

Women in the Canterbury Tales and the Arabian Nights: Parallels and Contrasts

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Abstract

This study identified the values and virtues, weaknesses, and vices of the twenty-one significant women characters from *The Arabian Nights* and *The Canterbury Tales*. It further investigated how the other men and women in the tales treated them. Moreover, this study examined the gender roles women portrayed in the tales and identified similar and contrasting characteristics displayed by women characters. This study employed a qualitative research design using textual analysis, focusing on the woman characters of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*, and employing Aristotle's Mimesis and De Beauvoir's theory on feminism. The study enumerated all the twenty-one women characters, and their actions, descriptions and thoughts were treated and analyzed using a table. Based on the analysis, the major values and virtues exhibited and shared by women from the two tales are magnanimity, fearlessness, confidence, intelligence, courage, self-sacrifice, forbearance, dutifulness, kindness, bravery, faithfulness, and submissiveness. The common weakness is lustfulness. As to how men treated women subjects, the findings of the study show that women are found to be: treated as sexual objects even when they are worshipped and adored, thus trivialized; and idealized, as reflected from the virtues and values that is inherently embedded to their womanhood. In Chaucer's tales there are some instances of women unfaithfulness to a husband. While, in the Islamic tales, the instance of lustfulness is only showed by an evil Queen who is almost dehumanized because of her supernatural attribute. As regards the gender roles of women, only two women depict their duties as nurturers. Other women perform in sword fighting, while others excel in their display of wisdom, faith, and self-restraint. Overall, these two tales presented the diversified nature and individuality of women which prevail amidst a similar societal culture where they grew up and nurtured. With the representation of women characters in the *Arabian Nights*, this study found that the women concept of the Arab folk as early as the 12th century, qualifies the women characters as feminist ideals as they exhibited power over men through using their strengths in the battlefield. They are the transcendental women envisioned by de Beauvoir. And they surprisingly exist in this age-old tales which was supposed to picture women as the second sex-the inessential. However, they also portray the stereotypical women who served as nurturer and as sexual objects to men. Chaucer's tales likewise characterize women in a balanced scale. Some of Chaucer's women characters are viewed as sexual objects, thus, trivialized. However, he also depicts women power in his tales in the form of extremely impressive virtues that these women characters possess. On the whole, women characters in this study are not discriminated. They instead picture some instances of transcendence which is the clamor of the feminists advocate.

Keywords: *Canterbury Tales*, *Arabian Nights*, Aristotle's Mimesis, De Beauvoir's theory on feminism, gender roles

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern women have continually sought to keep abreast with men in the roles which they perform in society. The women of today aver that men and woman are equal in their abilities and capacities to bring about an effect on the functions assigned to them. What has become of modern women is attributed to the women of the past. Looking at the women of ancient times, the researcher thought it interesting to conduct a study which will examine the place of women in ancient society as they are made alive in the literary pieces in the two opposing settings, the East and the West. The West, represented by the *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer out with a catholic religious background and the East, represented by the *Arabian Nights*, a collection of tales in an Islamic society.

The *Canterbury Tales* and the *Arabian Nights* are both collections of stories written some centuries ago. The *Canterbury Tales* was written in the 14th century while *The Arabian Nights* started its composition in the 10th century and was finished in the 16th century. The *Canterbury Tales* is a collection of twenty-four tales told by people from all layers of society such as a knight, a miller, a wife of bath, a pardoner, a nun's priest, a carpenter, a cook, a man of law, a friar, a summoner, a clerk, a merchant, a franklin, a physician, a shipman, a prioress, a monk, a nun, a manciple and a parson with the purpose of telling each other stories to keep them entertained while they travel on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury.

On the other end, *The Arabian Nights* is supposedly told by a girl who is well-read to deliver the people from the cruelty of their king. The tales themselves trace their roots back to ancient and medieval Arabic, Persian, Indian, Turkish, Egyptian and Mesopotamian folklore and literature. These stories tell tales from a wonderful realm of oriental magic wherein almost anything can possibly happen.

Today's computer generation, hooked to new technologies which unceasingly progresses, can hardly appreciate the value of reading literary

pieces. They should be introduced to entertaining and fantastic stories such as tales from *The Arabian Nights*. Contrary to fantasy, *The Canterbury Tales* tells of a realistic moral stories which may help shape women's moral values. These tales with similar and contrasting characteristics would surely hold the modern reader's interest and attention. For who could disregard the magic ships, valleys of diamonds, palaces that rise out of the desert, princes that are changed into beasts, miracles, women of great endurance and patience, courtly love and others. Students, children and adults are surely hooked to these enchanting and realistic stories. This prompted the proponent to decide on conducting a study on these tales, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*, which are also a must for the Language and Literature students. These tales are basically part of their syllabuses in English American and Afro-Asian literatures respectively. A study on these tales will help bring out the beauty and enchantment of these tales at the same time captivate the readers' attention with the researcher using mimetic and feminist approaches to examine the stories making them more comprehensible, specifically the woman/women characters.

The women in *Canterbury tales* are of diverse personalities. Some examples are: Emily, a beautiful maiden whom two knights fell in love with; Alisoun, a young wife of an old carpenter; the Wife of Bath, a woman who had experienced five different husbands; Constance, a beautiful and kind woman who experienced miracles; Griselda, a woman of enduring patience and other interesting women characters.

Equally interesting and perhaps more entertaining are the women in *The Arabian Nights*. They perform multifaceted roles which intrigue many a reader of the tales. The frame story tells a courageous, talented and intelligent girl who volunteered to be the king's next victim. The king marries a virgin each day and executes her the next morning in retaliation to the infidelity of his wife. This happened for a period of about three years, thus, more than a

thousand maidens had been slain. However, the heroine, Sharazad, beguiled the king with fascinating stories that saved her and her kingdom. And the tales that she tells are intertwining stories that interconnect with each other, thus, making the stories more interesting, suspenseful and delightful. One example of a tale that tells of a woman major character is “Julnar the Mermaid and Her Son Badar Basim of Persia”. It centers on a mermaid who decided to become a woman and who allowed a King to love her only when she knew that she had the full attention of the King. The tale eventually led to an obedient Princess Jaurahah, the love object of Badar Basim and another woman character, Queen Lab, a sorceress who enchants all her lovers into animals. Another leading woman character is Dalilah, from the tale “Wily Dalilah and her Daughter Zaynab”. Dalilah is a clever woman running a series of con games and at the end occupies a position in society that is supposed to be exclusively for men. Moreover, “Prince Behram and Princess Al-Datma” deals with a woman character who not only is capable of physically combating with a man but could also defeat a skillful prince in a battle using both physical prowess and intellect. On the other hand, a woman character from “Aziz and Azizha” tells of a woman who would sacrifice herself for the man she loves. These are only a few examples of the roles women play in the Arabian Nights (The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night, 1885).

Indeed, the researcher finds it interesting to have a closer scrutiny of the different faces of the characters of these two popular collections of tales from diverse cultural background. Hence, this study is conceived.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using textual analysis, focusing on the female characters of The Canterbury Tales and The Arabian Nights. They were read using Aristotle’s Mimesis and De Beauvoir’s theory on feminism. Every action and expression of the women characters in the stories were interpreted and analyzed.

Research Instruments

The Canterbury Tales (Geoffrey Chaucer) is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century. The tales are told as part of a storytelling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The prize for this contest is a free meal at the Tabard Inn at Southwark on their return. These collections of tales consist of 24 tales each with a prologue from the character teller of the story.

In this study only ten tales from The Canterbury Tales were included as subjects for analyses. These tales are the only stories that have significant woman characters. The ten tales with the woman/women characters are as follows:

1. The Knight’s Tale- Emily
2. The Miller’s Tale- Alisoun
3. The Lawyer’s Tale- Constance
4. The Wife of Bath’s Tale- Alisoun
5. The Student’s Tale- Griselda
6. The Merchant’s Tale –May
7. The Franklin’s Tale- Dorigen
8. The Physician’s Tale- Virginia
9. The Tale of Melibee – Prudence
10. The Second Nun’s Tale – St. Cecilia

The Arabian Nights stories are some of the world’s great treasures. They have existed for thousands of years, consisting of tales told in Persia, Arabia, India and Asia. The Arabian Nights (also known as The 1001 Arabian Nights) have inspired writers the world over with the ancient power of story.

There are versions of these stories in many languages and they all convey the great sense of adventure, truth, fantastic imagination, justice, and faith embodied by the great civilizations that contributed stories and ideas to the collection.

The Arabian Nights include fairy tales, fables, romances, farces, legends, and parables. The tales use a sweeping variety of settings, including Baghdad, Basrah, Cairo and

Damascus, as well as China, Greece, India, North Africa and Turkey.

These fanciful, sometimes brutal tales, reveal in the art of storytelling. The underlying suggestion of the Arabian Nights is that a fantastically precious jewel exists which, when it comes into contact with people, actually changes them. The jewel is the magnificently powerful art of story. There may not be any better examples in the world of how art, trickery, magic and craft can swirl together and form a world that every reader and listener wants to enter. Regardless of the situation presented in any particular Arabian Nights story, the assumption contained in the story is that life is always worth living and that human endeavor, along with human weakness, is a wonderful and fascinating thing to behold. These stories form a powerful mental connection between the ancient civilizations of the East and those of the West. More so than any other piece of writing in history, these stories illustrate that the minds of the East and of the West consider carefully the same subject matter.

For The Arabian Nights, the translations of Richard Burton was used. These 16 volumes collection of tales comprise of 449 tales with additional 37 variants. In order to identify the tales for this study, titles with women characters mentioned were considered. However, the first tale is included although it has no woman character in the title for it is the frame story of the Arabian Nights, and the most important woman character in the entire collection of the tales portrays her role in this very tale. Further, the woman character referred to in the title should bear a name for her to qualify as a significant woman character.

From the Arabian Night's collection, another ten tales with woman/women characters are subjected to analysis in the present study. The tales with the woman/women characters are the following:

- 1) Story of King Shahryar and His Brother – Shahrazad
- 2) Tale of Aziz and Azizah – Azizah

- 3) Niamar Bin Al-Rabia and Naomi His Slave Girl – Naomi
- 4) The Loves of Jubayr Bin Umayr and the Lady Budur – Lady Budur
- 5) Prince Behram and Princess Al Datma – Al Datma
- 6) Hind, Daughter of Al-Nu'man and Al-Hajjaj- Hind
- 7) The Roqueries of Dalilah, the Crafty and Her Daughter Zaynab, the Coney Catcher – Dalilah
- 8) Julnar the Sea Born and Her Son Badar Basim of Persia – Queen Lab, Julnar
- 9) Ali Nur Al-Din and Mirriam the Girdle-Girl – Mirriam
- 10) The History of the King's Son of Sind and the Lady Fatimah - Lady Fatimah

This study employed a qualitative research design using textual analysis, focusing on the female characters of The Canterbury Tales and The Arabian Nights. They were read using Aristotle's Mimesis and De Beauvoir's theory on feminism. Every details, action and expression of the women characters in the stories were interpreted and analyzed.

Details, actions, speech and thought of the women and men subjects are the essential data used in this study. Details used, actions, expressions and thoughts of each woman character were tabulated categorized and analyzed to: arrive at women characters description; examine the roles of women characters; analyze the treatment of men to women characters, determine the treatment of other women characters towards the women subjects; point out the similar characteristics of Chaucerian women to Islamic women subjects as regards their values and virtues, weaknesses and vices and gender roles; identify the contrasting characteristics of women subjects based on their values and virtues vis-à-vis weaknesses and vices and gender roles. To examine the treatment of men towards women, men's actions, expressions and thoughts were also used.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes women characters in The Canterbury Tales. Emily is described as beautiful and nature lover while Alisoun is beautiful and vain. Constance is virtuous and Alisoun, the Wife of Bath is promiscuous. Griselda is shown as beautiful, poor and pure while May, Dorigen and Virginia are all pictured as beautiful. Prudence is noble and

forgiving while Cecilia is revealed to be pious and chaste. Most women characters in The Canterbury Tales are described as beautiful. It may be because the author of these tales is a man who always wants women to be beautiful. There are only three women characters whose description of their faces is silent. Alisoun, the Wife of Bath, Prudence, and Cecilia.

Table 1. Description of Women Characters in The Canterbury Tales

Woman Character	Description	Supporting Text
1. Emily	Fair Nature lover	That Emily, a fairer sight to see Than lilies on a stalk of green could be [1035-1036] And in the garden, as the sun arose, She wandered up and down, and, as she chose, She gathered flowers, white as well as red, [1051-1053]
2. Alisoun	Fair, Vain	And fair this young wife was! She had withal A body like a weasel, slim and small. She wore a belt with little stripes of silk; An apron was as white as morning milk [3233-3236]
3. Constance	Virtuous	In all her works her virtue is her guide, [164]
4. Alisoun, The Wife of Bath	Promiscuous	For since I was twelve years of age, my lords, Thanks be to God eternally alive, Of husbands at the church door I've had five And all were worthy men in their degree. [4-7]
5. Griselda	Beautiful, Poor, Pure	Was of the fairest underneath the sun; For she had been brought up in poverty, No ill desire in her heart's blood would run. [211-214]
6. May	Beautiful	Her beauty other pleasures to enhance. [1749]
7. Dorigen	Beautiful, Noble	As lovely as any under the sun, This lady was, and of high birth as well... [734-735]
8. Virginia	Beautiful	This maiden had such loveliness that she Was fairer than all creatures men may see; [7-8]
9. Prudence	Noble, Forgiving	So noble Prudence let her husband weep for a time... [980] 'Do not render evil for evil,' he says, 'nor wicked speech for wicked speech, but do good to them who do you evil and bless those who speak evil to you.' [1291]
10. Cecilia	Pious, Chaste	She never ceased, as in the book I find, To say her prayers and God to love and dread, Beseeching that he guard her maidenhead. [124-126]

Table 2 shows the description of women from the Arabian Nights. Sharazad is pictured as an intelligent woman who is well read and well bred. Azizah is selfless, while Naomi, Lady Budur, Al-Datma, Hind, Julnar and Miriam are all depicted as beautiful. Other women characters are Dalilah, the wily, Queen Lab, a lustful woman and Lady Fatimah, a skilful warrior. Similar to the women from the Canterbury Tales who are featured as beautiful, women in The Arabian Nights are mostly

described as beautiful women too. Three of these beautiful women are Princesses who have their own different stories. Sharazad which is not included in the count of the seven beautiful women in The Arabian Nights is also featured as pleasant woman thus could be assumed to be beautiful too. Lady Fatimah too, whose popularity has gained far and wide must be so beautiful, judging from the many suitors who died for her.

Table 2. Description of Women Characters in The Arabian Nights

Woman Character	Description	Textual Reference
1. Sharazad	Intelligent Prim and Proper	She was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred.
2. Azizah	Selfless	"...could I come and go at Will, I would bring thee and her together in shortest time, and curtain you both with my skirt."
3. Naomi	Fair, Graceful	"... nor was there in all Cufa a fairer girl than Naomi, or a sweeter or a more graceful."
4. Lady Budur	Beautiful	"I beheld a damsel, white as a full moon when it mooneth on its fourteenth night"
5. Al-Datma	Beautiful	King's daughter, who had no equal in her time for beauty and loveliness
6. Hind	Fairest	Daughter of Al-Nu'man, was the fairest woman of her day.
7. Dalilah	Wily	"...she could wile the very dragon out of his den..."
8. Julnar	Beautiful	The merchant uncovered her face, whereupon the place was illumined by her beauty...
9. Queen Lab	Lustful	She was amazed at his beauty and loveliness and became passionately enamoured of him, and distraught with desire of him.
10. Miriam	Beautiful	"O Princess of fair ones, is there in the world a comelier than thou?"
11. Lady Fatimah	Skillful	Now this Princess was mistress of all manner weapons...

On Women Characters Roles as Reflected Based on Details, Actions, Speech and Thoughts of Women Characters

The roles of women characters in The Canterbury Tales are reflected on the bases of details, actions, speech and thought. Their descriptions, actions, speech and thoughts are

closely interconnected that an interpretation should be done holistically in order to produce a more objective interpretation.

Emily is a fair maiden, in **The Knights Tale**, enjoying the beauty of nature, gathering flowers in May. She delights her freedom in frolicking in her garden. She is an innocent silent

character desired by two noble knights who are imprisoned in a tower overlooking the beautiful maiden whose beauty one could amiss to be a goddess.

She takes the role as a source of conflict of a fight between Palamon and Arcite who were earlier best of friends and who promised to support each other as long as they live. However, when the two are struck by exceeding love towards the maiden, strife between them begins. No one wants to give up his love and extreme desire to have Emily. Emily, however, is not even aware of the pain and suffering she is causing the two noble knights. When at last an opportunity comes to let their noble intentions for Emily be known, both of them are supposed to be punished by death, however, compassion from women including Emily moves the King to save the two knights and declares an upcoming big fighting event that will decide who will marry Emily. It is a sad reality that no one asks Emily's opinion. Everything is decided for her and all she could do is obey. Emily is an embodiment of an obedient noble woman. She has not uttered a single word of complaint about the joust. Emily's character is even made more transparent when she prays to Diana. She actually does not want to marry, all she wants is enjoy her single-blessedness and takes pleasure walking in wild forest and hunting. She expresses her wish to end the fight between the two knights by giving an end to their burning love. But if it can't be, that she be wed to the man who most desire her. Emily is not insensitive to the suffering of Palamon and Arcite that she prays to end their burning love. However, she is also a woman who is not so much strict on what she really wants. She would just let the flow of fate work in her. After all, what she wants is not at all important. Goddess Diana even shows up to tell her that she cannot have her wish to remain chaste forever for it is written in the stars that she would marry either of the two. And she does not dare express any sign of disagreement either in words or action, which makes the reader thinks that it is the way things are done in those

days. Although Emily shows no feeling of love to either Palamon or Arcite, she is a woman of affection that she shrieked as if in pain when Arcite's death is pronounced. Then she mourns for years for his death. The reason for her mourning is never revealed, it may be an expression of propriety to honor Arcite or it could be that love already entered her heart. Or could it be delaying her marriage to Palamon whom Arcite in his deathbed recommends to be the best man to replace him. But then again, Emily has no voice. When Theseus declares that mourning period must end and she be married to Palamon, it is the King's decision that counts and all she could do is obey.

Alisoun in *The Miller's Tale* is portrayed as a pretty young woman with low morality. Because Alisoun is young and pretty at eighteen and is married to an old uneducated carpenter, her husband does not trust her. She is close-guarded. Alisoun's oozing sexual appeal is likened to that of a wench or a prostitute.

In the first part of the tale, the narrator makes it clear that John, the carpenter, does not trust his wife Alisoun and treats her like a prisoner. However, John left for an important business, leaving her behind with a young student boarder in their own house. What he fears for her indeed happened. Nicholas ravages Alisoun. The sexual appeal of Alisoun extends even to a fastidious church clerk who serenades her almost every night and which leaves the readers wondering why her husband does not do anything to stop him from wooing his wife. All he does in the tale is ask Alisoun if the one singing is Absalon and when Alisoun confirms, nothing is done. They just suffer him being a nuisance to their sweet slumber. Not only is the beauty and sex-appeal of Alisoun worthy of a serenade but Absalon also sends her gifts and money and even displays his talent only to be noticed by Alisoun. However, Alisoun's sexual pleasure already focuses to Nicholas, their student boarder that she connives with him to fool her husband into a coming flood story. While John is soundly sleeping, they were enjoying sex on the nuptial bed which is supposed to be sacred. Her being a daring

lustful woman is made fun in the tale through her cheating Absalon on kissing her ass instead of her lips when he appears during Alisoun's and Nicholas' most awaited trysting moment.

Chaucer at the start describes her using animals as comparison as she is compared to a kid or calf and a colt. It suggests Alisoun's animalistic wild nature which renders her powerless to control herself or her instincts. On the other hand she has power over the men in the tales because of her beauty and perhaps, sexuality.

Constance, in **The Lawyer's Tale** is featured as beautiful, mature, humble, courteous, pious, and generous. Virtuous woman as she is, still she is characterized as a powerless woman as she submits to the will of his father in marrying a Syrian Sultan who will bring her to their nation. She must have felt the impending danger that will befall her in that Barbaric nation, but her virtuous nature would not let her utter any word of protest to disobey her father. Instead, she just lifts everything to God who is her refuge whatever she does and wherever she goes. Indeed, God always protects her for when the Sultana slaughters the Christians during the wedding feast, she escapes miraculously being put to a ship to sail alone for years and finally reaching Northumberland. When she reaches the place, she wins the sympathy of the Constable and his wife. But although she gains the love not only of this couple, but by all who have seen her, she becomes more cautious and lives as an unknown woman in that foreign place, pretending to have lost her memory. She becomes more cautious this time as she experienced the Barbaric cruelty that may just have led her into becoming a wiser and more intelligent woman who knows how to deal with the society she presently faces. She incidentally cures a blind man making her perform as a faith healer.

King Allah in sympathy falls in love and marries Constance. However, the King's mother portrayed as a stereotyped mother-in-law, hates Constance and treats her as a strange being. When the King leaves, the King's mother tricks Constance into being pushed to leave the place again in the same situation as

she came. She is forced to sail a ship, now with a little child in her arms. In the same way that she was powerless to disobey her father, again she is powerless to fight against her mother-in-law. Or she is too virtuous to fight. Thus, she sails with her child. In the ship, her femininity and beauty again leads an abusive thief to try to ravage her. However, her determination and strength in saving her chastity, and her prayers leads her to push the attacker into the sea.

Alisoun, the Wife of Bath is a picture of a daring woman who is proud to have had five husbands already and still welcomes a sixth. She is a promiscuous, lustful, lewd, unfaithful, manipulative and deceitful woman. She portrays power over men because she has ways to get what she wants from them through her manipulative skills. She refuses to allow men to control her actions.

Alisoun is seen as an embodiment of feminist thought because of her power over men. She strives independence in an oppressive patriarchal society by using her sexual power to control them. Her boldness in mentioning her sexual instrument and her ways in sex in the presence of male listeners is something eccentric in a woman. However, it is in her directness about sexuality that she reveals her power over men because it is through sex that she manipulates her husbands to her end including to gain some material profit.

Instead of the stereotyped characterization of a woman who is considered as an object, Alisoun is the one who looks at the man as an object. She satiates her sexual pleasure using them and fulfils her material wants through them. Thus, not only is Alisoun equal to men, but she overpowers them in this sense. Indeed she is a feminist representation of a woman, but not in the strictest sense because she still uses her body to gain power over men. Towards the end of her narration however, she mentions again using her wit as she fakes her death after being attacked by her fifth husband and using her strength as she boxes him on the face when he approaches her still self on the floor. And this is through this incident that she gains freedom from the only husband whom she loves.

Griselda, a woman character in **The Clerk's Tale** is a maiden of great virtues. As a poor farmer's daughter she is seen to be beautiful, pure, simple, mature, responsible girl who takes care of her father. She has high value for work as indicated by her industry until her sleeping time. She is also portrayed as an obedient girl whose obedience to her father is transferred to her husband when she marries.

Griselda is consulted by Walter before the wedding. Although that consultation seems to be only a propriety so as to declare that there is agreement between two parties. For who could reject such a proposal that will elevate the social class of a person. Griselda was even excited to see the face of the Marchioness that she is in a hurry to finish her household tasks in order for her to take a glance at the lucky woman. But here is the Marquis, offering her to be the Marchioness herself, could she refuse? Definitely, no! Walter's attraction to Griselda is due to her unique female identity that is defined not with her physical appearance but with her good virtues which lead him to the decision of choosing her to be his bride. She is a strong female character whose virtues even grows as she ascends to a higher social status. She displays excellent social manners and uses her wisdom to resolve strife and disagreements among the Marquis' constituents. Thus, she has the quality and potential equal to, if not higher than the Marquis himself. Her own virtuous nature however, weakens her as she submits to the cruel test of the Marquis. Her submission to her husband however, should be seen not as a weakness of Griselda herself but a social system defect which offers her no option but to obey. Walter leads her to the belief that her low social status calls for the death of her children. As a poor girl who rises to the level of Marchioness, she has a great indebtedness, respect and faith to Walter that what he says is for her a rule which she must never question. Her obedience to her husband in turning over her children to be killed is in itself her strength. Walter himself observes how she loves her children and it is in the aspect of motherhood that he choose to test her. Griselda must have

been dying inside as she would say goodbye to each child. But each time, she would manage to control herself and her emotions that not a drop of tears comes out of her eyes each time her child is taken away. She fights against herself and emerges a winner. Her ability to put herself in control is an indication of strength. Walter is just observing a change in her, but her expression remains constant. She has self-restraint and self-command that completely puts herself in dominion of her emotions. To this effect, she defeats Walter's expectation of her emotional outburst. Walter, however, would not stop the test up to the highest level. He announces that a new bride is coming because his constituents calls for it. He humiliates Griselda in the process by reminding her of her lowly origin. Again she manifests strength by being steadfast and by speaking of her gratefulness for the years of kindness and honors bestowed upon her. She remains obedient, faithful and sane that she requests her smock not to be stripped of her for a sense of decency. Towards the end of the test, Walter in mockery asks her how beautiful is his new bride, and from her response, an indication of repressed suffering is shown. She requests Walter to be kinder because the new bride may not be able to survive the adversities survived by a person that comes from poverty.

Up to the end, Griselda never fails in her constancy and steadfastness that Walter has to accede his defeat and Griselda's victory. Griselda, in her mental and emotional strength, achieves full potential that is not only equal but higher than Walter's. In effect, Griselda shows emancipation of mind and emotion.

May, in the Merchant's Tale is displayed as a beautiful young wife married to an elderly man named January. May is a woman of low morality who easily indulged with a young squire who desires her through mutual understanding. Her adulterous nature leads her to implement her sexual desire above a tree in the presence of her blind husband.

January, who becomes blind continues to assert his power over May. He would always have May by his hand wherever he goes to assure

him of her faithfulness. However, May's adulterousness and deceitfulness lead her to design a scheme that will fulfil her own sexuality as a young woman who is not satisfied with an old husband. Thus, May resorts to an affair above the pear tree which is seen by god *Pluto* and with grave disgust he restores the eyesight of January at the moment of that most horrifying obscenity being enjoyed by May and Damian above the pear tree. January uttered a loud outcry of pain and threatened May with punishment of death but May is able to use her wit, bestowed by *Proserpina*, to give January a plausible excuse. And she is easily forgiven.

Dorigen, a woman character in **The Franklin's Tale**, is a young wife of a knight who swears loyalty to her husband. She is portrayed as a weak character as she displays extreme emotions while she suffers nostalgia for her absent husband. Dorigen is further depicted as a faithful woman who would not succumb to the temptation of indulging with the 'most handsome man alive', as her suitor Aurelius is described. However, she gives a promise which is supposed to be a joke, that she would love Aurelius if the big rocks on the shores of Britany disappear. She is certain that making those rocks disappear is impossible. And it is the same as saying that it is impossible for her to love Aurelius because she is loyal to her husband. But as the story goes, there is nothing that a lover would not do. He employs a magician to do the deed and the rocks on the shores of Britany vanished. Dorigen is distraught to learn about the fulfilment of the impossible task which is against the natural law. Now, she is caught in between: to honor her promise or honor herself by being pure. She contemplates suicide in order to save her body from sin. However, Arveragus who learns of her promise asks her to be true to her word. Dorigen's plan of saving her reputation as a woman is her strength as a character. She is not a lustful woman who would readily go with a desirous handsome young man, but she is a woman of honor who looks at marriage as a sanctity. She is a one man woman who honors her own body and does not think of indulging

with any other man, no matter how attractive he is. Dorigen's anxiousness and apprehension in fulfilling her promise is somehow noticed by Aurelius' sensitive nature. And with a knowledge of Arveragus nobility in leading Dorigen to keep her word, he frees Dorigen from the bond of her promise. Arveragus and Aurelius are two male characters who represent men who are not imposing power over a woman. All the three major characters seem to have the same level of freedom. And all of them are likable characters from the viewpoint of both the writer and the readers.

Virginia, is a woman character in **The Physician's Tale**. She is pictured as an excellently beautiful woman carved by nature, a young maiden at the age of fourteen. She is portrayed to be innocent and sweet. She is a representation of an idealized female character who possesses beauty and virtues. Her beauty, however, becomes a liability on her part because of the malicious violent desire towards her of a person in authority and power who is Judge Apius. In the eyes of the Judge, she is a trivialized female character because she is viewed only as a sexual object who is an instrument to satisfy his carnal desire. His power to manipulate stories and to decide for its authenticity renders Virginia and his father helpless. Virginia's, Virginia's father, powerlessness to fight against the judge's declaration leads him to make a drastic decision to save Virginia's honor, that is to kill his own daughter.

Virginia's obedience and submissiveness to the will of her father in order to save her honor is a portrayal of both power and powerlessness. Virginia and her father are powerless to go against the decision of the lustful Judge but Virginia has the power to face death in order to evade the malicious intent of the Judge that manifests from his malevolent court decision. She chooses death rather than face dishonour. In effect, the judge's power to possess Virginia is inundated by Virginia's constancy to save her honor, and bravery in facing death.

Prudence, a woman character in **The Melibee's Tale**, is an intellectual woman whose

name Prudence represents a prevalent virtue surrounding her character. She represents an ideal woman of the medieval times possessing strong positive virtues such as patience, prudence, and faith in God.

Prudence is at first stereotyped by her husband when he says that he would not follow her advice for two reasons: First, women are wicked; and second women cannot keep a secret. However, as Prudence painstakingly gives him lengthy quotes from male authorities, he is slowly won through persuasion and conviction. At the end he acknowledges his wife's advices and promises to follow her words of wisdom from then on.

Prudence functions as a wife, a nurturer of her husband, but her nurturing goes higher than physical nurturing. It goes up to mental and emotional nurturing. She gives her husband long speeches of moralizing quoted from male authorities to give him advice on patience, prudence and forgiveness. In giving her advice however, she assures that she gives utmost respect to her husband before delivering her 'speeches'. Although she is a powerful domineering character as shown by her intellectual ability in exhibiting her verbal fluency, retentive memory and logical reasoning, she does not impose her power to her husband by directly making the decision favourable to what she believes is right. She only works to persuade him to her idea of good decision.

Cecilia, a woman character in **The Second Nun's Tale**, is a woman of chastity. She highly values her virginity that on her wedding day, she is praying that she remains pure. Throughout the tale, she displays her spirituality, piety and loyalty to God that she becomes unacceptable to authorities because of her open defiance to non-Christian religion. She is a picture of bravery, fearlessness, courage and rebelliousness for the love and loyalty to her religious faith.

Cecilia is treated with respect by her husband as he believes her when she reveals to him the angel who is protecting her virginity. Although he demands to see some proofs. Not only does

he believes her but he also is convinced to let his brother be baptized as Christian.

Cecilia is not the stereotypical female character who suffers because of losing her virginity, instead she guards her chastity through her own will and her wit. She fights against male dominance by resorting to the power of language which is aided by miracles to achieve her end. Cecilia is a fearless character who speaks out and through the power of her words she converts many men into Christianity. Even the man who is supposed to punish her, helps in her crusade for Christianity. However, not all men would submit to her faith. Almachius, the prefect, treats her as a repulsive female figure for she does not conform to the behaviour of the medieval women. She fights back with fearless words and is not afraid to die because she believes in life after death. The prefect imposes his power over Cecilia by ordering her death but she does not die easily. Her power as a woman aided by divine grace continue to persist that although she is struck three times on the neck she does not die and continue to convince many people to embrace Christianity until her death on the third day.

The roles of women characters in *The Arabian Nights* are reflected on the bases of details, actions, speech and thought. Their descriptions, actions, speech and thoughts are interrelated that an interpretation should be done holistically in order to picture a more objective interpretation.

Sharazad in the **Story of King Shahryar and His Brother**, plays as the most significant heroine of *The Arabian Nights*. She is the erudite storyteller of the said 1001 tales from where *The Arabian Nights* tales originated. She is the daughter of the King's Vizier, whose task is to look for a virgin each day for King Shahryar to marry and kill the next morning. The King exempts the Vizier's daughter to be one of his unfortunate wives for a single night. However, Shahrazad's combined magnanimity, intelligence, courage, faith and determination lead her to convince her father to give her to the King in marriage risking her own life in an attempt to deliver her countrymen from a three-

year maiden slaughtering caused by the King's revenge against unfaithfulness of women which he and his brother experienced.

Although his father tries hard by telling her tales to dissuade her from her dangerous decision, still Shahrazad's assertiveness and fearlessness prevail.

She is respected both by her father and the King that her requests are granted and using her wisdom she achieves her end by beguiling the King with the wonderful stories about different personalities of men and women thereby bringing realization to the King for the cruelty he inflicted on his people.

Azizah is a woman character in the **Tale of Aziz and Azizah**. All throughout the story Azizah displays various positive values such as patience, love, forbearance, purity, self-sacrifice, restraint, devotion, dutifulness and intelligence.

Azizah is a great representation of an Arab woman who does not assert her own desires but is only willing to serve and help to the point of hurting herself. In the tale, Aziz meets and falls in love with another woman on the day he was supposed to marry Azizah. Azizah, although obviously in love with her cousin Aziz, selflessly helps him to be united with the woman whom he is madly in love with. In effect, Azizah got sick and dies with her unrequited love for Aziz. In the end, Aziz realizes his own folly of taking Azizah for granted, but only after he suffers rejection and punishment from the women who only used him and not truly loved him purely as Azizah did.

In the tale, Azizah is a maiden of great and exceptional forbearance and love. Some of her actions that depict these exceptional virtues are worth recalling. When Aziz did not arrive on time for their wedding date, she did not utter any word of reproach, although she reported Aziz' father's rage in his non-appearance during the appointed time for his wedding. Then she added a question to make him explain his being late but never hinted that she is mad at him. When Aziz told her the truth of his being hooked with an excessive love and desire for a

beautiful woman whom he saw by the window, she might have felt so much pain for she loved her cousin dearly. But her love for him is so pure and selfless that she just suffered silently and give him advice on how he could gain access to his woman of dreams and never ceased to encourage him that he could win her. When Azizah was kicked by Aziz which resulted in her being injured in her head when she hit a wooden peg, for a simple question of a pained woman, she did not manifest any display of anger or hatred. Instead she took care of bandaging her head and cleaned the blood that fell on the carpet then managed to talk gently to Aziz whose anguish for his unrequited love for a mysterious woman made him insensitive to the feelings and pain of Azizah.

Azizah continued to serve him even after her death because the two saws [Faith is fair, Unfaith is foul!] she taught Aziz protected Aziz' life when her lover was about to kill him but decided to castrate him instead. Aziz at the end suffered rejection and punishment from the women he got involved with. He was castrated by his lover upon knowing that he married another woman and was thrown away by the woman he married because of his castration.

Aziz treatment from these two women indicates that a woman is capable of power if she wills it. Azizah on the other hand chose to be silent and be oppressed. She is a picture of a typical woman, imprisoned within 'immanence' remaining a slave within the circle of duties imposed upon her.

Returning home to his mother, Aziz realized that he missed Azizah, her cousin. And he grieved for her loss and although in vain, his grief was still significant for Azizah left him something only to be given when he would show his grief for having lost her. It was the piece of linen with the figures of gazelles and inside was an inscription that expresses her undying love and sufferings for Aziz whose steel heart never noticed and returned the love contained in her. And in another piece of paper, she expresses her forgiveness and her wishes for him and his lover. In addition, there on was written a warning which had he been able to

read earlier, he could have been saved from the punishments he suffered from her women.

Naomi in Ni'amah bin al-Rabi'a and Naomi his Slave-girl, possesses the following virtues; beauty, skill, talent, piety, wisdom, eloquence, kindness, and loyalty.

Naomi is a naïve girl who easily trusts the old woman who is pretending to be of noble purpose. She shows kindness and generosity to the old woman by offering her food and a place to rest. Her innocence of foul dealings is shown when she gives her full trust to this old woman because of her thirst for a religious activity.

Naomi, when brought to Hajjaj veiled herself. It is an indication of her being conservative and proper. Consequently, when she is brought to the Caliph and told by the Princess that she was sold to the Caliph, she realizes that she is tricked, however, she chooses to be silent and is prudent enough to think that it is the best thing to do at that moment.

The King falls in love with Naomi and is very kind to her. However, the prospect of living in a Kingly palace never enters her mind. Instead, she becomes sick thinking about her master Ni'amah. Her loyalty to her husband never falters in her that she is ready to face any consequence, even death, in trying to reunite with her master and lord. Her faith in Allah, the sovereign, helped her ease her worries.

What makes Naomi unique is her love for learning and her exceptional beauty and talent in music and eloquence in speech which set her apart from ordinary slaves. Her beauty and talent in music is a source of delight of Ni'amah, her master and husband. However, these traits of Naomi became a source of envy and greed in other men that she is regarded not as a human being whose heart and body already rightly belongs to her master and husband whom she dearly loved, but a commodity of high value which can be sold to the King at a high price.

Lady Budur in The Loves of Jubayr Bin Umayr and the Lady Budur is a beautiful lady who is separated from the man she loved. Her character is narrated by Ibn Mansur. She possesses beauty and talent in singing. She is

frank and forthright and careful that at first she reproaches Mansur when she appeared in her place. However when Mansur gives him his excuse of thirst and wanting for a drink, she accepted his excuse. Again she reminded him to wend his ways but the loneliness in her eyes can never be concealed. So Mansur interfered with her affairs by his inquiries which she tolerated only after Mansur introduced himself. She is a trusting woman even to those she has just met. She humbles herself by sending Jubayr a letter through Mansur which Jubayr only tore to pieces. And when Mansur came back with the bad tidings, she accepts it with humility and gives justice to her word by giving him the amount she promised for his troubles. She might have lost hope of winning Jubayr's love and tries to move on living a contented life in the absence of love as shown by her beautiful face when Mansur once again came back after a year.

He carries a letter from Jubayr expressing his love and asking for pardon for the wrongs he had done. This time, it is Budur's turn to take revenge and compose a taunting letter. However, the messenger demands a letter which will make Jubayr's whole again for he is suffering from lovesickness at the moment.

When the lady feels sure of Jubayr's sincerity, love and sympathy at once enter her heart and she composes a letter which expresses her longing to see him just as he is longing to see her, still emphasizing that she is not to blame for their separation.

The boldness, courage and confidence of Lady Budur is revealed when she takes the step to make the contracting of marriage for them possible right away. Lady Budur goes against the propriety of waiting for the man to marry her. What she does is a transgression of the norms of Arabs but will surely make the feminist critics happy. Amidst a culture of repressed women, there is this female character who emerges to be self-possessed, daring woman who has the confidence to push her intentions and achieve her target because the man is sluggish and needs a little coercion. Lady Budur is a representation of a feminist

woman who has the capacity to impose her power upon the man if necessary.

Princess Al-Datma in the tale The Story of Prince Behram and Princess Al-Datma is portrayed as a beautiful, proud and confident swordfighter to the extent of conceit. She believes no one could surpass her in skill and beauty. She would marry no man except the one who would be able to overcome her at lunge of lance and stroke of sword in fair field. And if he is defeated, he would suffer humiliation and shame by giving up his horse and clothes and arms and allowing his forehead be marked with 'This is the freed man of Al-Datma.' Her self-confidence leads her to believe she is undefeatable and unmatched thus able to remain in control of her own life and destiny by beguiling and belittling men who sought for her beauty. However, when faced by Prince Behram who is expert in battlefield she fears losing the battle. Taking defeat unthinkable and unable to contain the humiliation she would suffer to the bystanders watching the fight, she uses her wit and cleverness by revealing her beauty to her challenger and a moment of amazement leads him to be tricked and defeated.

Prince Behram is a stereotypical lover who would not easily give up in his pursuit of a beautiful and cunning Princess. However, in their next encounter, he would be using both his wit and strength to conquer the Princess.

The Princess during her unguarded moments gave way to a woman's materialistic and perhaps inclination to vanity that she goes to the old man, unknowingly the Prince in disguise, who was giving away precious jewellery to her damsels and pretended to be one. However, when the Prince gets hold of her, he instantly rapes her.

After being raped she prefers to be silent for her not to be shamed and she consequently accepts that the best decision she can make is to elope with him. In the end, the superiority of the man overpowers the woman.

Hind in the tale, **Hind, Daughter of Al-Nu'man and Al-Hajjaj** is unveiled as a woman of beauty who is vocal of her disgust for the

ugliness of the man who married her. Her unhappiness and discontentment of her situation is expressed by her through verses which she may have intended him to hear. When her husband hears her loathing his appearance, he divorces her giving her a huge amount of money stipulated in case he divorces her. Hind in her happiness gives all the money to the deputy who told her of the good tidings.

Hind's beauty could be that outstanding because the Caliph himself asks her in marriage. However, she sends a message to the Caliph, self-debasing her and likening her to a vase which had been sit-on by a dog. The Caliph, however, only gives her a solution to her worries.

Hind's personal concept lowered because of the unwanted marriage. And she may have suffered so much from disgust and repulsiveness that resulted in her misbehaviour concerning her ex-husband. She disrespected him by requesting that he become her camel driver wearing a suit but barefooted, on the day of her wedding to the Caliph. In addition, she, together with the other damsels jeered and laughed at him non-stop on their way to the palace. Then lastly she likens herself to a dirham which turned to become a dinar. And her ex-husband is greatly shamed. Then he carried her ex-wife to the Caliph and she becomes the King's favourite.

Dalilah, a wily old woman in **The Rogueries of Dalilah The Crafty and Her Daughter Zaynab the Coney-Catcher**.

Dalilah is described as "a mistress of wiles, deception and subterfuge," she is able to "trick a snake out of its hole and tutor Iblis [the devil] in double-dealing." When Ahmad al-Danaf and Hassan Shuman are appointed joint commanders of the city watch by the caliph, Dalila recognizes Hassan and remembers that he was thrown out of Cairo for his past dealings. Because Dalila's late husband used to be the commander of the city watch, she sees it as unfair that these men have schemed their way into this post by ingratiating themselves to the caliph. Portraying a mother's role with a daughter persuading her to do some tricks, if at all she needs to be persuaded, she decides to use trickery and

cunning in order to alter the two men's reputation in Baghdad and to attract the attention of the caliph that she may somehow be given a position in the kingdom. Dalila performs with a long series of tricks to achieve her ultimate goal.

Her cunning alarmed the authorities and Ahmad Al-Danaf is assigned to take hold of Dalilah, but Zaynab, her daughter, tricks him and his men. This is a way to prove the saying, "like mother. Like daughter". Realizing Dalilah's slickness, Hasan proposes that Dalilah be pardoned.

Dalilah is brought before the caliph only after she is given the kerchief of pardon, a surety that she will not be punished for the tricks she had performed. She returns the stolen goods and announces that she did not perform her tricks for money but to prove she could be as crafty and scheming as Ahmad al-Danaf and Hassan Shuman have been known to be. Hearing this, the caliph gives her a chance to ask something and grants her request to take up her late husband's former post as city captain, as well as the additional role as doorkeeper of a kahn (inn or tavern). Dalilah is one of the significant woman characters who fought for the rights of women and achieved her goal at having an important role in the society through her wiliness.

Julnar in Julnar the Sea Born and Her Son Badar Basim of Persia is a woman character of great beauty who possesses the qualities of being admirable. Her beauty which sets her apart from other wives of the king is attributed to her being one who does not actually belong to the world but a woman who belongs to the sea. Julnar, an exceptionally beautiful maiden who is priced at a high level is worthy to be given as gift to a King. The King however, bestows a huge amount of gold to the merchant who brought her to him. The King's generosity is caused by his great admiration to the exceptional beauty of Julnar. She however is an observant proud maiden who would not speak a single word. And had it not been for her extraordinary looks, the King would have dismissed her. However, the King is so much enthralled

by her mysterious conduct and her beauty that although she remains silent for a long time, the King tolerates her behaviour. Julnar also displays prudence in her decision to speak or not. It seems she does not want to commit a mistake in saying something which should not be spoken taking into consideration that she is a maiden from the sea. However, when she decides it is the right time to speak, it is shown that she has a skill in good speaking that she shows proper courtesy in addressing the King. She displays pride in emphasizing that she would not have spoken at all, had it not been for her pregnancy. But the next moment she is humbling herself by calling her "a wretched exile". She reveals a rebellious character by admitting that she only had a quarrel with her brother before she decided to go to the lands and be married to a man who would take interest with her. She also vivifies a woman who knows how to reciprocate a good deed. She has the power to jump out of her room and into the sea, had there been any instance which could have disappointed her. But the total submission and love of the King to her makes her stay and reciprocate his love for her. Another reason that she mentions for not going back to their realm is to preserve her reputation. She knows people from the sea would condemn her if she returns pregnant. She further displays dependence to her family when she requests their presence during her delivery. When her family comes she expresses her pride of being valued high, and of the position and kindness of the person who bought her. It means that she puts importance on the stature as well as the attitude of the person. She emphasizes the King's excessive kindness and submissiveness to her and how he values her at the highest level that if she leaves, he would die. Surprisingly, she also admits that she too would die if she would go back to their realm for the excessive love that she bears for him. Her character confirms the adage which says love begets love. Her reciprocateness comes naturally as reaction to the kindest treatment she receives from the King.

The universality of a mother's feeling is also displayed by Julnar by saying that her being pregnant compensates everything that she had lost in the past. Another characteristic that she shows is her desire for approval from her family members that she wants the King to show courtesy and propriety to her family by paying respect to them.

When her son grows into marriageable age, mother's pride would not allow her to match her son to any girl except for one she knows to be a match to her son's beauty and grace. This shows an archetype of a mother character who is always prideful and exultant of her child be it a son or daughter.

Another trait worth mentioning is Julnar's strength when it comes to control of emotions. Although she is worried of her son's situation, she faces her responsibility as a ruler to the Kingdom left by her son in quest of his dream woman. Her leadership instinct overcomes her mother's emotion of becoming overly affected by her missing son. But when her attention and power is asked to rescue her son, her swift action signifies her being a true mother who would not waste time in order to save her child. Her good manners such as gratitude and hospitality is never taken for granted although she faces a stressful moment of having a son on the verge of danger. Still she is able to thank and honour the damsel who brought her the message of the whereabouts of her son. Julnar's power to rescue her son makes a woman's role stronger than men. She is able to easily defeat and vanquish the evil lady who is about to destroy her son whereas her son has no power to fight against his perpetrator.

Queen Lab is another woman character from the preceding story. She is depicted as an archetype of a woman villain. She is a she-Satan, a sorceress who is mighty and exceedingly perfidious. She would take a man as a lover and afterwards change him into an animal form that in her Kingdom animals abound. She is indeed a lustful and evil woman that her constituents are worried whenever they see a handsome man in their place such as Badr Basim. She is an authority as she is a Queen

that when she invites Badr all his guardian could do is let her promise that she would not do some enchantment with him.

Queen Lab enjoys the luxury of comfort and food and satisfying her libidinal desires that they did not stop over-eating and lying with each other for forty days and nights. Indeed, she is a lustful, vain and gluttonous woman. Her appetite for sex is so high that in addition to her being with Badr for forty days and nights, still she goes to another lover in form of a black bird and transformed herself into a white she-bird only to be trodden by the black bird.

Surprisingly she does not want her excessive lustful desires to be discovered that she immediately plans to dismiss Badr as lover as soon as she is sure that he witnessed her affair with the black bird. She attempts to transform him into an animal form and pretends to be jesting when her attempt fails. Her evil and lecherous nature shows in her treatment of Badr and all other past lovers that she had in her way of transforming them into animal form as soon as she fulfils her lust over them. She would not honor her promise to Badr's guardian. When she was the one who was transformed into an animal instead of Badr, she becomes desperately powerless. However, another notable twist in the story is the appearance of the villain's mother. Indeed, mother's love is universal and constant. She tricks Badr into selling the she-mule who is Queen Lab transformed and the next scene is the worst degree of revenge from Queen Lab. She is determined to kill Badr through hunger and thirst. It leads Badr's guardian to ask the help of supernatural beings which leads to Queen Labs end.

Miriam is a woman character in **Ali Nur Al-Din and Miriam the Girdle-Girl**. Through analysis of her actions and speech. It indicates that she is courageous, confident, frank, and with high self-esteem. Although she is a slave, she has the power to choose her buyer or next master. [In the context, she has that power to choose because her current master who is selling her had given a word that she could choose her next master. It is because of a good

deed done by Miriam to her Persian master. She took care of him very well when he was sick.] She has the courage, confidence and pride to express the ugliness and repulsiveness of those who are bidding to be her next master. She frankly rejects the proposal of men who wanted to buy her as a slave. The high level of self-esteem that dominates in Miriam could be traced from her being a Princess of Frank descent. However, esteemed as she is, Miriam is not a girl apart from an ordinary who could be overpowered with love. When she sees Nur Al-Din, a beautiful man, she is convinced that he is her match. She bribes the broker with a ring, so that the broker will go to Nur Al-Din and make a bid even if it is only a false bid. However, as soon as Nur Al-Din utters his bid, she quickly declares her willingness to be sold to him. Nur Al-Din cannot take back his words following the norms and their law.

Miriam also manifests a virtue of being candid in her speech. She asks Nur Al-Din to bring her to a better place or house. However, when she finds out that it is the only place Nur Al-Din could offer, no complaints is heard from her. Instead she demonstrates her resourcefulness when she requests Nur Al-Din to borrow money which would be used to buy silk and food. She is a skillful girdle-maker that her product could sell a high price, good enough for them to earn a living. She also values responsibility as a slave or as a woman as manifested when she fetched water for Nur Al-Din and herself for them to be able to cleanse themselves by performing the Ghusl-ablution which also shows her being religious. When the decree of their near parting comes, Miriam exhibits loyalty and devotion to his master. She warns him clearly to preserve their union, however, fate decrees that it should be so. Thus, Nur Al-Din is tricked into selling Miriam back to a Frank who is actually a man of her father. When Miriam finds out that she was sold, she accepts her fate sadly and with fear. However, she forgives Nur Al-Din for what he has done to her. But the story does not end sadly, for Nur Al-Din follows Miriam to her kingdom and she is infused with strength to escape and fight

against the will of his father to marry her to a one eyed Wazir. She fought and killed her three brothers who intends to kill her on their father's command. Indeed, she displayed a skill which is exemplary for a beautiful woman like her.

Lady Fatimah in The History of the King's Son of Sind and the Lady Fatimah is a woman character of extra-ordinary quality. Lady Fatimah is a princess who causes numerous deaths of princes who sought her hand in marriage. Her father gives three impossible tasks to be performed by a man who would want to marry her and only the Prince of Sind is successful in completing the tasks with the help of insects and supernatural creatures whom he earlier helped and befriended.

The Princess is portrayed as a woman who is skilled in man's art of fighting that she serves as the saviour of the Kingdom of Sind as they incidentally arrive in time when a neighbouring King is trying to usurp Sind's Kingdom. She, in disguise, comes to the aid of her husband Prince in overcoming the foes. She displays an extraordinary skill in warfare that mesmerizes the onlookers of the fight. She has endurance, bravery and dauntless determination to help the Prince. She embodies a figure of a woman superior to a man as she is the one who saves the Kingdom of her husband's sire. But there is one thing she wants from the Prince. That is to recognize the stranger who helped them. However, the Prince pretends to be the one who defeated the enemy, not recognizing the stranger who helped him. This makes her utter words of reproach to the Prince that leads him to pressing questions which in turn leads to her admittance that she herself is the valiant fighter. The Prince recognizes her superiority as he becomes thankful to the Princess by loving her all the more because of her superior skills.

UNIVERSAL TRUTHS

After a thorough investigation of the tales, the following universal truths are drawn. Knowledge is power. This universal truth is affirmed by Sharazad when she confidently faced the King because she knows she has power to beguile the King for she has vast

knowledge and wisdom about everything under the sun. Aside from knowledge, another thing of utmost importance is a positive attitude which makes a big difference.

It's not worth crying over a spilt milk. Aziz, experienced regrets as he realizes the woman who truly loved him is Azizah, but she is already dead because of so much grief he inflicted upon her. Aziz was actually with the right woman but he never realizes it. We can also say that familiarity bridges contempt. Because Azizah was always with him since they were small children, he was not able to see the beauty in her. Indeed, we only realize the importance of a thing when it's no longer there. Mother's love is constant. This is affirmed in the story of Queen Lab where her mother appeared and rescued her. They maybe witches but the motherly love is still present and constant.

Motherhood is the real essence of womanhood. Julnar, becomes thankful and happy that she is pregnant.

Children are pride of their parents. They always think their children are the best; the most beautiful, the most handsome etc. In the story of Julnar, she could not think of a girl which is a match to her son because she thinks her son is the most beautiful creature alive.

Love begets love, in Julnar's story, she is a woman from the sea who is only observing human beings. However, when the King treated her with utmost affection, she no longer wants to go back to her realm because she says that in the same way as her husband cannot survive without her, she too, cannot survive without her husband King.

A man can't know what it is to be a mother. Walter, in the Clerk's Tale, commands Griselda to turn over her children to be killed as a part of a test. He did that cruel test for he does not really know how it is to be a mother.

A woman's place is in the home. This is a human truth applied to stereotyped women whose life revolves around the four corners of the house.

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubts. Julnar in

the story did not speak for a whole year, until she was sure to stay with her husband. She observed everything first before she speaks.

Patience is a virtue that causes no shame. This idea is seen from Prudence. She convinces her husband to be patient until she won.

You can't buy love. This is affirmed in the stories of Naomi and Dorigen. The King, although with so much money, cannot buy the love of Naomi. Dorigen too is very much in love and loyal to her husband. And although Aurelius already spent much for her, still, feelings of love can never be transferred.

True love never runs smooth. This is again affirmed by Naomi and Dorigen. Both of them experience mutual love with their husbands. However, both of them were caught in a trouble, which is or will be solved.

Knowledge is power. It's not worth crying over spilt milk. Mother's love is constant. Motherhood is the essence of being a woman. children are pride of their parents. Love begets love. A man can't know, how it is to be a mother. A woman's place is in the house. Better to remain patient. Patience is a virtue. And True love never dies. Are the human truths found on the stories.

THE ARABIAN FOLK'S PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

The Arabian folk's portrayal of women in their collection of tales is surprisingly far from what is expected. Arabian women who are suffering from oppression and repression even today are expected to portray their women as they are in reality. However, the folks may be expressing their high ideals of women whom they made alive in their tales. Six women that is shown to be a transcendent woman is a good start for women to emulate heroines in their stories.

Arabian folk portray women as diversified personalities implying that they are either stereotyped or idealized transcendent women or masculinized women whose strength and power prevail over that of the men. It can be inferred that the Arabians include in the telling of their tales, their idea or concept of what their women should be.

CHAUCER'S PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

Similarly, Chaucer characterises her women characters as balanced women Chaucer's tales depict women's traditional role as almost derogatory; accepted in de Beauvoir's term- the second sex which treasured their submissiveness and faithfulness. The tales also display women's power emanating from their physicality as female and from their inherent virtue, intellect, and spirituality that classify them as the woman representation of the times.

IV. CONCLUSION

The women in the tales exhibited varied personalities as reflected from the tales. There were: stereotypical women who adhere to the traditional characteristics of medieval women; women viewed as sexual objects; those who exert efforts to transcend from what is usual; idealized women with extreme good virtues; women with masculine strengths who overpower men; and spiritually strong women in contrast with the evil and the lustful ones. As regards the role of women, the findings based on the actions and thoughts of women characters, are the following: Some women characters are portrayed as second or inferior to men and are inessential in the lives of men. They are also viewed as flesh and source of entertainment. Women remained nurturers. However, a number of female characters emerge powerful as they revealed themselves even more powerful than men in the battlefield. The power of the women is not taken in terms of physical strength but extends to their powerful wisdom and virtues when they want to, which subjugate the power of men. This diverse identity of women implies women struggle for power even before radical feminists fought for them. Some women in the tales are powerful women who have complete independence from their male guardians. There are numerous instances of transcendentalism depicted by the women subjects in these tales. Hence, we can deduce that advocates on feminism have been fighting since then. And they depicted their visions and ideals on the tales that they compose.

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