'And the Light in his Eyes Grew Dark':

The Representation of Anger in an Egyptian Popular Epic

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Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan ('The adventures of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan') is a late-medieval Egyptian popular epic, set in legendary pre-Islamic time, which recounts the life and adventures of its hero, King Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan. During the course of the narrative, Sayf leads his people into Egypt, diverts the Nile to its current course using magical talismans and then goes on to conquer the realms of men and jinn in the name of Islam, thereby rewriting history to present Egypt as born out of a reverse Exodus led by a proto-Islamic, Yemeni king. It belongs to a genre known as the *siyar* (sing. *sīra*) *shaʿbiyya*, Arabic popular epics or romances, works of popular entertainment that tell fantastic and epic stories of the adventures of their respective heroes or heroines. These long narratives, which are composed in varying proportions of prose, rhymed prose and poetry, have traditionally existed as both written and oral traditions in the Middle East and the Maghreb, and are 'of the folk', in that they are not individually authored and are fluid texts with no fixed form.[1] The *sīra*s all seem to have taken recognizable shape around the thirteenth century, and have evolved and developed since then to become rich and complex works which were traditionally performed by a *rāwī* ('narrator', 'reciter') for public entertainment for an hour or a couple of hours a day over a set period of time, for example during the month of Ramadan.[2] Narrators were also available for hire for private functions, where they might narrate a shorter extract for a specific occasion. Different *sīra*s are traditionally performed in different ways: some are sung or recited from memory

with musical accompaniment,[3] while others are performed with the aid of a manuscript prompt or read from manuscripts (or nowadays books).[4] In all cases, audience reaction and interaction plays a significant role in the storytelling experience: narrating a *sīra* is an interactive process of composition, in which the audience reacts and responds to the narrator during his performance, and this audience reaction helps to shape the way that the narrator tells the story. This has two implications that are of interest for the study of emotions in these texts. Firstly, it means that, in a very real sense, the narratives are all about emotion: their emotional impact is key to retaining the interest of their audience, and, in turn, the audience's emotional response to the story is an important force in shaping the performative and compositional process. In other words, the genre is one that involves emotional practices in its performance and reception, as well as expressing them in its telling.[5] Secondly, although these narratives are set in the past and deal with deeds of ancient heroes, because of their interactive, fluid nature they are very much of their time: they reflect contemporary conceptualizations of sociocultural identity (or identities).[6] The written manuscripts and printed texts that we have give us a snapshot of popular ideas about identity, history and behaviour at a particular time and place which reflect the ideas of a specific emotional community about how people think about emotions and emotional practices[7] in a way that may be very different to those expressed in individually authored, high-culture works of literature.[8] The *sīra*s are, nevertheless, works of literature. Thus, from my work so far on *Sīrat Sayf*, it seems that emotions play an important role in creating narrative tension and informing characterization through both the way they are represented and the way they are used (whether unconsciously or consciously) to manipulate narrative expectations. As I hope will become clear in the course of this article, the role they play is not primarily personal and biological: emotions in *Sīrat Sayf* should not be perceived as simply emotional, but also seem to perform as literary, rhetorical tools that inform and further plot and theme.

This article comprises two parts: the first explores the representation of anger (rather than its nature) in one specific variant of *Sīrat Sayf*, the current standard printed edition of the text,[9] focusing on the existence of gender-specific patterns through which anger is represented. The second part then analyses the representation of emotions in conversion narratives (i.e. segments of text that relate the conversion of characters to Islam), focusing on how narrative conventions relating to the representation of anger are used to manipulate narrative conventions, and thereby audience expectations of the text, at one particular climactic plot point. Work on emotions in Arabic and Middle Eastern history and literature is in its infancy, and an understanding of how emotions are actually conceptualized, configured and represented in Arabic literary culture is a necessary basis for more theoretical, analytical work. The scope of this article is also exploratory in terms of the material covered: it focuses on the way anger is expressed by a few of the *sīra*'s main protagonists in a limited number of key episodes rather than claiming to be a comprehensive survey of anger in the text as a whole.

Before moving on to discuss the representation of anger, I will give a brief overview of the plot as told in this variant of *Sīrat Sayf*, and the way that this text uses gender as a narrative device.[10] The story begins with a short account of how Sayf's father, a king of Yemen called Dhū Yazan, leads his tribe out of Yemen to settle near Ḥabash (the name given to the area covered by modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea), where he builds a city called Madīnat al-Ḥamrāʾ ('the Red City'). The king of Ḥabash, Sayf Arʿad, is warned by his two advisors, the evil, fire-worshipping magicians Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn, about predictions that Dhū Yazan's line will conquer Ḥabash and implement Noah's curse, that the sons of Shem will enslave the sons of Ham.[11] In an attempt to avert the curse, Sayf Arʿad sends Dhū Yazan a beautiful African slave girl called Qamariyya as a gift, having first given her orders to poison him. Dhū Yazan, who takes one look at Qamariyya and falls instantly in love, ends up

marrying her despite finding the poison vial secreted in the braids of her hair. Soon afterwards he dies in suspicious circumstances, leaving his now-pregnant wife as regent for their unborn son, Sayf, the hero of the *sīra*. Once her baby is born, Qamariyya first tries to kill him and then, when her attempt is thwarted, promptly abandons him in the desert to die and takes the throne for herself. There is then a long first section that begins by recounting how the infant Sayf is found by a hunter and taken to the court of one of Sayf Arʿad's vassal kings, who adopts him and goes on to tell the story of Sayf's childhood and early years, during which he discovers his true identity and converts to Islam. Eventually, through a twist of fate, Sayf is sent at the head of an invading army to Madīnat al-Ḥamrāʾ, where he is recognized and reclaims his rightful throne from his scheming mother. She repeatedly tries to bring about Sayf's early demise and retake the throne, each time being forgiven by the son she betrays, until she is finally executed by one of Sayf's wives and his jinni milk-sister. In the second section, the king of Ḥabash, Sayf Arʿad, sends another army against Madīnat al-Ḥamrāʾ, and the Yemenis are forced to flee while it is razed to the ground, leaving them exiled and homeless. Sayf, completing the exodus begun by his father, leads his people into Egypt (which is at the time an arid, uninhabited wasteland), where he diverts the Nile to follow its current course and founds Cairo, fulfilling predictions made in the ancient books. In the third and final section of the *sīra*, the Yemenis, or rather the Egyptians as they are now, embark on a retaliatory expedition against Ḥabash. After a successful campaign that takes them through the lands of various vassal kings, they capture the capital city and its ruler, Sayf Arʿad, but Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn, his advisors and the true anti-heroes of the story, escape. The Muslim army chases after them as they flee through ever more distant lands, in a campaign that organically evolves into the conquest and conversion of the entire human world, followed by the seven realms of the jinn.

The narrative function of gender in *Sīrat Sayf*

As a genre, the *sīra*s tell the story of a particular hero, or group of heroes, and are fundamentally concerned with issues of identity, the collective anxieties of the social unit, and that unit's struggle to maintain its integrity.[12] The *sīra* genre, which is traditionally narrated by men, has been described as one in which female characters are confined by the boundaries of male expectation. Remke Kruk's insightful work on women in the *sīra*s, primarily focusing on *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* (which is unusual in taking a female character as its main protagonist) has identified a pattern that is followed by a character type she calls 'warrior women' in the *sīra*s.[13] According to her schema, female characters are allowed freedom of action, and can encroach on 'male' roles, for example by going into battle as warriors and engaging in single combat with male characters, as long as they do not attempt to take and retain power, and as long as their sexuality does not become threatening (that is, as long as it remains under male control). Thus, there are many warrior princesses, for example, whose martial tendencies on the battlefield and in single combat are presented as perfectly acceptable traits in a female character, as long as they fight for the right cause and are appropriately subservient to their male betters. However, if female characters break with these established behaviour patterns, they, by definition, become threatening, and therefore 'bad' or 'evil', and are usually swiftly and comprehensively punished. Kruk finds that attitudes to women in the *sīra*s reflect ideas about *fitna* (social chaos and strife), here expressed in terms of the threat posed to society by women's sexuality, which distracts men, leading them away from proper behaviour and causing dissent and rivalry.[14]

The female characters and warrior princesses in *Sīrat Sayf* broadly correspond to this pattern, with one significant difference: whereas Kruk finds that warrior women in *Dhāt al-Himma* are able to continue their martial career after marriage, in *Sayf* it appears to be a narrative requirement that once they marry these women lose their 'male' attributes and settle

down to the life of a stay-at-home wife and mother. As I have argued elsewhere, this difference in the way that *Sīrat Sayf* approaches female characterization may well reflect a specifically Egyptian take on gender patterns in narrative.[15] One of the ways that *Sīrat Sayf* explores these issues is through the thematic use of gender, according to which the male, patriarchal forces of order are in tension with the female forces of chaos in an unstable and perpetually shifting balance that must be kept in equilibrium. The idea of women as a potential cause of *fitna*, as identified by Kruk, is, I would argue, subtly transformed in *Sayf* into a conceptualization of the female as a force that must be assimilated and appeased in a slightly different way. Sayf's first wife, Shāma, is a good example of the warrior woman pattern as found in *Sīrat Sayf*: she and Sayf fall in love when he rescues her from forced marriage to a monstrous *mārid* (a particularly huge and nasty type of jinn). When Sayf asks Shāma's father for her hand in marriage, he sends Sayf on a hazardous dowry quest and Shāma goes after him on horseback, disguised as a male warrior. She lies in wait for her beloved and, to test his prowess and valour, challenges him to single combat. Shāma acquits herself well but is eventually unhorsed and defeated. She reveals her identity and asks Sayf if she can accompany him on his quest. Sayf is too proud to accept her offer of help, but Shāma secretly follows him and proves herself an invaluable ally, both quick-witted and a good fighter. However, once they have returned from the quest and are married, her only further contribution to the story is to bear Sayf a son.[16]

Despite the general tendency for women to disappear from the text following marriage, it is noticeable that *Sīrat Sayf* is peopled with many strong, active female characters, who often appear to be more proactive than their male counterparts and whose actions often drive the plot forward. For example, the repeated attempts made by Sayf's mother, Qamariyya, to bring about his untimely death so she can retain the throne she usurped from him, drive the plot of most of the first third of the *sīra*. Likewise, the second third of the *sīra*

is set in motion when Sayf's jinni milk-sister ʿĀqiṣa refuses to marry the suitor Sayf has picked out for her. Outraged that Sayf intends her to marry someone of lowly birth, she sets her unfortunate intended a well-nigh impossible dowry quest, which Sayf is drawn into. In addition to these two women, there are a host of other active female characters who are more stereotypical in behaviour: as well as warrior princesses (mainly the future wives of Sayf and his sons), there are sorceresses (several of whom act as counterparts to Sayf's male advisors, while some are enemies) and a variety of other female characters who help the Muslim heroes in a variety of ways. Qamariyya is not the only woman to be a powerful and dangerous enemy: for a large segment of the *sīra*, Sayf is imprisoned by an evil queen, al-Thurayyā al-Zarqāʾ who, overcome by unrequited love, transforms him into a bird and keeps him hidden under armed guard until he is rescued by his allies.

However, generally speaking, although women who overstep the bounds of their perceived natural roles in *Sīrat Sayf* are punished, they do not appear to be subject to the levels of violent retribution that have been identified by Malcolm Lyons in the genre as a whole,[17] and women who have temporarily behaved in a misguided fashion are often simply forgiven. (For example, Sayf's jinni milk-sister and his wife Ṭāma are eventually forgiven for stepping in and executing Qamariyya when he is unable to bring himself to do so. This same wife is also forgiven for faking the death of one of her fellow wives.) This attitude towards women reflects the underlying concern of *Sīrat Sayf* with the reconciliation of male and female forces and their readoption of their appropriate places in the world order. In *Sīrat Sayf* woman is an essential force that must be assimilated rather than conquered.[18] As Lena Jayyusi has said in her introduction to her translation of the first section of *Sayf*, 'the treatment of women in the Sayf tale demonstrates that the oral narrative is a "living" field of negotiated identities, positions, and practices'.[19] In this light especially, it will be of interest to see whether male and female characters differ in their emotional characterization.

The representation of anger

When it comes to the way that emotions are represented in *Sīrat Sayf*, there is very little nuance in how the text presents them. The *sīra* genre is one in which personality is primarily described through action,[20] and its characters do not have complex inner lives that need to be teased out. Their emotional states are black and white, and tend to be extreme: no one is ever mildly irritated or a bit sad, they are either ecstatically happy or overcome by fury. Emotions are also generally easy to identify, in that they are usually either overtly labelled in the text or conveyed through the use of narrative formulae that describe the physical manifestation of the emotion in question.[21] So, for example, if someone is happy, they might be 'overcome with laughter and smiles' (*akhadahu al-ḍaḥak wa'l-ibtisām*). Likewise, when characters are angry the text tells you so very clearly, often with the words 'he flew into a rage' (*ghaḍiba ghaḍaban*[22]) accompanied by a formula such as 'the light in his eyes grew dark' (*ṣāra al-ḍayāʾ fī ʿaynayhi ẓalām*). There also seems to be no difference in the way the text describes the emotional intensity of anger experienced by 'good' or 'bad' characters, nor any differentiation between justified or unjustified anger: in all cases it seems to be an all-consuming experience, described in formulaic terms.

The text also seems to take quite a neutral stance in the way it represents anger overall. Both genders seem equally prone to anger, and the emotion itself is not viewed with censure.[23] Both good and bad characters get angry for similar reasons, and other characters around them in the text seem to take it in their stride. However, when it comes to the reasons male and female characters become angry, there are, perhaps not unexpectedly, some differences. There are many situations in which anger is a formulaic response, for example when encountering an enemy on the battlefield. Beyond this, reacting to a perceived injustice or outrage seems to be the most common cause of anger for both genders. Sayf, although

quite a flawed hero, has many good character traits and is generally calm, generous and peaceable. However, he has a strong sense of justice and ethics, which often triggers anger. For example, on hearing from one of his advisors of a sorcerer-king called Nūt, who has publicly claimed to be divine and is forcing his people to enter into fire worship on pain of death, Sayf is enraged by his blasphemy and immediately launches a military campaign against him:[24]

> When King Sayf had heard this from his wise advisor ʿĀqila, his face darkened with rage (ṣāra al-ḍayāʾ fī wajhihi ẓalām, lit. 'the light in his face became dark'), and he said, 'By the Truth of Islam, with God's permission I must destroy this sorcerer, raze his pleasure gardens to the ground, and destroy everything he has made by magic. Then I will settle [my ally, the commander] Maymūn al-Hujjām and [his wife] al-Thurayyā in the city, and lead its people into Islam and wipe out the worship of fire and idols amongst them.'[25]

On another occasion, to which I will return later, Sayf's eldest son, Damar, becomes furious when he sees Sayf being, as he perceives it, overly courteous in his dealings with the defeated king of Ḥabash. Both good and bad characters are angered when their social group is under threat. However, although both genders are driven to anger by perceived injustice, with female characters this generally plays out at a more domestic level, and their anger is often explicitly linked with jealousy. So, for example, the warrior princess Ṭāma is furious when, despite their long engagement, she hears that Sayf has married other women before her. In an attempt to force his hand, Ṭāma has stolen Sayf's cap of invisibility and sworn not to return it until he marries her, while Sayf in turn has sworn not to marry her until she gives him the cap. The couple are at an impasse, and, jealous and angry, Ṭāma swears an oath to kill Sayf's wives. When she and Shāma, Sayf's first wife, meet, the situation does in fact become

dangerous, due to anger on both sides. Ṭāma tells her mother to step aside and threatens the other woman:

> "Mother," she replied, "I have sworn that every wife of King Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan I meet I shall slay, and here is the first of them. Slay her I must, and so fulfill my oath; lies and falsehood must not be my bedfellows."
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> When Queen Shama heard those words, her eyes grew dark [with fury] (*ṣāra al-ḍayāʾ fī ʿaynayhi* [*sic*][26]). "What is this you have sworn, wanton wretch?" she cried. "Am I your freed slave that you can slay me?" With that, she drew her sword and advanced on Tama, who unsheathed her sword and advanced in turn.[27]

Ṭāma continues to threaten Sayf's other wives, unsettling Sayf to the extent that he is forced to call in mediators to settle their premarital disputes. Another of Sayf's betrotheds, al-Jīza, who is unhappy that she has fallen in love with him in the first place, becomes so furious when she hears that he already has several wives that she repeatedly tries to attack him from behind with a sword. Sayf, who is at the time eating a meal that she has prepared for him, is protected by invisible forces which turn aside her blows, and is so focused on his food that he doesn't even notice.[28]

This link between anger and jealousy in female characters is perhaps best illustrated in a passage from the beginning of the *sīra*, in which Sayf's mother, Qamariyya, demonstrates some interesting parenting ideas:

> After the death of King Dhū Yazan, the evil woman, the treacherous Qamariyya, sat upon the throne, gave orders and governed. Then she went into confinement and, when her time came, she went into labour and by God's will bore a son who was lovely as the full moon … When Qamariyya saw his beauty, a fierce jealousy (*ghayra shadīd*) seized hold of her, and she said to herself; 'If this boy should live, he will take the kingdom from me and take control over everything I now

possess, wealth, knights and warriors. But be patient, Qamariyya, it may be that

Saturn will come to your aid and kill the boy.' Then she began to pray

continuously to Saturn for the boy's death. She didn't suckle the child properly,

intending that his bowels should run dry and he should perish. But, by God's will

the boy grew, becoming more handsome and comely each day, while the wicked

woman, knowing nothing of God's almighty power, that it is He who brings life

or death, who created Adam from clay and his sons from water, grew ever more

jealous (*ghayra*) and perplexed (*indhihāl*). Her jealousy (*ghayra*), envy (*ḥasad*),

intense fury (*ghayẓ*), and grief (*kamid*[29]) increased daily.[30]

After forty days, Qamariyya has to present her son to the court so that he can be formally

acknowledged, and we are told that when she heard the nobles swearing allegiance to him,

her envy (*ḥasad*) and hatred (*ḥiqd*), and fury (*ghayẓ*) and grief (*kamid*) increased,

and her anger (*ghayẓ*) became so intense that she nearly shattered into pieces

(*tanfaṭiru*). She picked up [the child] and took him back to the palace. Her distress

(*humūm*) knew no bounds, and she wept so hard that she was in danger of falling

apart.[31]

Qamariyya then decides to solve her problem by doing away with her baby. However, her

plans are foiled by Sayf's wet nurse, who comes into the room in the nick of time and catches

her mistress standing over her son, a scimitar raised above her head. The wet nurse suggests

that rather than killing her son, which will inevitably be discovered and will end badly for the

queen, Qamariyya should instead 'misplace' him in the wilderness. When Qamariyya hears

this plan her equilibrium is instantly restored and she is 'overcome with joy and smiles'

(*akhadhahā al-faraḥ wa'l-ibtisām*).

This passage contains an unusually elaborate description of a character's internal

emotional state for this text. What is very clear, though, is that Qamariyya is driven to anger

because she feels that her position in the world is under threat, that she risks being usurped by a rival, in much the same way that Sayf's wives' fear of being usurped by his other love interests leads to their jealousy and anger. Her anger is accompanied by jealousy and grief at the loss of power and status she is about to suffer. Although male figures do care about their status, they do not seem to feel threatened in quite the same way: male characters will get angry if their prowess on the battlefield is challenged, or if their status is publicly questioned. However, their anger does not seem to be accompanied by feelings of jealousy and insecurity as Qamariyya's is here, but seems to often relate to issues of honour, and tends to be manifested in the public sphere rather than in private.[32]

Although many of the characters in the *sīra* get angry, and it seems to be a narrative convention that this anger is externalized into violent action, there are some who are particularly characterised by anger, three prominent examples being Sayf's wife Ṭāma, mentioned earlier; his eldest son Damar; and his milk-sister, the jinni princess ʿĀqiṣa. For the first third of the *sīra*, ʿĀqiṣa is presented as a loyal ally and supporter. However, this changes when Sayf promises her hand in marriage to his jinni friend and servant, ʿAyrūḍ.[33] ʿĀqiṣa, the daughter of the White King, one of the kings of the jinn, is furious that she has been promised to a lowly servant, and for the rest of the section she is characterized by her angry outbursts and defiance of her brother. The reasons for her anger are, as with the anger of Sayf's wives Shāma and Ṭāma discussed above, essentially domestic and personal (as opposed to, for example, Sayf's anger on hearing of the blasphemy committed by the sorcerer-king Nūt), and relate to her fear of loss of status. It is only much later in the *sīra*, after Sayf frees ʿAyrūḍ and crowns him as a king of the jinn and ʿAyrūḍ himself has completed a demanding set of dowry quests to prove his heroic worth, that she reconciles herself to the marriage.[34] In the interim, she periodically visits Sayf to try to persuade him to drop the marriage, argues with him and throws tantrums when she fails. Without actually resorting to violence, she does threaten it on

several occasions, and once goes so far as to steal Sayf's enchanted sword and hurl it into the sea in a fit of rage, leaving him vulnerable.

Despite her characterization in the second section of the *sīra*, and her general tendency to lose patience with Sayf when she thinks he is doing something particularly foolish, ʿĀqiṣa (whose name means 'bad tempered') is not consistently characterised by association with any one emotional state. In contrast, Sayf's eldest son, Damar, is primarily emotionally characterized by anger. His name comes from a verb with a root meaning of 'ruin' and 'destruction', and Damar is very different from his brothers Naṣr,[35] who is more a lover than a fighter, and Miṣr (pronounced 'Maṣr' in spoken Arabic),[36] who is steadfast and stable. Damar is one of the most threatening and chaotic protagonists in the *sīra*. He is hot-tempered, impatient and impetuous, and this frequently drives him to violent and premature action. What is particularly interesting about his anger, however, is that although he becomes angry about wider political 'male' issues, such as his father's courteous treatment of Sayf Arʿad, the king of Ḥabash, when he has been defeated in battle and captured (discussed in more detail later), on a number of occasions his anger crosses the gender boundaries outlined above and is linked with jealousy. For example, at one point he becomes angry with his father because he is jealous that Sayf keeps marrying all the available women himself, rather than leaving some for his sons, to the extent that he says his father is 'the only person in this entire land I'd like to kill'.[37] His jealousy and rage are so extreme that the court are seriously worried that he will, in fact, murder his father, and they are forced to intervene. Although Damar is not overtly condemned by any other characters for his jealous anger towards his father (and he does actually have good reason to be annoyed), his emotions are threatening to the social order. It seems interesting to me that all the occasions I have looked at in which Damar's anger is particularly threatening (as opposed to merely ill-judged) are when it is inspired by

jealousy, in other words when he seems to be acting in accordance with the way the *sīra* usually represents female anger.

Damar is not the only example of a male character acting according to 'female' anger patterns. At the very beginning of the *sīra*, Sayf's father, Dhū Yazan, launches an expedition against a neighbouring king, driven by jealousy-inspired anger when he hears how mighty and powerful this king is.[38] Like Damar, Dhū Yazan is a heroic but flawed character, and his major flaw is greed and covetousness. At the risk of coming to premature conclusions, it does seem that one of the ways the text expresses that male characters are flawed (at least in terms of anger) is through their adoption of female patterns of emotional behaviour. This is supported by the fact that Qamariyya's anger breaks with female emotional patterns in much the same way. Her anger, although linked with jealousy, is caused by her fear of losing power in the political, public arena, and thus seems to accord at least partly with male anger patterns in the text, rather than conforming wholly to the female patterns followed by Shāma and Ṭāma, or even ʿĀqiṣa, which are more concerned with the loss of domestic status. Her adoption of masculine behaviour patterns in pursuing power in the political arena crosses acceptable gender boundaries. It is striking that the masculine patterns that she is represented as following are highlighted in the text not just in terms of her inappropriate actions (her pursuit of power and attempted filicide), but in the way that these are very explicitly linked with her emotional drives and responses, which are described in great detail. The dissonance between the motivations for Qamariyya's anger, which follow a male pattern, and the representation of her emotions, which accords with female gender patterns, signals that her behaviour and her character are unnatural and particularly threatening to the social order.[39]

There is one more point that can be made about 'angry characters', and this relates to the function of their character types within the text. It seems to me that anger in *Sīrat Sayf* should not be perceived as just emotional in itself, but also as functioning at some level as a

narrative device that moves the plot forward:[40] Qamariyya's anger and jealousy give rise to the narrative break that sets Sayf on his heroic progress when she abandons him in the desert. Likewise, ʿĀqiṣa's anger at being forced to marry against her will drives her to set a series of dowry quests that put hundreds of pages of plot into action. Damar's anger enables various plot situations on a smaller scale, and is often used to create humorous situations. All of these characters share a chaotic aspect; they threaten the order of the social fabric, and neutralizing, averting or appeasing their anger is essential. On this note, on the basis of my research so far, it seems that angry characters are inherently chaotic, but it is also clear that gender is not a deciding issue in this, even though women tend (as a rule) to represent the chaotic 'other' in this particular text: the female tends to represent chaos in *Sīrat Sayf*, but not all angry or chaotic characters are female.[41]

Thus, on the basis of the episodes I have looked at so far, it seems that anger in *Sīrat Sayf* has aspects that are gendered and aspects that are not. The reasons for anger seem to be gender specific, but the ways that characters act on their anger, and the consequences they suffer, do not appear to rely on gender, but rather on whether the character is acting for 'good' or 'bad'. More importantly, perhaps, it seems clear that gender-specific narrative conventions surrounding the representation of anger are present in the text, and that these are manipulated so as to convey character: male figures who appropriate female anger patterns are flawed, inadequate characters, while female figures who appropriate male anger patterns are threatening. (I do not intend here to imply a conscious manipulation of emotional behaviour patterns on the part of the author-narrator. It seems more likely that this coded use of emotional patterns is a storytelling technique that is firmly embedded in the storytelling process.) Although the presence of gendered emotional patterns in the text might not be surprising in itself, it is interesting that the way *Sīrat Sayf* genders its representation of anger goes beyond the formulaic and is often deliberate, nuanced and subtle.

The literary role of emotions in conversion narratives

I now turn to the role of emotion in conversion narratives. *Sīrat Sayf* is composed broadly according to the oral-formulaic conventions and rules of oral narrative. It weaves together interchangeable units consisting of motifs, tropes, narrative formulae and tale patterns to create its narrative tapestry, presenting these in different constellations depending on the needs of the story.[42] The trope of conversion, and the role of conversion narratives within the text, also have a very formulaic aspect. *Sīrat Sayf* is not overtly religious in tone, and the conversion by Sayf of all the peoples he encounters seems to be more a literary trope that is symbolic of assimilation into the sociocultural unit than an expression of religious fervour. It is, however, a trope that plays an integral part in the narrative, and Sayf's conquest and conversion of the realms of both human and jinn provides the plot for the final third of the story. Conversion narratives in *Sīrat Sayf* tend to follow several general patterns. Some characters are converted by al-Khiḍr[43] immediately before they encounter Sayf, and some are converted by a disembodied voice (*hātif*) that comes to them in their sleep, while others are befriended and introduced to Islam by Sayf himself during his various adventures, or conquered and offered a choice between conversion or death. There is also a trope according to which the hero of the *sīra*, Sayf, encounters lone ascetics dwelling in the wilderness, who introduce him to his true identity and the Islamic faith. In addition, there are some occasions on which particularly wise characters read of the coming of Islam in the ancient books and spontaneously recognise the truth of the coming faith.

Although there is clearly quite a limited range of routes to conversion for characters in *Sīrat Sayf*, they are associated with a range of different emotional experiences within the conversion narratives. For some, a visitation from al-Khiḍr and introduction to the faith is a truly terrifying experience, while for others it takes on a more pleasant aspect. For example,

during the climactic section of the story, in which Sayf and his followers are diverting the Nile to follow its current course and flow through Egypt, their endeavours are brought to a halt by the machinations of a magician called Saysabān, whose home happens to be in their path, and who is not happy about the prospect of being flooded out.[44] He raises enchantments against the Muslims which nearly destroy them, but is converted in the nick of time by al-Khiḍr, who visits him one night and presents him with a seven-sided apple the size of an ostrich egg. Brandishing a flaming spear (also seven-sided) in his hand, al-Khiḍr tells him to eat the apple and accept Islam, or perish.[45] Saysabān chooses life and becomes one of Sayf's key allies. In contrast, al-Dajwa, the warrior-princess daughter of the king of Ḥabash, Sayf Arʿad, has a much more pleasant encounter with al-Khiḍr. When she runs into Sayf's youngest son, Naṣr, during one of his adventures, she instantly falls in love with him and rescues him from certain death. Soon Naṣr is equally smitten, and, overcome by mutual passion, the couple are tempted to consummate the relationship outside wedlock. In a slightly bizarre episode, Satan makes his sole appearance in the *sīra*, and he and al-Khiḍr fight it out for possession of Naṣr's soul. Al-Khiḍr wins and persuades Naṣr that he must not ravish al-Dajwa because she is an infidel. Overhearing this, al-Dajwa immediately converts, and al-Khiḍr marries the couple.[46]

These two examples illustrate one emotional aspect of conversion narratives in *Sīrat Sayf*: the emotions associated with conversion can be either very positive or very negative. In general, those characters and groups who have already allied themselves with Sayf and his cause are persuaded of the truth of Islam through discussion, through conversations with Sayf in which the character in question makes a positive choice to convert. However, in the case of enemies the emotions associated with conversion are predominantly those of fear, as in the story of Saysabān and the seven-sided apple – characters are presented with a choice, but the alternative to accepting Islam is terrifying and terminal. Although al-Dajwa was born into the

enemy camp, at the point of her conversion she has switched her allegiance to the Muslim side because of her love for Naṣr. Her conversion is therefore driven by a more positive emotion, love. Having said that, it is clear that neither of these conversions is driven by pious feeling or religious sentiment: the issue of al-Dajwa's conversion arises in the context of preventing Naṣr from committing the sin of having sex with an infidel, and al-Dajwa explicitly accepts Islam because of her love for him, so that they can consummate their relationship and marry. This is a good example of the functional aspect of the representation of emotions in the text: the primary function of both Naṣr's and al-Dajwa's emotions in this episode lies in the way that they are used to help resolve problematic plot points and move the action along. Similarly, Saysabān's forced conversion does not have much to do with faith per se, but is a symbolic incorporation of his character into the Muslim fold, which serves to remove an obstacle from Sayf's path and signal divine approval for his quest.

There is one particular conversion narrative in *Sīrat Sayf* which I would like to explore in more detail in terms of the part anger plays in it: the failed conversion of Sayf Arʿad, the king of Ḥabash, which takes place towards the end of the *sīra*. At this point in the text, Sayf has led his army to victory against the Ḥabashi forces and taken Sayf Arʿad captive. Sayf tells Sayf Arʿad that he will spare his life if he 'speaks the words of deliverance' (that is, converts to Islam) and hands over his advisors, the sorcerers Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn. Sayf Arʿad vehemently refuses, but rather than killing him, Sayf continues to try to persuade him to convert:

> The narrator said: Going back to King Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan; he was sitting [in court] with the other kings. He said, 'Bring me that accursed devil,' and with that they brought Sayf Arʿad before him, looking more lowly than a destitute vagabond, and Sayf said to him: 'What do you have to say for yourself, you vile cur?' Sayf Arʿad replied, 'I am in your hands, and will do whatever you wish.'

Then King Sayf said to him, 'You will find no [eternal] salvation [unless you speak the] words of deliverance,[47] and likewise you will find no salvation from me unless you hand over my enemies, those dogs [Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn], to me, so that I can punish them as I see fit. If you do not do this, I will make you drink from the cup of death. So what do you say to this proposition (lit. *ḥadīth mufīd*)?'

The narrator said: When King Sayf Arʿad heard these words, he was extremely angry (*ghaḍiba ghaḍaban shadīd* [*sic*[48]]), but he remained silent, not saying anything or replying for a full hour. He neither responded nor made any speech. Thereupon King Sayf shouted at him, 'You! Tell me what you are thinking. If you don't speak I will send you to your grave!', intending by this that Sayf Arʿad would convert to Islam, join his side, and accompany him in worshipping his God, He who had created him. But King Sayf Arʿad, full of anger (*imtazaja bi 'l-ghadab*), declared, 'Know that I will never abandon my religion, nor leave what I know to be true. Do whatever you want. Farewell.'

The narrator said: The most astonishing thing about this story is that King Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan was having a conversation of this kind with King Sayf Arʿad, and that he wanted to intimidate him and lead him to the Islamic faith and the will of the All-knowing Sovereign who created man and taught him the Qur'an. While they were thus, the Sword of Ṣamṣām[49] glittered and danced amongst the gathering, and swooped down on the neck of God's enemy, chopping off his head. God cast his soul into the Fire, the evil abode. Sayf and the other men looked for the one who struck the blow, and, behold, it was Sayf's son, Damar. No one had any idea who had struck the blow until they saw him holding the sword, covered in blood.

When King Sayf saw this, he was overcome by rage that knew no bounds (*ghaḍiba ghaḍaban mā ʿalayhi min mazīd*). He turned to his son and said to him, 'You! You spineless idiot (*maqṭūʿ al-nakhāʾ*), who told you to do that? You wretched knave! I was hoping he would convert, because, when all is said and done, he was the ruler of Ḥabash and its vassals, noble and princely in every way, and strong-minded.[50] And, by God, I have never seen anyone more valiant than him on the battlefield, or anyone better [at jousting] with a spear.'[51]

The episode is interesting in the way it presents the various characters' emotions and plays with narrative expectations: the normal narrative pattern the text follows when Sayf meets with a defeated enemy is to offer them conversion or death, which is often accompanied by intimidation and threats calculated to evoke fear in the convert, as we in fact see here.[52] Sayf Arʿad, the king of Ḥabash, is ostensibly Sayf's arch-enemy, and his defeat is a climactic point in the narrative, so this is to be expected. However, when the defeated king is brought before Sayf, Sayf Arʿad is described by the narrator as feeling anger, but Sayf is not. He shouts at the defeated king, and gives the appearance of anger, but the lack of either emotion words or actions introduces a sense of ambiguity. Then the narrator explicitly tells us not just once but twice that Sayf's primary motivation is to convince Sayf Arʿad to convert. However, his attempt to persuade Sayf Arʿad to give up Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn and embrace Islam is derailed when Damar, driven by rage, takes on the role of an avenging fury, and Sayf, in turn, becomes enraged by his son's slaying of the Ḥabashi king.

This episode contains a lot of anger: Sayf Arʿad is angry with Sayf, Sayf is angry with Damar, and Damar (we are told later in the passage) kills Sayf Arʿad out of anger with the enemy, but also with his father because he doesn't understand why his father does not just summarily execute the defeated king. It also raises a number of questions, primarily why is Damar rather than Sayf responsible for killing Sayf Arʿad? As the main hero of the narrative,

surely Sayf himself should be the one to kill the Ḥabashī king who is his arch-enemy, the man who has relentlessly pursued his destruction for the entire *sīra*? I think that the text makes Damar responsible for Sayf Arʿad's death for two main reasons. The first, and perhaps most important, is that Sayf's main enemy is not, in fact, Sayf Arʿad, but his two fire-worshipping advisors, the sorcerers Saqardīs and Saqardiyūn. Sayf Arʿad is almost an incidental enemy, for he is a pawn in the hands of the real villains of the piece, the sorcerers, who are behind every move he makes and are the cause of all conflict, war and destruction. It is not until these two are captured and executed that order is restored. And in this light it is significant that neither Saqardīs nor Saqardiyūn is offered the choice of conversion: they are simply executed.[53] Shifting the responsibility for Sayf Arʿad's death to Damar realigns our narrative expectations of the plot at some level, making it clear that Sayf Arʿad cannot, in fact, be Sayf's primary antagonist and opposite in the *sīra*. This is significant because *Sīrat Sayf* is an essentially inclusive narrative: its story of the creation of a new Islamic world order rests on the idea of the brotherhood of man. In its worldview, Sayf and Sayf Arʿad are related by their descent from Noah, through his sons Shem (the ancestor of the Arabs) and Ham (the ancestor of the Africans).[54] By the end of the *sīra*, Sayf has instigated a new world order, in which the entire world is united in an Islamic community (*umma*). Because of this, Sayf *has* to be relieved of responsibility for killing Sayf Arʿad.

The second reason Sayf is absolved from responsibility for Sayf Arʿad's death has, I think, to do with his characterization. By this stage of the narrative, Sayf is a mature and wise king. One of the main ways that the *sīra* conveys this is through creating parallels with other famous heroes also known for these qualities, most notably the Prophet Muḥammad, Solomon and Alexander the Great. But Sayf's personal heroic progression is also depicted through his emotional characterization. In the earlier stages of the *sīra*, Sayf is very likeable and has many good qualities, but he is also hot-tempered, impetuous and foolhardy. He is, in other words, an

entertaining hero but not a good king and ruler to his people. As the *sīra* progresses, his transformation into a just and wise ruler is reflected in his calmer and more measured emotional responses to situations. By referencing the emotional states of the three protagonists in this scene, the narrator is able to influence the way the plot unfolds and the way the audience perceives the main protagonists. Sayf Arʿad is furious but remains silent, thereby both demonstrating his stubborn intractability and giving Damar more justification for his own anger, with its resulting consequences. Meanwhile, Sayf, the only character who actually appears to be angry in terms of his words and actions, shouting at and threatening Sayf Arʿad, is in fact the only one of the three who is emotionally detached: his anger is feigned in a strategic attempt to persuade and intimidate Sayf Arʿad into complying with his agenda. The way the three protagonists deal with their anger also speaks to their characterization. Both Sayf and Sayf Arʿad exhibit emotional self-control, as befits a ruler, whereas, true to form, Damar acts on impulse.

So, in conclusion, what we effectively have in this small but key episode is another example of the literary, rhetorical use of anger, in this case to manipulate the conventions of conversion narratives in *Sīrat Sayf* in such a way as to allow the text to transcend the binary opposition of victorious hero and vanquished enemy, that is, self and other, and so to express (simultaneously with, and in contradiction to, the binary) an inclusive world view which encompasses all of humanity and represents the new Islamic world order of the *sīra*. Damar's impetuous rage allows the narrator to fulfil the plot expectation that Sayf Arʿad must be defeated and killed, whilst allowing Sayf to be portrayed as a just and honourable king who is generous in his clemency. Sayf's anger with his son and his grief at the death of the fallen king have a wider symbolism in terms of the ideas of communal identity being expressed in the *sīra*, and ideas of honourable and shameful conduct towards the subjugated other. Above and beyond this, the narrator uses the emotional behaviour of his characters in this tiny

episode to not only create a narrative break that drives the plot of the *sīra* at a global level but also signal this narrative break to his audience. This use of anger to play with genre and textual narrative conventions has much in common with examples discussed in the first part of this article, in which the text manipulates gendered emotional behavioural patterns. In both cases anger is used to subvert narrative expectations, and can be said to function more as a rhetorical tool than a meaningful representation of how the emotional community in which the story was told thought men and women actually behaved. Having said that, I think we can extrapolate some ideas of what this emotional community thought about how people *should* behave, for example in terms of where and when it was acceptable for men and women to express anger, in terms of power dynamics between the genders and between those in power and their subjects, and in terms of idealized patterns of behaviour that those in power should follow towards their less powerful fellow men.

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[1] On the *siyar* as a genre, see Helen Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings in Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 3–6, 10–16; and Dwight F. Reynolds, 'Epic and History in the Arabic Tradition', in David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub (eds), *Epic and History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 392–410. See also Bridget Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword: Sīrat ʿAntar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996). The term *sīra* has no direct correlation in English: literally meaning 'a going', 'path' or 'way' – from which is derived 'way of conduct' or 'way of life' with reference to a person's behaviour, conduct and deeds – *sīra* can mean 'biography', 'romance' or 'epic' (see Heath, *Thirsty Sword*, p. 254 n. 4). The term also seems to imply not just a biography but rather an 'exemplary' life that is worthy of imitation. Reynolds, 'Epic and History', p. 395. For an introductory overview of the genre, a good place to start is with the various articles in

Sabine Dorpmueller (ed.), *Fictionalizing the Past: Historical Characters in Arabic Popular Epic* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

[2] Edward William Lane devotes three chapters of his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003) to discussing the performance settings, technique and style of various *sīra*s and other popular entertainments in nineteenth-century Cairo (pp. 391–425). For more recent practice, see Khaled Abouel-Lail, 'The *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*: New Remarks on its Performance in Upper and Lower Egypt', in Sabine Dorpmueller (ed.), *Fictionalizing the Past*, pp. 73–93; Khaled Abouel-Lail, *al-Sīra al-Hilāliyya fī muḥāfaẓāt Qena: dirāsa li'l-rāwī wa'l-riwāya* (Cairo: Maktabat Jāmiʿat al-Qāhira, 2007); Thomas Herzog, 'Le Dernier Conteur de Damas?', in Jean-Claude Garcin (ed.), *Lectures du Roman de Baybars* (Marseille: Editions Parenthèses/Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, 2003), pp. 209–29; Remke Kruk and Claudia Ott, '"In the Popular Manner": Sīra-Recitation in Marrakesh anno 1997', *Edebiyat*, 10:2 (1999), pp. 185–98; Claudia Ott, 'From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript: The Storyteller', *Oriente Moderno*, 22(83):2 (2003), pp. 443–51; Dwight Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Susan Slymovics, *The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[3] *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is the only one of the major epics to still have a living oral tradition of this kind. The Sirat Bani Hilal Digital Archive, compiled by Dwight Reynolds at https://siratbanihilal.ucsb.edu/, contains recordings and transcriptions from this epic.

[4] According to Lane's accounts of the performance of popular epics in nineteenth-century Cairo, *Sīrat Sayf* belonged to this last category of *sīra*s that are read. Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 409. He goes on to say that he was told that the high price of purchasing manuscripts of *Sīrat Sayf* was the reason the *sīra* was not performed any more.

[5] On 'emotional practices', see Monique Scheer's influential article, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is That What Makes them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51 (2012), pp. 193–220, in which she discusses approaching the study of emotions through practice theory. As she says on p. 217, 'a definition of emotion based on practice theory has the distinct advantage that it will not, in most cases, be found in the source material. It does not reproduce assumptions in the sources, confirming their "truth," but provides an analytical perspective from the outside, allowing for a critique of past theories of emotion, especially their strategies of naturalization and interiorization as well as their implications in power relations and social hierarchies.'

[6] This has been pointed out by ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Abnūdī, in his article 'Sīrat Banī Ḥilāl bayn al-shāʿir wa'l-rāwī', in Ayūb ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (ed.), *Sirat Beni Hilal: Actes de la 1ère table ronde intenationale sur la Geste des Béni Hilal* (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne de l'Edition, Institut National d'Archéologie et d'Arts, 1989), pt. 2, pp. 39–46 (40).

[7] 'Viewing emotion as a kind of practice means recognizing that it is always embodied, that an emotion without a medium for experience cannot be described as one. Access to emotion-as-practice – the bodily act of experience and expression – in historical sources or ethnographic work is achieved through and in connection with other doings and sayings on which emotion-as-practice is dependent and intertwined, such as speaking, gesturing, remembering, manipulating objects, and perceiving sounds, smells, and spaces. I have termed these "doings and sayings" "emotional practices," which build on the embodied knowledge of the habituated links that form complexes of mind/body actions.' Scheer, 'Are Emotions …?', p. 209.

[8] Having said that, on the basis of the other articles included in this issue and such previous work on emotions in premodern Arabic literature as has been published so far, it appears that

there are significant conceptual and literary synergies between the ways that emotions are represented and expressed in popular and elite literature.

[9] The variant of *Sīrat Sayf* addressed in this study consists of four volumes, each of roughly 500 pages, based on an edition first published in Būlāq, Cairo, in 1294 AH / 1877 AD. References to the Arabic text are to this edition.

[10] More detailed plot summaries can be found in Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 26–51; Malcolm C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 586–641; and Rudi Paret, *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Jazan: Ein arabischer Volksroman* (Hanover: Heinz Lafaire, 1924), which has been translated into English by G. Seidensticker-Brikay as *Siirat Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan: An Arabic Folk Epic* (Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri, 2006). There is also an English translation of the first third of the *sīra*, by Lena Jayyusi: *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan, an Arab Folk Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[11] The curse is reiterated on many occasions throughout the *sīra*; see Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 81–7. On Noah's curse in general, see, for example, Roland Boer and Ibrahim Abraham, 'Noah's Nakedness: Islam, Race and the Fantasy of the Christian West', in Roberta Sterman Sabbath (ed.), *Sacred Tropes: Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an as Literature and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 461–73; and David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); and for the curse in Islamic prophetic legends, see M. O. Klar, *Interpreting al-Thaʿlabī's 'Tales of the Prophets': Temptation, Responsibility and Loss* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 142–86.

[12] 'The genuine taboo and problem buried figuratively in the tale is the cultural ambivalence surrounding the inside and the outside, a question of personal and social boundaries.' Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic*, p. 141. See also Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, p. 11.

[13] See Remke Kruk, 'Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance: Qannasa bint Muzahim and Other Valiant Ladies', pt. 1, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 24:3 (1993), pp. 213–29, and pt. 2, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 25:1 (1994), pp. 16–33. On the characterization of women in the *sīra*s generally, see also her more recent 'The Princess Maymūnah: Maiden, Mother, Monster', *Oriente Moderno*, 22(83):2 (2003), pp. 425–42; and *The Warrior Women of Islam: Female Empowerment in Arabic Popular Literature* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

[14] On this, see Remke Kruk, 'The Bold and the Beautiful: Women and "Fitna" in the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*: The Story of Nura', in Gavin Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety* (New York: St Martin's, 1998), pp. 99–116. In addition to Kruk's work on women and gender in the popular *sīra*s, we now have Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg's recent PhD thesis on 'Wives, Witches, and Warriors in Arabic Popular Epic' (University of Pennsylvania, 2018). In this, Steinberg 'examine[s] the roles of its female characters and how they relate to power', borrowing the categories of 'power-over', 'power-to' and 'power-with' from feminist theory (p. v). Her general thesis, which broadly correlates with Kruk's findings although her approach and agenda is different, is that 'family ties, as the primary structure of medieval Islamic society, largely determined in what ways women were able to exercise power. The expression of this power determined whether its practice was lauded, tolerated, or punished' (p. 177). Within this framework, 'power-with is portrayed as the most morally acceptable form of female power, while a woman practicing power-over always suffers severe consequences, a sure sign that her activities are considered unacceptable in the worldview of the tale's composers. Women practicing power-to are portrayed more ambivalently: sometimes the tale allows such activity, but it is only temporary and must eventually be judged to fall into either the "power-over" or "power-with" category. Sexually available women (marriageable virgins, wives, and widows or divorcees) tend to represent fear of a power-over scenario, where their attractiveness and intimate access to men raise the

specter of female domination. Power-to is exemplified by sexually unavailable women: sisters and daughters. Their relationships with their powerful brothers and fathers are portrayed as necessarily platonic, but emotionally close: as minimally threatening characters closely associated with the reputations of their male relatives, they are, at least temporarily, allowed the freedom to live their lives in unconventional ways. The character of the mother is the ultimate example of power-with: women transgressing boundaries for the sake of others, whether it is their children or their community, are rarely condemned in the universe of the *sīrah*s' (p. 11).

[15] See Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*.

[16] For this adventure, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, pp. 67–96, summarized and translated in Jayyusi, *Adventures*, pp. 24–31.

[17] See Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, vol. 1, pp. 35–42.

[18] For more on female gender roles in *Sīrat Sayf*, see Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 57–61.

[19] Jayyusi, *Adventures*, p. xxiii.

[20] As outlined in Tzvetan Todorov, 'Narrative-Men', in *The Poetics of Prose*, Richard Howard (transl.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), pp. 66−79; reprinted in Ulrich Marzolph (ed.), *The Arabian Nights Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 226−38.

[21] Scheer remarks, 'The use of language that links the body with the mind (metaphors that vary culturally and change over time) can serve as a signpost such as when actors speak of their "blood boiling," when they "feel" and "sense" their thoughts, or describe a physical space or movement in their immaterial, "inner" parts. In these cases, the experience of emotions is very often described as a merging of body and mind, as a physical involvement in thought.' 'Are Emotions …?', p. 218.

[22] On the semantic range of *ghaḍab*, see Marek M. Dziekan, 'The Categorisation of Emotions in the Classical Arabic Language: A Preliminary Lexicographical Study', in Nina Pawlak (ed.), *Codes and Rituals of Emotions in Asian and African Cultures* (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, 2009), pp. 63–81 (70).

[23] This is in contrast to, for example, Gwynne Kennedy's description of attitudes to anger in literature early modern England, where 'women are believed to get angry *more* often and *more* easily than men because of their physiological, intellectual, and moral inferiority to men. A woman's anger is a sign of weakness that confirms her innate inferiority and her need to submit to male authority.' Kennedy, *Just Anger: Representing Women's Anger in Early Modern England* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp. 3–4.

[24] As has been pointed out by Zeynep Yelçe, in the context of Turkic legends, the motif of rage leading to a military campaign is a common one. See Yelçe, 'Royal Wrath: Curbing the Anger of the Sultan', in Karl A. E. Enenkel and Anita Traniger (eds), *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 439–57 (447).

[25] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 3, p. 210. For the whole episode, see pp. 209–19.

[26] The Arabic phrase has '*his* eyes'.

[27] The translation is from Jayyusi, *Adventures*, p. 224, with minor amendments. For the Arabic, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, pp. 492–3. For the whole episode, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, pp. 491–3, 505–10; and Jayyusi, *Adventures*, pp. 223–7, 232–3.

[28] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, pp. 248–9.

[29] *Kāmid* has connotations of being heartsick, distressed and grief-stricken.

[30] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, p. 41. See also Jayyusi, *Adventures*, p. 15. The full episode is on pp. 15–16 in Jayyusi's translation and pp. 41–5 in the Arabic text.

[31] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, p. 42.

[32] This has interesting correspondences with the ideas of *ghayra* discussed by Marion Holmes Katz in her article for this issue.

[33] For this episode, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 2, pp. 182–90.

[34] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 3, pp. 392–3.

[35] 'Naṣr' means 'victory' or 'triumph'.

[36] Miṣr is named for the Egyptian name for Cairo, from the verb *maṣṣara*, the root meaning of which is 'to found settle or civilise', or 'to make Egyptian'.

[37] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 4, p. 321. See also Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 237–8.

[38] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 1, pp. 7–8; and Jayyusi, *Adventures*, pp. 1–2. See also Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 27–30.

[39] As I have explored in *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, the level of gender confusion displayed by Qamariyya's character is really intriguing in terms of intertextual parallels between the way she is depicted and the portrayal of the Egyptian god Seth in the ancient Egyptian 'The Contendings of Horus' (see pp. 170–96). The emotional confusion of gender patterns identified in the current article adds an additional layer to this discussion that is consistent with the ideas surrounding Qamariyya's characterization outlined there.

[40] This makes the representation and literary purpose of anger in *Sīrat Sayf* very different from, for example, that described by Christian Peters in his '*Iustas in iras*? Perspectives on Anger as a Driving Force in Neo-Latin Epic', in Enenkel and Traniger, *Discourses of Anger*, pp. 261–87 (265).

[41] On gender and order and chaos in *Sīrat Sayf*, see Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 39–40. On a more general level, see Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Patrick Gregory (transl.) (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

[42] On *sīra* composition, see Heath, *Thirsty Sword*; and Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic*. On orality and written texts in a more general sense, see Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts,*

Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Lauri J. Honko et al. (eds), *The Epic: Oral and Written* (Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages Press, 1998); and Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).

[43] Al-Khiḍr is a wandering figure who appears in a lot of popular literature, and in many collections of prophetic legends. He is an immortal servant of God who possesses great wisdom and secret knowledge. For a brief introduction, see A. J. Wensinck, 'al-Khaḍir (al-Khiḍr)', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.soas.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0483 [accessed 8 June 2019].

[44] For the Nile diversion episode, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 3, pp. 205–60. There is a detailed summary of this episode in Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 256–62.

[45] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 3, pp. 248–50.

[46] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 3, pp. 185–7.

[47] i.e. the *shahāda* or 'profession of faith', which is, in the Sunni tradition, *[ashadu an] lā ilāh illā Allāh wa-Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* ('[I testify that] there is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Prophet of God'). The Shi'i *shahada* adds the phrase *wa-ʿAlī walīy Allāh* ('and ʿAlī is the *walī* ['representative' or 'friend'] of God'). Recitation of the *shahāda* is the primary formal requirement for conversion to Islam.

[48] This disregards the rules of written Arabic, according to which the text should read *shadīdan* rather than *shadīd*.

[49] Ṣamṣām figures in the *sīra* as the king of China. He is the father of one of Sayf's wives, Nāhid, and marries Sayf's mother, Qamariyya, when she flees to China after her attempts to kill her son are discovered. It is unclear why it is (presumably) his sword that is referenced here.

[50] The Arabic word used here, *ʿanīd*, literally means 'stubborn' but I opted for 'strong-minded' because Sayf's wording here implies praise for Sayf Arʿad's character. The implication in the Arabic (which is difficult to convey in translation) is that Sayf Arʿad resisted conversion to Islam because he was stubborn, but simultaneously reflects an underlying assumption is that faith in one's own convictions, determination and a sense of purpose are good qualities in a ruler. Hence, the single-mindedness that made Sayf Arʿad resist conversion is actually a sign of strength of character, and is one of the reasons that Sayf was prepared to go above and beyond in his attempts to coerce him into converting.

[51] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 4, pp. 102–3.

[52] To give just one example, see *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 2, pp. 135–6, where Sayf threatens a defeated enemy, the sorcerer Shaʿshaʿān, with death if he does not abandon fire worship and convert to Islam. When he refuses, Sayf strikes him with a staff given to him by al-Khiḍr, which sets him on fire, and he burns alive. For the entire episode, see pp. 80–138. There is an alternative conversion narrative pattern, which is often used when Sayf encounters friendly foreign peoples on his travels, in which he uses courtesy and persuasion to enlighten them with the truth of the Islamic faith and bring them into the fold.

[53] *Sīrat Sayf*, vol. 4, p. 444.

[54] For more on this, see Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods and Kings*, pp. 80–90.