

APPROACHES TO ARABIC LITERATURE

General Editor: Kamal Abu Deeb

No. 2

Jāhiz

THE EPISTLE
ON SINGING-GIRLS
OF JĀHIZ

Edited with translation and commentary by

A. F. L. Beeston

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7

TRANSLATION

- 1 In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful. From Abū Musā b. Ishāq b. Musā and Muḥammad b. Khālīd Khudhār-khudhār and 'Abdallāh b. Ayyūb b. Abī Sāmīr and Muḥammad b. Ḥammad kātib-i-rāshid and al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm b. Rabāḥ and Abū l-Khiyār and Abū l-Rattāl and Khāqān b. Ḥamid and 'Abdallāh b. al-Haytham b. Khālīd al-Yazīdī known as 'Scalpel' and 'Alik b. al-Hasan and Muḥammad b. Harun 'the Cupping-glass' and their friends, people who enjoy prosperity, whose choice is pleasure, and who are well provided with singing-girls and companions who furnish regular banquets and varied wines, who hold themselves aloof from accepting other peoples' views, men of intelligence and distinction, mirth and generosity: unto ignorant and boorish folk with rough dispositions and deplorable taste.
- 2 Greeting to anyone who is blessed with rightmindedness, who prefers his own lot in life, and who understands the value of prosperity. For nobody can be duly thankful for prosperity who is not acquainted with it and its worth; and nobody receives increase of it who is not duly thankful for it; nor will it stay long with one who bears it ill. It has been said, 'To bear wealth is harder than to bear poverty'; but the duty of thankfulness is easier than the misery of endurance. God make us and you to be numbered among the thankful!
- 3 Now, not everyone who refrains from stating his case is vainly mistaken in his belief; and not everyone who does state his case (but without some good evidence to support him) is justified in his pretensions. The just judge is the one who is not over-hasty in giving a verdict without exhaustive examination of the litigants' pleas, without debate being conducted between the litigants present and a fair hearing being given to them, and without the pleading reaching its fullest extent of exposition, and without the judge sharing (equally with the litigants) in an understanding of

the point about which they are at issue: so that he should not be in a position of displaying a better comprehension of the superficial aspect of the ruling which it falls on him to give, than of its real nature; nor of being more knowledgeable about the outward aspect of that affair (over which he has to handle the dispute), than about the inner reality thereof. Consequently, prudent and clear-sighted judges are accustomed to be silent for a long time, and to give careful and deliberate attention: in order that decision may follow knowledge of the facts, and judgment follow clarity of comprehension.

4 We have hitherto refrained, out of moderation, from stating our case in the matter with which this letter of ours is concerned; on the ground that Truth is sufficiently attested by its own obviousness, and is self-evident independently of being demonstrated by any external proof. For one uses the obvious to demonstrate the recondite, and the accident to demonstrate the substance; there is no need to demonstrate something obvious by means of something recondite. We know that our opponents, for all their falsification and glozing of facts, will never achieve success and triumph in the opinion of just-minded persons, without a hearing being accorded to us; and that any assertion which its supporter fails to establish is as good as non-existent (or rather, it is an embarrassment and trouble to the proponent, until such time as it brings him finally to the joy of success or the calm of having abandoned hope).

5 [We maintained this attitude of reserve] until the situation became desperate and patience was exhausted, and there came to our ears the censorious remarks of a certain group of people: to which if we had refrained from giving an answer, and from engaging in altercation about them (knowing full well that it is the nature of the envious man to scorn the object of his envy, and a quality of the have-not to decry and belittle the thing of which he is deprived, and to vilify those who do possess it), we would have had every right so to refrain. For envy is an inevitable punishment of the envious, occasioned by the [misery] which it brings on him and by the disgrace to him involved in his refractoriness towards his Lord, the belittling of His bounty, and the railing against His decree; [all this is] accompanied by persistent wretchedness, lasting misery and heavy sighing, and preoccupation with

countless unattainable objectives. The grateful man is grateful for some definite thing; but the envy of the envious is directed towards that which has no bounds, and the more widely the objects of his envy are spread, the more extensive is his envy.

6. But we have now begun to fear that an ignorant person might suppose that our refraining from rejoinder was an admission of the truth of the allegation, and that our turning a blind eye to the slanderer was an inability to refute the slander. So we have set down in this letter of ours some arguments against him who reproaches us for possessing singing-girls, and abuses us for carousing with our friends, and resents our displaying and talking about our prosperity. We hope to be justified because we are the victims of aggression, and the aggressor has been the greater offender; 'the writer of truth is eloquent' (a dictum also recorded in the form 'the tongue of truth is eloquent'); the spirit of a man in jeopardy cannot be withstood; and the assault of the long-suffering man, slow to wrath, is irresistible. So we have set forth the argument for casting aside jealousy in respect of a thing which is neither illicit nor even suspect. Then we describe the excellence of the bounty bestowed on us, and refute the claims of our opponents in a statement concisely summing up our purpose. If in any passage we expatiate, it is for the sake of clarity and the creation of a better understanding; any passage where we use a concentrated and brief style is in order that one may more easily bear with it. For we feel confident that he who speaks at length may be taking [what is really] the shortest way, while the summarizer [has the advantage of being] compendious; what is involved may nevertheless be disentangled, and general principles have detailed applications. In God there is sufficient help!

7 Detailed applications are necessarily referable to their basic principles; ends are linked to their beginnings; clients are subject to their patrons. The phenomena of this world are compounded on a principle of homogeneity, but individually distinguished by mutual contrastingness. One may be a cause for another. Thus rain has as its cause the clouds, while the clouds have as their cause water and moisture. So too the seed has as its cause the grain, and the grain has as its cause the seed; the hen has as its cause the egg and the egg has as its cause the hen; a human being

has as its cause another human being. The sky and all that the regions of the earth contain and all that the earth's wide spaces carry, are for man a chattel and 'a usufruct for a time'. But of all things subservient to his use, the closest to his spirit and the most akin to his soul is the feminine creature; since she was created for him 'that he might find solace in her', and between him and her were ordained love and sympathy. It was needful that this should be so, and that he should be more entitled to her, and have a better right to her, than to anything else with which he has been endowed, because she was created out of him and as part of him and one of his members: and parts of one thing are more conformable and closer to each other than any part of that thing is to a part of any other thing.

8 Women are a 'tillage ground' for men, just as herbage is a provision for those animals for which it has been made a provision. Were it not for the trial and tribulation involved in the fact that certain things are illicit and others licit, and in the keeping of offspring free from doubts of adulterous parentage, and in [the need to ensure] the falling of inheritances into the hands of the legal heirs, no man would be more entitled than any other to any one woman: just as no beast is better entitled than another to graze the pastures watered by the rains. In fact, the situation would have been as the Magians assert it to be, [when they say] 'To a man belongs the closest, and then the next-closest to him by blood or kinship among women'. But religious duty has occasioned the test [of distinguishing some women as illicit for men in general], and has made the general rule subject to particular limitations. It is the same with grassland: this is pasture for mankind and all the beasts, except that part of it in respect of which an explicit prohibition imposes a veto.

9 Now everything which is not prohibited in God's Book and the *Sumnah* of the Prophet is a matter indifferent and free. Human disapproval or approval provides no basis for argument — so long as we do not extract from the existence of the prohibited category a proof of the [positive] goodness of something [indifferent], or an inducement to regard it as having an actual religious sanction. Nor do we know any justification for the feeling of jealous exclusiveness over that which is not

canonically prohibited [to others]. Had it not been for the existence of the canonical prohibition, such jealousy would disappear, and we should have been obliged to admit the argument about whether anyone is specially entitled to women (it having been said that no one is more entitled to them than anyone else, and they are simply like nose-gays or apples that men hand round freely from one to another); hence a man having many would content himself with one of them and share out the rest among his associates. However, once he forms the intention of fulfilling the legal prescription, by distinguishing between the licit and the illicit, Believers rest content with the limit laid down for them and give him a free hand with what they forego.

10 Among bedouin men and women there was no veiling of women; yet in spite of the absence of the veil, they disapproved of sly glances and secret ogling. Nevertheless, they were accustomed to foregather for conversation and evening parties, and might pair off for whispering and joking (the man who was addicted to this being termed *zîr*, [a word] derived from [the verb meaning] 'to visit'). All this would take place under the eyes of the woman's guardians or in the presence of her husband, without these taking exception to conduct not in itself exceptionable, provided they felt secure against any misbehaviour occurring. So, Buthaynah's brother was vexed in his heart with Jamîl because of certain objections to the latter's association with her, and because of an idea that the acquaintanceship was not wholly innocent. He complained of this to her husband, whose alarm was excited by the same thing that had perturbed the brother. So they laid in wait for Jamîl, when he came to visit Buthaynah, with the intention of killing him; but when they had listened to his and her talk, they heard Jamîl saying to her by way of testing her, 'Would you like to do as men and women do for the quenching of love's thirst and the extinguishing of passion's fire?' 'No', said she. 'Why?' he asked. 'Because', she replied, 'true love is spoiled when one has sexual intercourse'. Then Jamîl produced a sword which he had hidden under his garment, saying, 'Had you granted the favour I asked, I would have plunged this into you'. When the two others had heard this, they were prepared to trust him without surveillance and rely on his chastity; they abandoned their intention of killing him and allowed him freedom to see her and talk to her.

11 Men continued to hold converse with women both in Pre-Islam and in [the beginning of] Islam, up to the time when the veil was imposed as a particular duty on the wives of the Prophet. Such converse was the cause of the association between Jamîl and Buthaynah, 'Afrâ' and 'Urwah, Kuthayyir and 'Azzah, Qays and Lubnâ, Asmâ' and Muraqqish, 'Abdallah b. 'Ajlân and Hind. Moreover, noble ladies used to sit and talk to men, and for them to look at each other was neither shameful in Pre-Islam nor illicit in Islam.

12 Dubâ'ah of the Bani 'Amir b. Qurṭ b. 'Amir b. Şa'sa'ah was the wife of 'Abdallah b. Jud'ân for a time, but bore him no children; so Hishâm b. al-Mughayrah al-Makhzûmî sent her a message saying, 'What are you doing with this old man to whom no children can be born? Tell him to divorce you.' She reported this to 'Abdallah, who said to her, 'I fear you are going to marry Hishâm.' But she replied, 'I will not do so.' 'If you do' he rejoined, 'you must pay for a hundred camels to be slaughtered at Ḥazwarah, weave me a garment which will stretch across the space between [the peaks of] al-Akshabân, and perform *ṭawâf* naked.' 'I could not possibly do these things' she said. Then she sent to Hishâm telling him what had taken place, but he sent back a message saying, 'What he demands of you is perfectly easy. What is there to bother you? I am the richest of Quraysh, and my women more numerous than those of any other man of Quraysh, and you are the most lovely of women. Do not refuse his conditions.' So she said to 'Abdallah b. Jud'ân, 'Divorce me, and if I marry Hishâm, I will undertake the things you mentioned.' Then he divorced her, after getting a guarantee from her [for fulfilment of the conditions in the event of her marrying Hishâm]. Hishâm married her, and slaughtered a hundred beasts in her name, and assembled his women, who wove a garment stretching between al-Akshabân, and then she performed the *ṭawâf* naked. Al-Muṭṭalib b. Abî l-Wadâ'ah relates: I observed her as she performed the *ṭawâf*, when I was a youth; I followed her when she had her back to me, and faced her when she came towards me, and I never saw any creature more lovely than her, as she placed her hand over her private parts, reciting, 'Today some of it or all of it may appear, but what does appear I do not make common;'

many a one there is to gaze unwearying on it, a hillock like a goblet casting its clear shadow.

13 Furthermore, ladies up to the present day, both daughters and mothers of caliphs and those below them in rank, perform *ṭawāf* with unveiled faces, for only in that way is a pilgrimage performed properly.

14 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb wedded 'Ātikah bint Zayd b. Nufayl. She had formerly been the wife of 'Abdallah b. Abī Bakr, who left her a widow after stipulating that she should never remarry, on consideration of his bequeathing her a portion of his property over and above her legal share. 'Umar then sought her hand in marriage, and ruled for her that he should give her an equivalent sum of money and she should distribute it in alms in quittance from [her promise to] 'Abdallah b. Abī Bakr. Now she had said in her elegy for 'Abdallah,

I swear that my eye shall not cease to be scalded [with tears] for you, nor my skin to be covered with dust.

When 'Umar espoused her, he gave a wedding feast, and invited the Emigrants and the Helpers; when 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb came in, he made his way over to the bridal bower, lifted the curtain, looked at her, and said,

I swear that my eye shall not cease to be comforted over you, nor my skin to be yellow-dyed.

She was embarrassed and cast her eyes down; and 'Umar was vexed at seeing her embarrassed and upset by 'Alī's reproaching her for breaking her parting promise to her [former] husband, and said, 'What did you mean by saying this?' 'Alī replied, 'It was an impulse which I have satisfied.' Yet you people relate that 'Umar was the most jealous of men; in fact, the Prophet said to him, 'I saw a palace in Paradise and asked whose it was, and was told it was 'Umar's, and I was restrained from going into it simply by my knowledge of your jealous nature.' (to which, however, 'Umar replied, 'Can anyone be jealous of *you*, Prophet of God?'). So that if looking at, and talking and joking with [women] had been occasions of jealousy, certainly 'Umar would have been the first to object [to 'Alī's behaviour], on account of his being particularly jealous; if it had been illicit, he would have prevented it, since there is no doubt of his puritanical respecta-

bility and his competence in legal knowledge.

15 Al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī married Ḥafṣah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān; but al-Mundhir b. al-Zubayr was in love with her. Now al-Ḥasan heard some [ill] report of her, so he divorced her. Al-Mundhir then sought her hand, but she refused him, saying, 'He has committed me.' 'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb then asked for her hand, and she married him. But al-Mundhir carried some scandal about her to 'Āṣim and he divorced her, and al-Mundhir then [again] asked for her hand. People now said to her, 'Marry him, so that men may know that he slandered you unjustly.' So she married him, and men realised that his tales about her had been lies. Then al-Ḥasan told 'Āṣim to ask al-Mundhir for permission for him to visit her and have a talk with her. They did this, and al-Mundhir sought the advice of his brother 'Abdallah, who told him to let them in. So they came in, and she paid more attention to 'Āṣim than to al-Ḥasan, for he was the more free of the two in conversation. Finally, al-Ḥasan said to al-Mundhir, 'Take your wife's hand'; he did so, and al-Ḥasan and 'Āṣim got up and left. But al-Ḥasan was in love with her, and had only divorced her because of al-Mundhir's scandal-mongering about her. One day, al-Ḥasan said to Ibn Abī 'Atīq, 'How about a trip to 'Aqīq?' They started out, but al-Ḥasan turned aside to Ḥafṣah's house and went in to see her, and they had a long conversation before he came out. Later on, he said to Ibn Abī 'Atīq 'How about a trip to 'Aqīq?', to which he assented; but al-Ḥasan [again] stopped at Ḥafṣah's house and went in. On a further occasion he made the same suggestion, but Ibn Abī 'Atīq said, 'Brother, why do you not say outright, How about a trip to Ḥafṣah?' Now in that age, al-Ḥasan was the most virtuous of all his contemporaries, and if there had been any prohibition or disgrace about talking to women and looking at them, he would not have done it; nor would al-Mundhir have permitted it, nor Ibn al-Zubayr have recommended it.

16 This tale and the preceding one disprove the allegation made by the Ḥashwīyyah, that 'the first look is permitted, but the second is forbidden', since there can be no conversation unaccompanied by innumerable glances. Unless indeed, by 'look' it means a forbidden [glance], such as looking on the hair

or underclothes, or what the dress conceals; a thing which is licit for the husband or next-of-kin but forbidden to others.

17 Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr, while sitting with his wife in a tent of his, decorated with embroidery, called in al-Sha'bī and said to him, 'Who is with me in the tent?' 'I do not know, your excellency', was the reply. Then Muṣ'ab lifted the curtain and there was 'Ā'ishah bint Ṭalḥah. Now al-Sha'bī was the chief jurist and scholar of Iraq, and would never have allowed himself to look at her if looking had been forbidden.

18 Mu'āwiyah saw one of his secretaries talking to a slave-girl belonging to his wife Fakhitah bint Qarazah in one of the passages of the palace; later on, the secretary asked for her in marriage, and Mu'āwiyah married her off to him. Then Mu'āwiyah visited Fakhitah's apartment and found her busy over preparing some perfume for her slave-girl's wedding, and said, 'Don't bother about that; I should think the union has taken place some time ago.' Now Mu'āwiyah was a religious leader, but since the conversation he had witnessed implied in his eyes no certain evidence [of misconduct] but a sort of conjectural guess, he did not pass judgment on it or regard it as something definitive. Had he done so, he must have inflicted on the secretary the legal punishment [for fornication].

19 Mu'āwiyah used from time to time to have a slave-girl brought to him and stripped of her clothes in the presence of his courtiers, and he would then place his rod on her sexual organ and say, 'This would have been enjoyment [of sexual intercourse], if it could have found enjoyment.' Then he would say to Ṣa'sa'ah b. Ṣuhān, 'Take her for one of your sons, since she is not permissible for Yazid after what I have done to her.'

20 A caliph, or someone else in a comparable position of power and influence, used never to be without a slave-girl standing behind him to wave fly-whisk and fan, and another to hand him things, in a public audience in the presence of other men.

21 Thus there is the story of the serving girl who overlooked a confidential letter of 'Abdallah b. Marwān to al-Ḥajjāj. When the

contents became public property, he sent a reproachful message to al-Ḥajjāj, quoting the proverb, 'Do you not see how scandalmongers leave no skin unblemished? So do not divulge your secret to anyone else; every confidant has [another] confidant [in turn].' But then he looked round, and realised that the girl had been able to read and had divulged [the secret].

22 Note too the tale of when he felt drowsy, and said to al-Farazdaq, Jarir and al-Akḥṭal, 'Whoever describes drowsiness in a verse with a telling simile and works it out well, shall have this servant girl'. So al-Farazdaq said,

Sleep smote him on the head so that it was as though he had his head cleft open by hard rocks, leaving an ache therein.

To which the caliph replied, 'Damn you, Farazdaq, you've given me a nasty crack on the head.' Then Jarir said, [using the same first hemistich],

... as though he fancied in the blackness of the night ...
(?) ...

'Damn you, you've made me out to be mad', said the caliph. Then he asked al-Akḥṭal to speak; who said,

... as though he were a toper who had soaked up wine among his boon companions.

'Well done,' cried the caliph, 'take the girl.'

23 Moreover, kings and nobles constantly had girls serving various needs, who appeared in the official halls, and women who sat in company with men; such as Khālīṣah the slave-girl of Khayzurān, 'Atabah the slave of Rayṭah bint Abi l-'Abbas, Sukkar and Turkiyyah the slaves of Umm Ja'far, Duqāq the slave of 'Abbāsah, Ḥalūm and Qustantinah, slaves of Umm Ḥabīb the wife of Ḥārūn b. J. . . wayh, and Ḥamdūnah the servant of Naṣr b. al-Sindī b. Shāhik. They used to appear in the presence of men as fine as they could and as prettily adorned as possible, and nobody raised any objection or regarded it as shocking.

24 Ma'mūn once looked at Sukkar and said, 'Are you free or bond?' 'I don't know', she said, 'When Umm Ja'far is angry she says I'm bond, and when she's pleased she says I'm free.' So he said, 'Write to her at once and ask her about this.' She wrote a

letter which she attached to the wing of a carrier-pigeon she had with her, and sent it off to tell Umm Ja'far this. The latter realised what Ma'mūn intended, and wrote back, 'You are free.' Thereupon he married her, giving her a dowry of ten thousand dirhams, and took her off in private straight away and lay with her; then he let her go and ordered the money to be paid to her.

25 An indication that looking at women in general is not prohibited is that a middle-aged spinster will appear before men without any bashfulness. Were this prohibited when she is young, it would not be permissible when she is middle-aged. But this is a matter in which the limits of reasonableness have been overstepped by people who go beyond mere normal jealousy to positive illwill and narrowmindedness, so that they have come to regard this [attitude] as a real duty.

26 Equally, in the past they used not to see any harm in a woman transferring herself to a number of husbands in turn, and not ceasing to do so until prevented by death, so long as men still desired her. Whereas today they censure this, or in some cases regard it as [at least] unseemly. They cold-shoulder a free woman [who remarries] after she has already been married to one husband [previously], and attach social disgrace to the man who espouses her as well, and include both him and her in the blame and shame of such conduct. Yet men will take as a concubine a slave who has been in the hands of innumerable masters. Who, however, can [reasonably] approve of this in a slave and object to it in a free woman? They are not jealous over slaves (who may become mothers of their children or favourites of monarchs), and yet are jealous over free women!

27 Jealousy, if extended to persons outside the limits of those prohibited [to others] by God's sanction, is a vain thing. It is, however, a common characteristic of women, by reason of their frailty, to such an extent that they will be jealous over mere dreams or thoughts. A woman may even have jealous feelings about her own father, and thereby become estranged from his wife or concubine.

28 Singing-girls have been from time immemorial in the entourage of Arab and non-Arab kings. The Persians regarded

singing as a polite accomplishment, the Greeks as philosophy. In the Jāhiliyyah, 'Abdallāh b. Jud'ān had his two 'Crickets';

'Abdallāh b. Ja'far al-Tayyār had slave girls who sang and a singing boy named Badi'. For all this, al-Ḥakam b. Marwān censured him, but he answered, 'What is it to my discredit that I should gather the choicest part of the verses of the Arabs and teach it to the girls, for them to warble and recite with their melodious throats?'

29 Yazīd b. Mu'awiyah listened to music. Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik took Ḥabbābah and Sallamah and brought people in to listen to them. About the former the poet says,

When her lute responds plaintively to her [voice], and beneath its influence the hearing of the noble guests is filled with yearning, and all ears hearken to it in silence, as though they were asleep when they sleep not! and about Sallamah,

Have you not heard her (marvellous as she is), when she raises her voice in song, how skilful is her execution; she renders the thread of the lyric in such a way as to render it to a turtle-dove cooing in her throat.

Yazīd used to listen, and when he was specially moved, he would rend his garment and cry, 'I am transported', and Ḥabbābah would reply, 'Please don't be transported! we need you.'

30 Subsequently, Walīd b. Yazīd was pre-eminent for playfulness and amatory verse; and later rulers followed exactly the same path as this earlier precedent. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, before he came to the caliphal throne, used to be a singer, and a well-known piece he used to sing is,

Stay, my two friends, let us visit Su'ād, for to visit her is nigh at hand, and leave alone the distant bournes.

His also is,

My heart has often visited Su'ād, and my eye hated sleeplessness.

31 We can see no harm in singing, since it is basically only poetry clothed with melody. If [the poetry] is truthful, it is good; if false, then evil. The Prophet has said, 'Some poetry is true wisdom.' 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, 'Poetry is but a form of

speech; that which [as speech] is good, is good [in verse], and that which is evil, evil.' We do not regard the metrical form of poetry as depriving speech of its basic tendency. Metrical form may be present without that fact impairing the speech or nullifying its status as 'true wisdom'. If it be allowed that speech as such is not a prohibited thing, the addition of metre and rhyme to it cannot by any possible argument entail making it prohibited. Equally, the addition of melody to it does not amount to anything prohibited. The rhythm of poetry is of the same category as the rhythm of singing, and the domain of prosody is part of the domain of music: it belongs to the domain of psychology. It is impossible to describe satisfactorily by a verbal definition, but it can be apprehended intuitively just as much as it can be apprehended by prosodic analysis. There is hence no reason for regarding it as prohibited, nor is there any basis for such a view in Qur'ān or Sunnah.

32 If [the objector] regards it as prohibited only on the ground that it distracts one from contemplation of God, we find many things such as tales, food, drink, the visual enjoyment of gardens and bouquets, hunting, sex and other pleasures, which divert and distract one from contemplation of God. Now while we know that to devote one's whole time to the contemplation of God is, for a person to whom it is possible, a more excellent thing, yet provided that a man fulfils his canonically prescribed duty, all these other things are permissible for him; sin [only] attaches to him if he fails to fulfil his canonical duty. If anyone could have been safe from being distracted from the contemplation of God, it would have been the prophets; yet there was Solomon, distracted from prayer by the reviewing of horses 'until the going down of the sun' (so he hamstrung them and severed their necks).

33 Slaves are a variety of merchandise, subject to bargaining and chaffering over price; and both vendor and purchaser need to examine the piece of goods carefully, and subject it to a close scrutiny. For this purpose there is requisite the same sort of ocular selection as is obligatory in relation to all commodities sold. If a thing cannot be priced by measure of capacity, weight, number or linear measurement, it is judged by beauty or ugliness.

Of this the only judge is a person with a trained eye, skilful in his trade. For the quality of beauty is too fine and delicate a thing to be appreciated by just anyone whose eye falls on it. Furthermore, intangible qualities cannot be judged by the witness of the eye alone; were it so, anyone who cast his glance on them would be a competent judge. Yet even in the case of cattle and asses, a correct judgment on them is only formed by someone with a perceptive eye, who must inspect them, form a mental estimate [of the ocular evidence], and transmit that evidence to his intellect; the final judgment on the objects proceeds from the intellect.

34 I must explain to you that beauty lies in both completeness and moderation. By completeness I do not mean any going beyond the standard of moderation, such as a simple increase in tallness of stature, or slenderness of body, or mightiness of limb, or breadth of eye or mouth, such as might surpass that respective feature in men of a balanced physique. For where an excess of that kind occurs, it is a diminution of beauty, even though it can be regarded as an 'addition' in a purely physical sense. There are certain proper limits which circumscribe worldly phenomena, and draw a boundary line around the magnitudes which have been established for them. Anything which goes beyond those bounds either physically or morally (even in religion and wisdom, which are the most excellent phenomena of all) is ugly and to be deprecated.

35 Moderation consists in the balance of a thing — not with reference to quantity, but as in [the expression] 'the balance of the earth' referring to its equilibrium. Psychologically, balance is to be found as between the quasi-parts of the soul. In the human body, balance is a just proportionableness between its various excellencies, and the absence of an excess of one over another; such as occurs when a man with a small snub nose has an enormous eye, or a tiny-eyed man has a big nose, or an insignificant chin accompanies a huge head, or a large face goes with an undernourished skinny body, or a long back with short thighs, or a short back with long thighs, or a breadth of forehead out of proportion to the lower part of the face. One can also speak of 'balance' in the case of buildings, rugs, embroidery,

clothes or canals where water flows: by balance [in all these cases] we mean evenness in design and composition.

36 Certainly, since nobody is prevented from looking at a field of corn or a garden plot, or from enjoying himself in its freshness, or from sniffing its sweet scent, and all this is admitted to be allowable provided he does not stretch out a hand to [interfere with] it all (though if he interferes with the weight of a grain of mustard seed to which he is not entitled, he does that which is not permissible and tastes of forbidden fruit): so too it is with conversing, joking and flirting with singing-girls, shaking hands with them in greeting, or putting a hand on them [merely] in order to make them turn round. Looking is licit provided that there is no admixture of forbidden behaviour. God Himself has allowed an exception [from censure] for 'trifling faults', saying, 'To those who avoid major sins and indecencies, [and commit none] save trifling faults, the Lord is amply forgiving'. 'Abdallah b. Mas'ud, when asked about the interpretation of this verse, replied, 'When a man is close to a woman and goes forward, it is an indecency, but if he holds back it is a trifling fault.' Another Companion says that 'trifling faults' implies kissing and fondling. Others say that it is any [bodily contact] short of actual coitus. And so said the bedouin when asked about the favours he had received from his mistress, 'How near is what God permits to what He forbids!'.

37 If someone says, as the Tradition runs, 'Set a barrier between men's and women's breaths', or says, 'Let not a man be alone in a room with a woman, even if he be called her kinsman; her [true] kinsman [in such a case] is death'; or [if he declares] that association between men and singing-girls is liable to lead to misbehaviour, in view of the way in which he who indulges in such association is exposed to a sexual urge which compulsively drives one on to the commission of sexual indecency, and most of those who resort to singing-girls' houses do so for that purpose and not for mere listening to music or with the intention of purchasing them: then our reply [to all these arguments] is that the laws apply only to overt acts. God does not impose on mankind the duty of passing judgment on what is hidden [in the heart], nor of taking action in respect of [another man's] intentions. A man

is legally reckoned a Muslim on the basis of his overt behaviour, though he may perhaps be [secretly] a heretic. He will be legally counted as legitimate, when possibly the father whose paternity he claims never begot him at all; still, he was 'born on the father's bed', and by general repute is assigned to [that father]. If the witness who testifies for a man on one of these two counts were to be required to produce the absolute truth, no testimony could ever be given on such a subject. If someone frequents our assemblies without disclosing any lineage with which people credit him, or supposing that he does disclose it and we turn a blind eye to it [s dubiousness], then no sin attaches to us.

38 The degree of estimation whereby singing-girls fetch high prices is due to infatuation. If purchases [of them] were made on the same basis as the purchase of ordinary slaves, not one of them would run up to more than the price of a commonplace slave. But most of those who bid a high price for a girl do so because of passion. Such a one may perhaps have been intending to seduce her, thinking this an easier way to satisfy his ardent desire; then this proves impossible for him, and he turns to a legitimate approach, though he had not originally intended this, nor acknowledged that this is a preferable course. So he sells off property and looses his pursestrings, and incurs the burden of social disapproval, until he finally purchases the girl. Thus his captivation by, and addiction to, singing-girls is the very thing in his behaviour which is productive of good. For the affair starts off with his having nothing in mind but his passion for them, but then this is frustrated by the carefulness of the owners, the watchfulness of the custodians, and the strictness of the seclusion in which the girls are kept, so that the lover is forced in the end to making a purchase; whereby sexual intercourse becomes licit and the Devil is the frustrated one.

39 The passion of love is a malady which cannot be controlled. In the same way, attacks of [other] maladies may not be controllable, except by means of dieting. Yet again, one may get hardly any advantage from dieting, in view of the side-effects engendered by the [prescribed] food and the way it overloads the constitution by excessive consumption [of it]. If anyone were able to guard himself from all harm [of that kind] by complete abstinence

from food, the self-doctor would stick to this course while still healthy, but his body would become emaciated and his flesh waste away, so that [in the end] he would be told to adopt a varied diet and advised to pay special attention to palatable things. And even if he were to get over the change in foods and preserve himself by dietary regime, he might still not get over the harm caused by change of air and difference of water.

40. Now I will describe for you the definition of the passion of love, so that you may understand what exactly it is. It is a malady which smites the spirit, and affects the body as well by contagion: just as physical weakness impairs the spirit and low spirits in a man make him emaciated. Love-sickness and its general effect throughout the body is due to the position of the heart in relation to the limbs. The difficulty of curing it arises from the variousness of its causes. For it is compounded of a number of aspects: like a fever attack which is compounded of cold and phlegm, so that anyone who attempts to treat one of the two elements of the disease is ineffective in remedying it and only increases the malady caused by the other element. The stronger the constituent causes of the malady are, the more inveterate it is, and the slower to clear up.

41. Passion is compounded of love and infatuation and natural affinity and habitude of association. It begins with a growing intensity, reaches a climax, and then falls off by natural progression to the stage of complete dissolution and the point of positive revulsion.

42. 'Love' is a term applied to the concept which [linguistic] convention prescribes [as its meaning], and there is no other descriptive term for this. One can say, 'a man loves God', 'God loves the Believer', 'a man loves his child', 'a boy loves his father' or 'loves his friend' or 'his country' or 'his people', and his love can tend in any direction he likes; but none of this can be called passion. One understands therefore that the term 'love' is not adequate to express the idea of 'passion'; the latter needs the addition of the other factors [mentioned above]. Nevertheless, love is the starting point of passion, and is followed by infatuation. The latter may be compatible with truth and conscious choice; or the

reverse, as is the case with infatuation over religions, countries and other things. An infatuated person will not budge an inch from his standpoint and his predilection for the object of his infatuation. Hence it is said, 'The eye of infatuation does not tell the truth', and it is also said, 'To love something makes you blind and deaf' — taking their faiths as lords, because of their infatuation. Thus a man will often 'fall in love' with someone who is by no means the height of beauty and perfection, and not characterized by any cleverness or grace, and if he is asked the reason why, he has no reason to produce.

43. Furthermore, love and infatuation may both be present, and the combination still not qualify to be termed passion. Love and infatuation together may be felt for a child or a friend or a country or a kind of clothing or furniture or riding beasts, and yet nobody has ever been seen to be physically ill and mentally distraught for love of his country or his child, even though he may experience pain and anguish when separated from the object of his love. Whereas we have seen and heard of many a one who has been utterly destroyed, and suffered long torment and wasting away, because of the malady of passion.

44. Now one must know that if there be added to love both infatuation and affinity (meaning natural affinity, i.e. the love of men for women and women for men, such as is implanted in all males and females in the animal world) the resulting emotion becomes true passion. If this passion is felt by a male for a male, it is only derivative from this fundamental carnal instinct. Otherwise it could not be called passion when the carnal instinct is absent. Furthermore, you do not find passion likely to be fully developed at first encounter, before association is linked to it, and habitude implants it in the heart. It then springs up as the seed springs up in the soil, so that it becomes firmly established and strong, and bears fruit; and it may come to have as it were a lofty stem and a strong hard trunk, or sometimes it may grow crooked, and then there comes about the ruin of the root. When [the emotion felt] includes all these factors, it is passion in the fullest sense. At that point, infrequency of meeting only serves to increase it and add fuel to its fire, while separation inflames it to such an extent that the mind become deranged

and the body wasted, and the heart preoccupied to the exclusion of all profit, and the image of the loved one is present to the eye of the lover, and has mastery over all his thoughts, and recurs to the heart in every possible situation.

45 But if the lapse of time is prolonged, passion wanes as the result of parting, and fades away through frustration; yet the traces and marks of its wounds and scars hardly ever disappear completely. Moreover, the conquest of the loved one tends to hasten the dissolution of the passion. The cause of this is that some men are quicker than others to conceive a passion, owing to the difference in the constitution of hearts in respect of their tenderness or hardness, and their speed or slowness in forming an intimacy, or of the fact of the [lover's] carnal instincts being feeble and weaker than the passion manifested by the beloved: unless indeed the latter infects [the lover] with the malady and makes an impression on his breast and pierces his heart. This arises from affinity and the response of some natures to others, the yearning of some souls towards others, and the mutual approximation of spirits. It is comparable with [the case of] a sleeping man: another, who is not sleepy, may see him sleeping and himself doze off. Or a person not inclined to yawn may see someone else yawning and himself do the same, by natural compulsion.

46 [This sort of thing] is rarely a passion between two persons with equal strength on both sides, unless by some special compatibility in their physical or moral make-up, or in respect of cleverness or infatuation or natural characteristics. Such [special compatibility] accounts for the fact that we may observe a handsome person nourishing a passion for an ugly one, or an ugly person loving a handsome one. A person may prefer the ugly to the handsome, though one does not observe this preference in other contexts, so that one might suppose that some mistake was involved in it; but in fact it is due to the reciprocal recognition of spirits and pairing off of hearts.

47 Passion for singing-girls is dangerous, in view of their manifold excellencies and the satisfaction one's soul finds in them. They provide a man with a combination of pleasures such as

nothing else on the face of the earth does. Pleasures all come by means of the senses. Food and drink belong to the domain of the sense of taste, and no other sense participates with it therein. If a man were to eat musk, which belongs to the domain of smelling, he would find it disgusting and loathsome, because it was in origin congealed blood. If he were to sniff the odours of foodstuffs (other than the sweet-scented foods such as fruit and the like), at a time when he had no appetite, or were to persist in simply gazing at such things, it would turn out to be unprofitable. Or if he were to bring into contact with his hearing any perfume or [other] sweet-scented thing, he would get no pleasure from it. But when one comes to consider singing-girls, three of the senses are involved all together, and [the pleasure of] the heart makes a fourth. The eye has the sight of a beautiful or [otherwise] attractive girl (since cleverness and beauty are hardly ever simultaneously possessed by a single object of enjoyment and delight); the hearing has from her its meed of that which is attended by no inconvenience, that in which the organ of hearing finds its sole delight; touching her leads to carnal desire and the longing for sexual intercourse. All these senses are as it were scouts for the heart, and witnesses testifying before it. When the girl raises her voice in song, the gaze is rivetted on her, the hearing is directed attentively to her, and the heart surrenders itself to her sovereignty. Hearing and sight race each other to see which of the two can transmit its message about her to the heart before the other, and they arrive simultaneously at the heart's core and pour out what they have observed. From this there arises, together with the feeling of joyous abandon, [an indulgence in] the sense of touch. So that the man has at one and the same time three concurrent pleasures, such as he would not find conjoined in anything else, and the like of which the [individual] senses could never give him. Thus in his consorting with singing-girls lies the greatest temptation. It is said in Tradition, 'Beware of gazing [on women], for it sows carnal desire in the heart, and that is a most grievous temptation for one who experiences it.' How much the more will this be the case with gazing and carnal desire, when they are accompanied by music and helped along by flirting.

48 The singing-girl is hardly ever sincere in her passion, or wholehearted in her affection. For both by training and by innate

instinct her nature is to set up snares and traps for the victims, in order that they may fall into her toils. As soon as the observer notices her, she exchanges provocative glances with him, gives him playful smiles, dallies with him in verses set to music, falls in with his suggestions, is eager to drink when he drinks, expresses her fervent desire for him to stay a long while, her yearning for his prompt return, and her sorrow at his departure. Then when she perceives that her sorcery has worked on him and that he has become entangled in the net, she redoubles the wiles she had used at first, and leads him to suppose that she is more in love than he is. Later she corresponds with him, pouring out complaints to him of infatuation for him, and swearing to him that she has filled the inkwell with tears and wetted the envelope with her kisses; that he is her sole anxiety and care in her thought and mind by night and day; that she desires no other than him, prefers nobody else to her infatuation for him, never intends to abandon him, and does not want him for his money but for himself. Then she puts the letter in a sixth of a sheet of paper, seals it with saffron, ties it up with a piece of lute-string, declares it to be concealed from her guardians (in order that the deluded lover may have more confidence in her), and insists on the necessity of his replying. When she gets a reply to it, she asserts that she finds the reply her only consolation, and that she has taken it as a substitute for the sight of him in person, and quotes,

Many a missive telling the heart's secret, charming in its melodious eloquence, has come when [my] heart has been sore because of the long time I have waited for it; I laughed when I saw it, but wept when I read it; my eyes saw unpleasing news, and the tears started up unbidden to my eye. You tyrant of my soul, my life and death are in your hands.

Then she sings to him,

My loved one's letter is all night long my bosom companion, at times my confidant and at times my fragrant scent; the start of the missive made me laugh [with joy], but then he made it too long and caused me to weep.

49 Later, she begins to find fault with him, affects to be jealous of his wife, forbids him to glance at her companions, makes him

drink out of her half-emptied cup, teases him with bites of her apples or with a salute from her sweet-basil, bestows on him when he departs a lock of her hair, a piece of her robe, or a splinter from her plectrum; presents him at Nayrūz with an embroidered belt and some sugar, at Mihrjān with a signet ring and an apple; engraves his name on her own signet ring; and if she happens to stumble, lets slip his name. When she sees him, she declaims,

The sight of the lover is sweet to the loved one, his shunning her is a dread disaster for her.

Then she tells him that she cannot sleep for love of him, and cannot bear to touch a bite of food by reason of her yearning for him, and is never weary of weeping for him when he is away; that she can never think of him without agitation, or utter his name without trembling, and has gathered a bowlful of her tears over him. When she encounters his name, she quotes Majnūn's verse, I love every name that is the same as hers, or like to it, or in any way resembles it.

If anyone calls out the name, she quotes Majnūn's other lines, Often has someone called out, when we were on Minā's slopes, and has stirred unwittingly my heart's griefs; he has called by the name Laylā someone other than my love, and it was as though by [the very word] 'Laylā' he caused a bird in my breast to fly up.

50 But it sometimes happens that this pretence leads her on to turning it into reality, and she in fact shares her lover's torments; so that she will come to his house and allow him a kiss, or even greater liberties, and give herself to bed, should he think fit [to accept] that from her. Sometimes she may renounce her craft, in order for her to be cheaper for him [to buy], and makes a show of illness and is sullen towards her guardians and asks the owners to sell her; or she may allege that she is really a free woman, as a trick to get herself into the lover's possession, and out of anxiety for him lest her high price should ruin him – specially if she finds him to be sweet-tempered, clever in expressing himself, pleasant-tongued, with a fine apprehension and delicate sensibility, and light-hearted; while if he can compose and quote poetry or warble a tune, that gives him all the more favour in her eyes.

51 Yet for the most part singing-girls are insincere, and given to employing deceit and treachery in squeezing out the property of the deluded victim and then abandoning him. Sometimes a singing girl may have three or four such victims with her, in spite of their own anxiety to avoid such an encounter, and their mutual jealousy when they do meet each other. Then she weeps with one eye to one of them, and laughs with the other eye to the second, and winks at the latter in mockery of the former; she deals in secret with one, and openly with the other, giving the former to understand that she really belongs to him and not to the other, and that her overt behaviour is contrary to the promptings of her heart. When they leave, she writes letters to all of them in identical terms, telling each one how much she dislikes the rest, and how she longs to be alone with him without the others. Had the Devil no other snare with which to slay, no other banner to rally [men] to, and no other temptation wherewith to seduce, than singing-girls, that would still be ample for him. Nor is this any criticism of them, but the highest praise; for we find in Tradition, 'The best of your women are the charmers and deceivers'. Hārūt and Mārūt, Moses' staff, and Pharaoh's magicians, were not so skilful as these singing-girls are.

52 Furthermore, there is their indulgence in fornication forced on them by it, since their origins in pimping houses throw them into the arms of fornicators. Yet later they bear children to men who have reached such a pitch of fondness for them as to pardon every fault and overlook their every disgrace. When they are in the dwelling of a man of the common folk, one may disapprove of them; but when they move up into kings' palaces, there is no excuse at all. But the cause and reason for the phenomenon is one and the same [in both cases]. How indeed could a singing-girl be saved from falling a prey to temptation, and how is it possible for her to be chaste? It is in the very place where she is brought up that she acquires unbridled desires, and learns her modes of speech and behaviour. From cradle to grave she is nourished by such idle talk, and all sorts of frivolous and impure conversation, as must hinder her from recollection of God; among abandoned and dissolute persons, who never utter a serious word, from whom she could never look for any trustworthiness, religion, or safe-guarding of decent standards.

53 An accomplished singing-girl has a repertoire of upwards of four thousand songs, each of them two to four verses long, so that the total amount of poetry contained in it, if one multiples one figure by the other, comes to ten thousand verses, in which there is not one mention of God (except by inadvertence) or of the terrors of future punishment or the attractions of future reward. They are all founded on references to fornication, pimping, passion, yearning, desire and lust. Later on she continues to study her profession assiduously, learning from music teachers whose lessons are all flirting and whose directives are a seduction. This she is compelled to do for the sake of her profession: for if she shirks it, [her skill] will slip away; if she neglect it, it will fade; if she does not make use of it, it will come to a standstill – and anything which comes to a standstill is on the brink of recession. The thing which distinguishes the masters of crafts from the unskilled practitioner is the greater degree of [the formers'] assiduous practice of it.

54 If a singing-girl were to wish to follow the path of virtue, she would not know what it is; were she to desire restraint, she could not achieve it. Although Abū l-Hudhayl's doctrine of the duty incumbent on the thinker is generally valid, it is not applicable to the special case of the singing-girl, because her thoughts, heart, tongue and body are wrapped up in her surroundings. Proportionate to the combined influence exercised by all that [environment] on her, in *her* soul, is the combined influence, for the man who is so unfortunate as to associate with her, on him as well as on her.

55 Among the advantages enjoyed by each man among us is that other men seek him out eagerly in his abode, just as one eagerly seeks out caliphs and great folk; is visited without having the trouble of visiting; receives gifts and is not compelled to give; has presents made to him and none required from him. Eyes remain wakeful, tears flow, minds are agitated, emotions lacerated, and hopes fixed – all on the property which he has under his control: which is something that does not occur with anything [else] that is sold or bought, gained and acquired, unless it be very valuable estates; for who could reach anything like the price fetched by an Abyssinian girl, the slave of 'Awn, namely 120,000 dinars?

56 Furthermore, people send along to her owner's house presents of all sorts in the way of food and drink, but if they come to visit, they get just a sight [of the girl] and go away frustrated, while her master reaps the fruit of what they have sown, so that he, not they, has the enjoyment of it and is amply provided against the expense of maintaining his [other] slave girls. All that other men have to put up with in maintaining a household of slaves, and the worries they have about the number of these, the huge expenses of keeping them, and the problem of getting service out of them – all this does not affect him. He need not bother about the high price of flour, the fact that barley-groats may be unobtainable, the scarcity of oil, or the poor quality of the date wine. He is proof against feeling it to be vexatious if the wine is scarce, a misfortune if it goes sour, and an absolute disaster if [the jar] gets broken. If he does get into financial difficulties, he can borrow money and not be turned away; he can make requests and not be refused. He is always met with the greatest respect, is called by his formal name when addressed, and is spoken to with all the polite phrases; he is favoured with the choicest titbits of news, and kept informed of the most confidential secrets; the infatuated lovers struggle enviously for his notice, vie with each other in doing him favours, contend with each other for his liking, and boast over each other of his special regard.

57 Such a description is not known to apply except to the caliphs themselves. Yet even the latter give more than they get, and people's objectives are really obtained by means of them, and wealth acquired from them. The owner of singing-girls on the other hand takes the substance and gives the appearance, gets the real thing and gives the shadow, and sells the gusty wind for solid ore and pieces of silver and gold. Between the suitors and what they desire lies the thorniest of obstacles. For the owner, were he not to abstain from granting the dupe his desire for motives of purity and decency, would at any rate do out of sharp-wittedness and wiliness, and to safeguard his trade and defend the sanctity of his estate. For when the lover once possesses himself of the beloved, nine-tenths of his ardent disappearance, and his liberality and contributions [to the owner] diminish on the same scale. What is there, consequently, to

induce the owner of the singing-girls to give you his girl, spitting his own face and causing himself to be no longer sought after?

58 If he were not a past-master in this splendid and noble profession, why is it that he abandons jealous surveillance of the girls (though choosing his spies well), accepts the room rent, pretends to doze off before supper, takes no notice of winkings, is indulgent to a kiss, ignores signs [passing between the pair of lovers], turns a blind eye to the exchange of billets-doux, affects to forget all about the girl on the day of the visit, does not scold her for retiring to a private place, does not pry into her secrets or cross-examine her about how she passed the night, and does not bother to lock the doors and draw close the curtains? He reckons up each victim's income separately, and knows how much money he is good for; just as the trader sorts out his various kinds of merchandise and prices them according to their value, or as the landowner knows his land to be proper soil for vegetables, or wheat, or barley. When he has an influential customer, he takes advantage of his influence and makes requests from him; if the customer is rich but not influential, he borrows money from him without interest. If he is a person connected with the authorities, such a one can be used as a shield against the unfriendly attentions of the police; and when such a one comes on a visit, drums and hautbois are sounded. [These are] people like Salāmah al-Fuqqā'i, Ḥamdūn al-Ṣahnā'i, 'Alī al-Fāmī, Ḥajar al-Tawr, Faḡḡah, Ibn Dajjājah, Ḥafṣawayh, Aḥmad Sha'rah, Ibn al-Majūsī and Ibrāhīm al-Ghulam.

59 So what profession on the face of the earth is nobler than this? If those [critical] people could only realise the true distinction between permitted and prohibited, they would not charge the practitioners of this profession with pimping. It is perfectly legitimate for a girl to be sold to a rich man, who has his will on her (remaining at the same time morally irreproachable), and then returns her to her [original] owner at a less price than that for which the latter had first sold her, so that the latter gets the profit; alternatively, she may be married off to someone in whom he has confidence and whose intention is to contract a temporary union only. But does any moral discredit attach to the one who gives [a girl] in marriage to him [in this way]? And will

anyone except an ignorant fool shrink from availing himself to the full of what is legally permitted? Has testimony of fornication ever been produced in Islam on such grounds?

60 This epistle which we have written down from the transmitters is ascribed to the authorship of the persons named in its preface. If it is genuine, we have [merely] done the job of transmitting it, and the original authors are the ones responsible for the arguments they have adopted in it. If it is a fabrication, then it is a fabrication on the part of libertines, since they have produced an argument for the casting aside of shame; or of accomplices [of the owners] in order to make easy for the owners of singing-girls a course of conduct which criminals would adopt. If anyone remarks that the treatise has a relevance and connection with [all] these three classes of person, he is quite right.

COMMENTARY

§1 On the general problems of this paragraph, see Introduction, p.3.

The spelling of Khālīd without an *alif* was evidently a scribal convention at the time the ms was written, though one less common than cases such as Ishāq, Ibrāhīm etc.

Kuḡār-kuḡāh is manifestly Persian, though the meaning is unclear; a Persian slant is perceptible in several of these names.

The nickname attached to Muḥammad b. Ḥammād must, it seems to me, be read in Persian form as *kātib-i-rāšid*, with the second term as an adjective (and not as in P's version 'secrétaire de Rašid'), since the Arabic name is normally al-Rāšid.

Rabāh is an attested, though somewhat rare, name; but in the present context there may be a pun on *arbah* 'financial gains', with a satirical glance at the covetousness of the *muqayyin*. Abū l-Khiyār 'father of good things' also has satirical overtones suggesting the covetousness of the person concerned.

F, H and P all read Rannāl, since the ms does not appear to have more than one diacritic dot. But this has so extraordinary and un-Arabic a sound (there are no Arabic roots with *n* and *l* as second and third consonants), that I find it difficult to believe that any copyist would have actually intended to write this. I believe he intended Rattāl 'chanter'; Nowayri, cited by Dozy, mentions such people along with barber-surgeons (*hajjāmīn*), butchers (*jazzārīn*) and masseurs (*hākkah*), all of them despised occupations.

mīšraṭah 'scalpel', and the Persian *kabah* 'cupping-glass', may be satirical allusions to the *muqayyin*'s expertise in 'bleeding' his customers, i.e. getting their money out of them (though *kabah* also has the meaning 'tumour'). The name in between is probably to be vocalized as *ʾalik* 'a tough morsel to chew'.

wazāʾif, see Dozy, 'des vivres . . . que l'on fournit régulièrement à quelqu'un'.

al-rāgibina bi-anfusihim ʾan: the *bi* makes the verb transitive (see Lane), so that the phrase implies 'make oneself undesirous of'.