ʿUMAR IBN ABĪ RABĪʿA AND ṮURAYYĀ IN *RAWḌAT AL-QULŪB WA-NUZHAT AL-MUḤIBB WA-AL-MAḤBŪB*

MÒNICA COLOMINAS APARICIO

(UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM)

This paper is dedicated to the poetry of the well-known Qurayšī poet ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa (23/644–93/714). Some of his love poems to his beloved Ṯurayyā are included in *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-al-maḥbūb* (hereinafter: *RQ*), a treatise on love written by the Syrian author Abū al-Naǧīb ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Šayzarī (fl. 569/1174).[1] *RQ* belongs to the literary genre of theoretical works written in Arabic that are devoted to worldly or *profane* love, a genre that developed throughout the Middle Ages from the ninth century onwards. The spread of Neoplatonic and Ẓāhirite ideas, chaste ʿUḏrite love stories and Ṣūfī writings[2] influenced early attempts at systematizing courtliness in matters of love as found in *Risāla fī-l-ʿIšq wa-n-Nisāʾ*, *Risālat al-Qiyān* by ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Ǧāḥiẓ and *Kitāb al-Zahra* by Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd.[3] These treatises collected and classified the characteristics, stages and symptoms of love and analyzed the relationship between the lover and the beloved. Within this conceptual framework, analysis of courtesy unfolded and was expressed through poetry and prose. *RQ* also follows this model. Al-Šayzarī employs different kinds of sources to support his views,[4] including several poems by ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa, whose verses exhibit the first traces of *courtly love*. ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa's poems are interspersed throughout al-Šayzarī's work and are introduced with narrative passages that contextualize or give supplementary information about them.

---

1 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr al-Šayzarī, *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb*, ed. G. Kanāzi, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003 (Codices Arabici Antiqui, 8).

2 L.A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs*, New York: New York University Press, 1972. Her monograph surveys the genre of treatises on love, but it does not mention *RQ*, nor its several manuscript versions.

3 The latter is, together with *Kitāb al-Muwaššā* by al-Waššā, discussed in the first chapter of *RQ*.

4 In an earlier issue of this journal, Antonella Ghersetti discusses the depiction of the marriage of Isḥāq in various sources, including *RQ*. A. Ghersetti, "Musiciens, parasites et amoureux: le récit du 'marriage d'Isḥāq'", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 1 (2006), pp. 113-128, especially pp. 121-123. Al-Šayzarī, being a physician, uses the story to illustrate his theory of the influence of love on the human body.

QSA n.s. 5-6 (2010-2011), pp. 187-198
© Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, Roma

In this paper, I will focus my attention on the depiction of the love affair between ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā. I will also examine al-Šayzarī's selection of ʿUmar's work and his treatment of the previous reports about the couple. For this purpose, I have selected one of the poems by ʿUmar in *RQ*. Although only a short version of the poem is included in *RQ*, his *Dīwān* includes a longer version entitled "Ṯurayyā's Farewell",[5] on which I have also based the following analysis. I will compare both versions with the narrative prose passages in *RQ* that accompany the poem. I will also examine the poem alongside reports about ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā's love affair in one of the sources discussed in *RQ*, Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġānī* (897/284–967/357).

Remarkably little is known about ʿUmar, the most famous poet of the Umayyad period in the Ḥiǧāz. The poetry of ʿUmar was influenced by the music that flourished in the Umayyad cities of Mecca and Medīna and is representative of the urban *ġazal*,[6] which is distinct from both the poetry of Imruʾ al-Qays and from the stereotypical style of earlier poetic tradition. The licentious and, to some extent, *courtly love* portrayed in ʿUmar's work clearly contrasts with the innocent and pure platonic love of the Bedouins of the Naǧd and Ḥiǧāz deserts, as portrayed by ʿUmar's contemporary Ǧamīl (d. 701 A.D.) in his love for Buṯayna or

---

5 ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Rabīʿa, *Dīwān ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa,* Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1971, pp. 315-317.

6 Some literary critics use the term *ġazal* to refer to poems about women and love. Others prefer to use the terms *nasīb* or *tašbīb*. According to Rais Fatima, these terms are distinct from each other, and the term *ġazal* encompasses in its meaning the other two terms. R. Fatima, "A critical study of the poetry of ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa", *Islamic Culture*, 52 (1978), pp. 39-55. According to Vadet, *tašbīb* means "*plaisanterie*", and it is the first step towards courtesy: "*Du tašbīb on passe à la galanterie et de la galanterie à la courtoisie*". J.C. Vadet, *L'esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de l'Hégire*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1958, p. 102. Western Arabists have made a distinction between *nasīb* and *ġazal*, and scholars such as Renate Jacobi and Thomas Bauer have defined these terms according to their differences in function and content. As a result, the *nasīb* can be differentiated from the *ġazal*, since its primary function is to serve as the introduction to the *qaṣīda*. In terms of content, the *ġazal* can be addressed to a male or a female lover, whereas the *nasīb* is only ever addressed to a woman. T. Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts,* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998 (Diskurse der Arabistik 2). Another important difference is that in the *ġazal* the beloved is depicted as being present, whereas in the *nasīb* the beloved is unattainable. In addition, in the *nasīb*, there are many references to Bedouin places. Given these differences, some scholars, such as M. Jagonak, have questioned the hitherto accepted idea that the *ġazal* emerged from the *nasīb*. They put forth the hypothesis instead that the two forms perhaps developed from different traditions. M. Jagonak, *Das Bild der Liebe im Werk des Dichters Gamil ibn Ma'mar. Eine Studie zur ʿudritische Lyrik in der arabischen Literatur des späten 7. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008 (Diskurse der Arabistik, 13).

in the fervent love of Maǧnūn for Laylā.

ʿUmar was a member of the tribe of Qurayš, of the clan Maḫzūm, and within the family Rabīʿa, he belonged to the branch founded by al-Muġīra, his grandfather.[7] He was a member of the aristocracy, which at that time distanced itself from the political struggles for power and sought a life of pleasure. Odette Petit describes ʿUmar thus: "*Revêtu de ces vêtements de soie précieuse, il se promène à travers la ville accompagné de 'fityān', jeunes aristocrates comme lui, ou de chanteurs, dont les plus célèbres furent ses amis*."[8]

Ṯurayyā was a Quraysite too and lived in the neighborhood of Aǧyād in Mecca, where ʿUmar's family had a residence. Thus, it is likely that the couple met when they were young. ʿUmar was a native of Medīna but spent much of his life in Mecca. The life of wealthy urban people such as ʿUmar was carried out between the centers of the Ḥiǧāz region at the time: Medīna, Mecca and al-Ṭāʾif. They spent the winter mostly in Mecca and in the summer lived in Medīna or in the mountains of al-Ṭāʾif. In the latter region, Ṯurayyā's family owned a house "*qu'on appelait pompeusement alors un château*".[9] The families' emigrations to these cities furthered the encounters between the young ʿUmar and the slightly older Ṯurayyā, but it was also during those periods of travel that the two lovers were separated from each other.

ʿUmar was not accepted by Ṯurayyā's family; they did not want a Don Juan-type such as him to be her husband. Therefore, she was married to the Syrian Suhayl ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. ʿUmar suffered as a result, but not enough to put an end to his relationships with other women, affairs that he maintained during his love affair with Ṯurayyā. Of course, when she found out about this, she became furious. Yet despite all these obstacles and difficulties in their relationship, Ṯurayyā was the only woman to whom the poet displayed some constancy in his love.[10] Unlike other amorous adventures of his, ʿUmar's relationship with Ṯurayyā has some characteristics of a *courtly love* affair, and these characteristics certainly influenced al-Šayzarī's decision to include the story in *RQ*.

"Ṯurayyā's Farewell"

ʿUmar bids farewell to Ṯurayyā when she leaves with her new husband, Suhayl ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Al-Šayzarī tells us: "He stood up, rose on his horse and stopped

---

7 This is the reason why he was known as "the Maḫzūmite" or "the Muġīrite". Sometimes he is called Abū al-Ḫaṭṭāb, probably owing to the admiration of his family for the second calif ʿUmar ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb. O. Petit, *Poèmes d'amour d'Omar ibn Abī Rabīʿa*, Paris: Publisud, 1993, p. 37.

8 O. Petit, *Poèmes d'amour*, p. 34.

9 *Ibid*., p. 35.

10 J.C. Vadet, *L'esprit courtois*, p. 115.

to look at them as they left. His gaze continued to follow them until they disappeared from sight and he recited."[11]

The long version in the *Dīwān* begins with the poet's lament for the departure of his beloved and his questions addressed to the remains of the camp:

1. *yā ṣāḥibayya qifā nastaḫbiri-ṭ-ṭalalā / ʿan baʿḍi man ḥallahu*[12] *bi-l-ʾamsi mā faʿalā//*
[Oh, my two companions! Stop, both of you, to ask the traces of the deserted campsite about the one who halted there yesterday, about what he did!]

2. *fa-qāla lī-r-rabʿu lammā ʾan waqaftu bihi / ʾinna-l-ḫalīṭa ʾaǧadda-l-bayna fa-ḥtamalā*[13]*//*
[The camp told me when I stopped at it: "The tribe hurried up the separation by departing".]

3. *wa-ḫādaʿatka-n-nawā ḥattā raʾaytuhumū / fī-l-faǧri yaḥtaṯṯu ḥādī ʿayrihim zaǧalā*[14]*//*
[She lied to you about her intentions: you saw them (leave) at dawn, the leader of the caravan urging on the camels, his voice raised.]

4. *lammā waqafnā nuḥayyīhim wa qad ṣaraḫat*[15]*/ hawātifu-l-bayni fa-stawlat bihim ʾuṣulā//*
[When we stopped there, we greeted them (i.e. the tribesmen that had moved on), and the screaming ghosts of the separation had already yelled and had overwhelmed them in the twilight.]

The image of the weeping poet standing at the remains of the camp next to his companions also occurs in other poems by ʿUmar,[16] as does the interrogation of the camp remains, which usually do not answer the poet's questions. Yet here, they speak of the hurry of the beloved to depart. The poetic image of the shouting voice of the caravan leader urging on the camels is set against the poet's shouting and weeping in his attempt to prevent the departure of the tribe, voiced in the screaming ghosts of the campsite.

Then follows ʿUmar's description of Ṯurayyā's beauty and fine features, such as her hair, eyes and mouth.[17] The opening line of verse 5, which expresses Ṯurayyā's lament about her unavoidable departure determined by fate, contrasts (*muṭābaqa*)

---

11 *RQ*, pp. 66-67. Meter: *basīṭ*. When necessary, I will footnote the differences between the version of the poem in *RQ* and the version in ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Rabīʿa, *Der Diwan. Nach den Handschriften zu Cairo und Leiden: mit einer Sammlung anderweit überlieferter Gedichte und Fragmente*, ed. Paul Schwarz, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2004 (repr. ed. Leipzig, 1901-1909), pp. 136-137, poem 188.

12 "*ʿani-llaḏī ḥallahu*", in *RQ*, p. 66.

13 "*fa-rtaḥalā*", *ibid.*, p. 66.

14 This line is missing in *RQ*. The same holds for the verses 5-16; 19-20; 22 and 25-28.

15 "*hatafat*" in *RQ*, p. 66. "*šaḥaṭat naʿāmatu-l-bayni*" in (ed.) Schwarz, *Der Diwan*, p. 136.

16 Ed. Schwarz, *Der Diwan*, pp. 116-117.

17 These motifs are listed in *al-Tašbīhāt* by Ibn Abī ʿAwn and *al-Tašbīhāt* by Ibn al-Kattāni. A. Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic themes in Hebrew Andalusian poetry*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, p. 173 and *ff.*

with ʿUmar's observation that she had made no effort reschedule their appointment earlier:

5. *qāmat tarāʾā li-ḥaynin sāqahu qadarun / wa qad narā ʾannahā lan tasbiqa-l-ʾağalā//*
[She stood up to look at the face of the misfortune that divine foreordainment had brought – but we had already seen that she would not hasten the fixed meeting –]
6. *bi-fāḥimin mukraʿin sūdin ġadāʾiruhu / taṯnī ʿalā-l-matni minhu wāridan ğaṯilā*[18]//
[with perfumed black hair of black locks folded on her back,[19] long, dense (that is tangled and soft).]
7. *wa muqlatay naʿğatin ʾadmāʾa ʾaslamahā / ʾaḥwā-l-madāmiʿi ṭāwī-l-kašḥi*[20] *qad ḫaḏalā*
[And the two white eyes of a female sheep that has been abandoned by the one with black tear ducts (i.e. the male sheep). The one with the slim waist had already left.]
8. *wa nayyiri-n-nabti ʿaḏbin bāridin ḫaṣirin / ka-l-ʾuqḥuwāni ʿuḏābin ṭaʿmuhu ratilā*[21]//
[And with gorgeous straight teeth, agreeable, fresh, cold like chamomile with its beautiful taste. Well-ordered,]
9. *ka-ʾanna ʾisfinṭatan šībat bi-ḏī šabamin / min ṣawbi ʾazraqa habbat rīḥuhu šamalā//*
[similar to the flavored grape mixed with the cold water of a blue cloud that lets down rain, which the wind has blown to the north]
10. *wa-l-ʿanbara-l-ʾaklafa-l-masḥūqa ḫālaṭahu / wa-z-zanğabīla wa rāha-š-šāmi wa-l-ʿasalā//*
[and like the smashed russet ambergris mixed therewith and like ginger and wine from Syria and like honey.]
11. *tašfī-ḍ-ḍağīʿa bihi wahnan ʿawāriḍuhā / ʾiḏā taġawwara hāḏā-n-nağmu wa-ʿtadalā//*
[Her teeth restore the companion's health at night; meanwhile the Pleiades set and sink to the sky-line.]

In these verses, the metaphors employed by ʿUmar to describe Ṯurayyā contain several elements of the extant nature of a Bedouin landscape. Ṯurayyā's white eyes are those of a female sheep and contrast with the black tear ducts of the male sheep that has abandoned her. In the previous verse, the perfumed locks of Ṯurayyā's black hair, which is thick, long, and folded at her back, contrast, in turn, with the whiteness of her eyes.[22] The same can be said of the allusion in verse 7 to the thin waist of the beloved, an attribute that frequently contrasts with the full buttocks.[23] Ṯurayyā's teeth, straight and clean, are portrayed as chamomile petals (*ʾuqḥuwān*) or flavored grapes (*ʾisfinṭata*) mixed with water. This combination confers to her saliva a delicious taste that lasts all night to please the

18 "*ğaṯalā*", in (ed.) Schwarz, *Der Diwan*, p. 136.

19 lit. "his back".

20 "*lašaḥi*", *ibid*. p. 136.

21 "*ʿiḏābin*", *ibid*.

22 There are multiple examples of the dark-light contrast in Ibn Abī ʿAwnʾ *Tašbīhāt*. A. Schippers, "Hebrew Andalusian and Arabic Poetry: Descriptions of Fruit in the Tradition of 'Elegants' or 'zurafa'", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 33 (autumn 1988) 2, pp. 219-232; p. 207.

23 For an overview of its use, see T. Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*, pp. 312-314.

lover, as verse 11 tells us. The use of alliteration in verse 9 (*šībat bi-ḏī šabamin*) intensifies the idea of the mixture of which her saliva is composed: cold water and wine, in contact with her lips, the color of which is comparable to russet ambergris powder. ʿUmar can enjoy the memory of the taste of her mouth all night and, as a result, take respite from his lovesickness for a while.

In the following verses, Ṯurayyā speaks with her female companions. It is usual in poetry of this style and era, and indeed in other poems by ʿUmar, for the lady to be portrayed in the company of other women of her clan. In this poem, these women give her counsel to help her cope after she has learned of ʿUmar's slanders about her. He has broken their pact and endangered her honor:

12. *qālat ʿalā riqbatin yawman li-ǧāratihā / mā taʾmurīna fa-ʾinna-l-qalba qad tubilā*[24]//
[One day, she said with alarm to her neighbor: "What would you advise me if the heart is afflicted?]

13. *wa hal liya-l-yawma min ʾuḫtin muʾassiyyatin / minkunna ʾaškū ʾilayhā baʿḍa mā ʿamilā*[25]//
[Is there today among you a sister to give me solace and to whom I can complain about some of the things he has done?"]

14. *fa ǧāwabathā ḥaṣānun ġayru fāḥišatin / bi-raǧʿi qawlin wa ʾamrin lam yakun ḫaṭilā//*
[A polite, noble lady answered her and gave her a word and an instruction that were not idle talk:]

15. *ʾiqnay ḥayāʾaki fī sitrin wa fī karamin / fa-lasti ʾawwala ʾunṯā ʿulliqat raǧulā//*
["(Protect) your bashfulness with modesty and with noble-mindedness, as you are not the first female being attached to a man!"]

16. *lā tuẓhirī ḥubbahu ḥattā ʾurāǧiʿahu / ʾinnī saʾakfīkihi ʾin lam ʾamut ʿaǧalā//*
["Don't express your love for him until I test him. I shall protect you against him, that is if I don't die first."]

17. *ṣaddat biʿādan wa qālat li-llatī maʿahā / bi-llāhi lūmīhi fī baʿḍi-llaḏī faʿalā//*
[She (Ṯurayyā) turned, went away and said to the person who was with her: "By God! Blame him for something he's done!"]

18. *wa ḥaddiṯīhi bi-mā ḥuddiṯti wa-stamiʿī / māḏā yaqūlu wa lā taʿyay bihi ǧadalā*[26]//
["Tell him what you have been told! And listen to what he has to say! Yet we don't want to argue with him]

19. *ḥattā yarā ʾanna mā qāla-l-wušātu lahu / fīnā ladayhi ʾilaynā kullahu nuqilā*[27]//
[until he sees that what the slanderers have told him about us being with him, all of it, has been reported to us.]

20. *wa ʿarrifīhi bihi ka-l-hazli wa-ḥtafiẓī / fī ġayri maʿtabatin ʾan tuġḍibī-r-raǧulā//*
[Ask him about it in a teasing way and take care to do it without blame so that you do

---

24 "*šuġilā*", *ibid.*

25 This line is missing in (ed.) Schwarz, *Der Diwan*.

26 "*ḥuddiṯtu*", "*wa lā naʿnī bihi*", *ibid.*, p. 137.

27 "*kullahu*" [*sic*], *ibid.*

not rouse the man's anger!]

21. *fa-ʾinna ʿahdī bihī*[28] *wa-ḷḷāhu yaḫfaẓuhu / wa ʾin ʾatā-ḏ-ḏanba mimman yakrahu-l-ʿaḏalā*[29]//

[Indeed my promise is to him, God would protect it! Even if he has committed an offense against the one who detests the blame.]

22. *law ʿindanā-ġtība ʾaw nīlat naqīṣatuhu / mā ʾāba muġtābuhu min ʿindanā ǧaḏilā*[30]//

[If any of us has been slandered (while absent) or criticized, then the one among us who has being slandered is not happy."]

Of course, Ṯurayyā is not happy about having been slandered behind her back! Her conversation with her companions about her concerns begins at verse 13 and is divided into three sections. In the first section, Ṯurayyā tries to find among her closest companions someone who can counsel her. It is appropriate for a lady of Ṯurayyā's high ranking to be in the company of other women who amuse and serve her. A noble lady advises Ṯurayyā to be modest and to protect her honor, for she belongs to one of the richest and best-known families of the region. It would bring shame on Ṯurayyā if her relationship with a Don Juan-type such as ʿUmar were to be publicly known. Furthermore, her feelings of love must be kept secret (*kitmān*).[31] But Ṯurayyā needs to know whether what has been reported to her is true. Therefore, (in the second verse) she sends one of her friends to talk to ʿUmar. This messenger is crucial in sending messages and arranging dates between the lovers. In the third verse, Ṯurayyā gets word from the messenger and says to her friend – and probably also slave – that she must question ʿUmar to find out if he has been faithful to her, but she must do it tactfully so that he does not become angry. This is because, even though he has acted wrongly, she stills wants to keep their love's promise. Having reached this point, the poem continues with what we can call ʿUmar's *reply* to the insecurities and doubts about him that Ṯurayyā has expressed. He defends himself against her accusations and makes clear that the *kāšiḥ* and the *wāšī* – the secret enemy or slanderer – are the real obstacles for their love:

23. *qultu-smaʿī fa-laqad ʾablaġti fī laṭafin / wa laysa yaḫfā ʿalā ḏī-l-lubbi man hazalā*[32]//

[I said: "Listen! You have exaggerated your kindness and it is not hidden from an understanding person who the joker is."]

24. *hāḏā ʾarādat bihi buḫlan li-naʿḏirahā / wa qad narā ʾannahā lan*[33] *taʿdama-l-ʿilalā*//

---

28 "*bihim*", *ibid.*

29 "*ʿuḏulā*", *ibid.*, p. 137.

30 "*ʿindinā*", *ibid.*

31 This is the central theme of chapter five of *RQ*.

32 "*luṭufin*", *ibid.*, p. 137. "*bulliġti*" in RQ p. 67.

33 "*ʾarā ʾannahā lā*" in *RQ* p. 67.

[This is what she wanted, out of avarice, so that we would excuse her, and I already saw that she would not have a lack of excuses.]

25. *mā summiya-l-qalbu ʾillā min taqallubihi / wa lā-l-fuʾādu fuʾādan ġayra ʾan ʿaqalā//*
[The heart was only named after its inconstancy, and a heart is not a heart without being intelligent.]

26. *ʾammā-l-ḥadīṯu-llaḏī qālat ʾutītu bihi / fa-mā ʿanītu bihi ʾiḏ ǧāʾanī ḥawilā//*
[As for the news she said I came with, I'm not concerned about it since word of the ruses has reached me.]

27. *mā ʾin ʾaṭaʿtu bihā*[34] *bi-l-ġaybi qad ʿalimat*[35] */ maqālata-l-kāšiḥi-l-wāšī ʾiḏā maḥalā//*
[Indeed I (never) obeyed her with respect to the absence! I was already aware of the sayings of the secret enemy, the slanderer, when he was plotting.]

28. *ʾinnī li-ʾarǧiʿuhu fihā bi-saḫṭatihi*[36] */ wa qad ʾatānī yuraǧǧī ṭāʿatī nafalā//*
[That, indeed, I would return to her his indignation (i.e. of the *kāšiḥ*), he came to me asking to present my obedience as gift (to her).]

ʿUmar does not agree with Ṯurayyā's decision to distance herself from him. According to his view, the separation is not necessary, and it is only the result of the plotting of the *kāšiḥ* and *wāšī* mentioned above. He presents to her his obedience as compensation for the damage caused by the slanderer.

ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā's love affair in Rawḍat al-qulūb

The changes that al-Šayzarī makes to the existing reports about ʿUmar in the prose section that precedes the poem written to Ṯurayyā show to what extent the stories about ʿUmar and his love affairs were deep-rooted in the collective consciousness of the audiences. Al-Šayzarī takes this for granted when he freely selects and reorders the material and presents the traditional reports to the reader in a new manner.[37] Al-Šayzarī selects some anecdotes and poems from various parts of the fourth section of *Kitāb al-Aġānī*, in which the reports about Ṯurayyā are

34 "*wa mā ʾaqarra lahā*", (ed.) Schwarz, *Der Diwan*, p. 137.

35 "*ʿalimat*", *ibid.*, p. 137.

36 "*suḫṭatihi*", *ibid.*, p. 137.

37 Regarding this issue, the words of Ulrich Marzolph are instructive: "Factual narratives can be fictionalized by stripping them of their original historical garments and by placing them in a different environment in terms of time, protagonists, locality, and even motivation. On the other hand, fictional narratives can be factualized by supplying them with a credible, reliable or otherwise apparently factual garb and by fitting them together with other narratives whose factuality is known or accepted beyond doubt". U. Marzolph, "'Focusees' of jocular fiction in classical Arabic Literature", in S. Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the framework of non-fictional Arabic literature*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998, p. 120. This is, in my view, undoubtedly the case with ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā.

included,[38] and puts them together to compose a love story. He uses materials from the sections about the *nisba* of Ṯurayyā[39] and also from the sections about her marriage with Suhayl.[40] Some elements within the story match the concept of *courtly love*. For instance, love is conceived of as a disease that brings sorrow: the lover is unhappy and his suffering is never-ending. Despite some Greek and Hellenistic influence here, the link between love and sickness is an authentic element of Arabic love poetry. Love is a physical condition in which the body is in the grip of the mind. The eyes reflect the troubled mind and reveal the secret feelings of the lover. If the lover is truly in love, the lover's eyes are full of suffering and tears, because a crying lover is usually considered to be a happy lover.

In Arabic poetry of this era, it is also common that when the love affair comes to its end, the poet never sees his beloved again. Both lovers exchange letters to express their love, and a good example of this can be found in this story of ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā. Other *courtly* elements appear in *RQ*: the coquetry of the lady, her companions, the slanderers, the threat of the departure or exile (*hiǧra*) and nostalgia. Noteworthy in *RQ* is the absence of physical description of Ṯurayyā, contrary to the long version of the *Dīwān* analyzed above. Moreover, the prose paragraphs in *RQ* refer only indirectly to her beauty. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the lover fears the departure of his beloved, is tormented and suffers from homesickness. The prose section in *RQ* begins with a summary of the relationship of ʿUmar with Ṯurayyā: he is passionately in love with her and dedicates verses to her. Al-Šayzarī again takes it for granted here that the reader is acquainted with the character of Ṯurayyā. In contrast to Abū al-Faraǧ, who discusses her genealogy extensively, he gives little commentary about her roots, citing only the last transmitter of al-Iṣbahānīs *isnād*, Salama ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maḫzūmī.[41] Al-Šayzarī takes this passage almost *verbatim* from *al-Aġānī*, and hence there are only a few variations and additions. One of these is the inclusion of the reason why ʿUmar goes to the fruit sellers from al-Ṭāʾif every day to ask news of Ṯurayyā when she is ill: he needs to hear about her health to calm his troubled heart – "this was because of the intensity of the desire for her and his passionate love", al-Šayzarī remarks. In *al-Aġānī*, this comment is lacking, yet it is included in *RQ* because it encapsulates the thematic essence of the chapter in which the story is

38 Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aġānī*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Baǧāwī et al., al-Qāhira: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya ʿĀmma li-al-Taʾlīf wa-al-Našr, 1389-1394 [1970-1974]; H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs. Compilation and the author's craft in Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī's Kitāb al-Aġānī*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

39 *al-Aġānī*, pp. 209-211.

40 *al-Aġānī*, pp. 230-243.

41 In *Kitāb al-Aġānī* he is referred to as "Maslama ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maḫzūmī". *al-Aġānī*, p. 211.

included: desire and yearning for the beloved. A noteworthy detail in this passage is that whereas in *al-Aġānī* ʿUmar meets Ṯurayyā in the company of her two sisters – al-Ruḍayyā and Umm Uthmān – in *RQ* the poet meets with her alone.[42]

Al-Šayzarī omits an important element in al-Faraǧ's account, namely the relationship of ʿUmar with another woman, Ramla, and his subsequent break-up with Ṯurayyā because of her jealousy. The couple reunites through the intermediation of ʿUmar's best friend, Ibn Abī ʿAtīq. Although *RQ* mentions ʿUmar's relationships with other women such as Umm Kulṯum, his love for Ṯurayyā is depicted as monogamous, and to a certain extent this exclusivity makes the love of ʿUmar comparable to the *courtly love* of the troubadours. As a courtly lover, ʿUmar is not allowed to show any interest in women other than Ṯurayyā, who is a *lady*, and the only one who has a place in the poet's heart. In the conventions of courtly love, however, such a commitment is not required of the lady. Rather, convention dictates that she should be married to another man, preferably to someone with whom she cannot be in love. This is the role played by Suhayl, the Syrian husband, whose background and personality are the opposite of Ṯurayyā's upbringing and character. Not without reason, claims ʿUmar in *RQ*:

> Oh you who have engaged Ṯurayyā with Suhayl // may God protect you! How did they meet?
> She is Syrian as she ascends// but if he ascends, he is Yemeni.[43]

The character of Suhayl appears unexpectedly, just as abruptly as he appears in *al-Aġānī*. Whereas al-Iṣbahānī discusses at length whether the correct name of the spouse might be Suhayl ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz or Abū al-Abyāḍ Suhayl ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, before finally settling on the former, al-Šayzarī accepts Suhayl's name as a matter of course. Again, it is clear that the author of *RQ* does not attach much importance to the historical accuracy of his sources; rather his primary aim is to narrate a love story. At this point, al-Šayzarī makes the story more exciting to the reader by delaying the marriage of Ṯurayyā with Suhayl by depicting them getting engaged first. "And Suhayl asked for her hand," he says. These words leave open the chance of a *happy ending* for ʿUmar, whose passion rapidly grows, and who seeks the help of Abū Musʿada ibn ʿUmar, *amīr* of Mecca, in the hope that he might still be able to marry Ṯurayyā. Unfortunately, the *amīr* of Mecca betrays him. He asks ʿUmar to go to Yemen, an order that he cannot refuse. The ruse of the

---

42 *al-Aġānī* gives other information, and sometimes the couple is left alone. However, in this story, this is not the case.

43 *RQ*, p. 65. Al-Ṯurayyā is the Arabic name for the star cluster known as Pleiades, and Suhayl designates Canopus, the second-brightest star in the night sky, to which is attributed the popular connotations of cowardice and instability. The verse refers to two different positions in the sky.

amīr removes any obstacle to Suhayl marrying Ṯurayyā. In *al-Aġānī*, these events are also narrated, but in a more pragmatic way: although the marriage between Suhayl and Ṯurayyā takes place in secret, it is conducted immediately, while ʿUmar is in Yemen attending some affairs of the *amīr*.[44] The element of the betrayal of the *amīr* is omitted, and in this way, *al-Aġānī*'s narration does not take into account the reader of a love story, the reader whose own heart is perhaps also filled with the passion of love. The passionate moments, the historicity of which Vadet doubts,[45] multiply at the end of this passage, when Ṯurayyā and ʿUmar cry, separately and together, and when the poet witnesses the departure of the new couple, Suhayl and Ṯurayyā. Whereas in *al-Aġānī* they simply disappear into the desert, in *RQ* they vanish out of sight and ʿUmar is left behind with a broken heart. *RQ* then quotes ʿUmar's poem, "Ṯurayyā's Farewell". The story goes on and the next scene takes place in Mecca. In *al-Aġānī*, this scene begins immediately after the marriage of Ṯurayyā with Suhayl, whereas in *RQ* the order is as follows: the marriage, the ruse of Abū Musʿada and pursuit through the desert and, finally, the scene in Mecca. This order is chosen by al-Šayzarī so that ʿUmar's love letter to Ṯurayyā (quoted below) will seem, if possible, even more moving to the reader. The events in Mecca, *i.e.* the family of ʿUmar waiting for him and the threat of the caliph, do not appear in *al-Aġānī*. Yet the characteristics of the letter – the perfume, the buckle and the jewelry – are kept. Ṯurayyā does not delay in her answer to ʿUmar, which coincides with the end of their relationship:[46]

A letter came to me, of a kind that people had never seen//
    soaked in camphor and musk and amber
and its title, a greeting from me to you//
    My ardent passion had, a long time ago already, reduced my patience.
Its paper is scented, and the band around it//
    has a buckle that has a pure red sapphire and jewels
and the sender is a person whose heart is crazy,//
    the errant lover assaulted by memories.[47]

---

44 *al-Aġānī*, p. 235.

45 "les épisodes les plus fameux ne sont que forgeries à côté desquelles subsiste, modeste, la vérité historique. Ils furent refaits à date postérieure, les adieux émouvants du poète à son aimée au moment d'une séparation soi-disant définitive et copiés probablement sur les modèles abondants qu'offraient ou qu'avaient fini par offrir à la suite d'une élaboration analogue Ǧamīl, Kuṯayyir et les autres amoureux parfaits", J.C. Vadet, *L'esprit courtois*, p. 116. Al-Iṣbahānī already notices that some reports he had heard about the couple were weak and that some elements in the letters between ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā seemed to be forgeries.

46. *RQ*, p. 68.

47 Meter: *ṭawīl*. According to Hilary Kilpatrick, both the scented ink as well as the envelope made from the flower of the palm, musk and grey amber, wrapped with a band and adorned with a

After her missive, they never see each other again. It is remarkable that in the story told by al-Šayzarī, the poet is the one who constantly runs after the lady: he rushes to see her when he hears that she is ill, he pursues her through the desert and, finally, his passion brings him to Medīna. There, his family prevents him from seeing her, but he cannot stop himself writing her a love letter. In *al-Aġānī*, the lady runs after the poet too. This results in humorous situations, such as when she confuses ʿUmar with his brother and jumps on him; the brother is furious.[48] In *RQ*, these elements are put aside, and, therefore, ʿUmar seems constantly and inevitably attached to Ṯurayyā, the protagonist of a story whose thematic thread, according to al-Šayzarī's intentions, is desire and yearning for the beloved.

Conclusions

Both the poem by ʿUmar analyzed above and ʿUmar's love affair with Ṯurayyā are, in *Rawḍat al-qulūb*, undoubtedly influenced by the genre of narratives about love to which the work belongs. I have given evidence that Al-Šayzarī's treatment of the materials of his main source, *Kitāb al-Aġānī* by Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī, is not arbitrary; rather, he aims to tell a story that will fit the main topic of the chapter in which it is included: desire and yearning for the beloved, wherein the concept of *courtly love* plays a major role.

SUMMARY

The subject of this paper is the love poetry of ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa to his beloved Ṯurayyā. It focuses on one of his poems, "Ṯurayyā's Farewell", which is included in the twelfth-century treatise on love, *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-al-maḥbūb*, written by the Syrian author ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Šayzarī (fl. 1174 A.D.) With reference to the 2003 critical edition of *Rawḍat* edited by G. Kanāzi, to Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġānī* and to the *Dīwān* by ʿUmar, I discuss the content and the main themes of the poem as well as al-Šayzarī's treatment of the existing reports about the couple ʿUmar and Ṯurayyā, in which the influence of *courtly love* plays a major role.

---

buckle that contained a red sapphire and jewels, are posterior additions and distinctive elements of the elegant ʿAbbasid society in Baġdād. H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*, p. 117.

48 *al-Aġānī* pp. 232-233. A Spanish translation of this passage can be found in M. Subh, *Historia de la literatura árabe clásica*, Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2002, pp. 333-334.