a group? Three remarks have to be made:

1. The texts are only homogeneous in a limited sense: there common theme is love and some of its implications, but they are ascribed to women in varying historical and social circumstances.
2. It has already been indicated, that the chosen texts are a corpus for a preliminary survey; they are not the total corpus that can be found.
3. The texts above have never been presented as a collection, as an interconnected group, neither in the Arab Middle Ages nor recently: the juxtaposition is ours and it does not follow unequivocal criteria.

If we would superimpose a "*Sammelbegriff*", a collective definition, on these poems it would probably be "functional poetry with lyrical inclinations", because they are almost without exception connected to concrete occasions. In this sense they are occasional poetry.

It is debatable whether these poems would coincide with a historical category that occurred in Medieval Arabic genre definition. After excluding categories like *wasf* and *madīh* as we did, the only category that could be considered is *ġazal/tašbīb* (love) poetry, but one might argue, that with the variety of love's implications that these poems present, they are thematically not "stable" enough to bring them under this category alone.

It is difficult to typify these poems in terms of communicational situations ("*Sprechsituationen*"), either performative or informative, because as far as they are communicational, most of them are intended as "one-to-one" messages, from one sender (the poetess) to one receiver (the beloved). To subdivide further into primary and secondary *modi* ("*Schreibweisen*") like narrative, dramatical, comical or satirical is even more complicated, because it would mean that we need to have at least a clear understanding of the sender's and receiver's intentions and moods. And decisive to determine these intentions and moods are the

texts themselves (to a lesser extent the context), so that here too we would find ourselves in a vicious circle.

These considerations would lead us to believe that the poems presented here can hardly be considered a genre in the normal sense of the word. Neither can most of the women, whose poems we have been discussing here, be considered poetesses in the sense that they produced a number of poems collected in a *ḍiḥwān*, let alone that poetry made up most of their daily activities as is the case with the laureate poets of medieval Arab culture. Their poems can hardly be understood as anything else than occasional (or maybe: situational) poetry, which leaves us with a tantalising question: why were they collected and transmitted at all? Perhaps their only value was and is, that for a reader (now and then) they are highly recognisable as a reflection of the vicissitudes of love, phenomena that still provide enough material to fill 24 hour schedules of three TV pop stations on my local cable network.