

Emilio Tornero Poveda, *Teorías sobre el amor en la cultura árabe medieval*, Madrid, Siruela [Biblioteca de Ensayo, 81], 2014, 234 p., ISBN : 978-84-15937-56-2, 19,95 € paperback.

While it is true that any publication about love provokes a certain curiosity and expectation in the public, during the reading of *Teorías sobre el amor en la cultura árabe medieval* by Emilio Tornero Poveda these initial attitudes turn into a desire of knowing more about the culture that, according to Stendhal, has created the model of “true love” as the Western world conceives it.

Throughout the eleven chapters and the three annexes of the book, the author analyzes the main Islamic and Arab treaties with considerations about love that were composed during the Middle Ages. He proposes a purely literary study, plenty of translations into Spanish of the Arabic texts, excluding the religious or moral issues. When Emilio Tornero explains the aim of the book, he insists on the treatment of love in a profane and heterosexual sense, based on the Arabian pre-Islamic exaltation and adoration (*ta'abbud*) of women (p. 11-15). The path of the conception of love, traced by the author from the poetry of the *ǧahiliyya* times to the anthologies and collections of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, has three major milestones: the most ancient one, the *ʿUdrī* love, where amorous passions culminate in the death or suicide for love (“Anexo I. El amor *ʿudrī* y la leyenda de Maǧnūn y Laylā”, p. 149-179); secondly and followed in time, the well-known text *Ṭawq al-Ḥamāma* by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1065) and his deep theoretical analysis of love, cited along the whole book; and at last, the treaty of Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya (d. 1350) about *Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn wa-Nuzhat al-Muštāqīn*, where the ideas of the Ḥanbalī school are best summarized.

This chronological evolution is outlined in the author’s classification of the treaties about love that he includes in the first part of chapter one (“Tratados árabes sobre el amor”, p. 19-38). Emilio Tornero places the origin of the considerations of love in the treaties of the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, concluding with the text of Ibn Ḥazm. The second group of treaties established by the author is written between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is the time of the Ḥanbalī authors, as Ibn al-Ǧawzī (d. 1200) and Ibn Qayyim, and when the ethical and religious considerations are raised to the fore. At the end of the classification, Emilio Tornero includes the great anthologies and compilations written between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These last treaties are not going to be included in the general analysis of the topic, because,

in author's words, "no ofrecen ninguna novedad en los escasos desarrollos teóricos que en ocasiones presentan" (footnote 30, p. 211). In the second part of the chapter ("Características generales de estos tratados", p. 34-38), the author studies the general characteristics of the treaties listed in the preceding pages. He alludes to the self-justification of the authors, the appeal of reason and the ambiguity, which are present within all of them.

In the case of the second chapter ("*Nasīb y gazal*", p. 39-46), Emilio Tornero explains the genre of the Arabic love poetry and the difference between *nasīb* (the first introductory part of the *qasida*, whose thematic axes are systemized by Emilio Tornero as "Quejas ante los restos del campamento de la amada", "La mañana de la separación" and "La aparición del *jayāl*, o imagen de la amada", p. 40) and *gazal* (independent genre with love themes). The author insists on the diverse conception of love within both compositions, and on the different concept of time: while the *nasīb* refers to the past, the *gazal* does it to the present and future. In this way, in the context of the *nasīb*, "la amada aparece sublimada por el recuerdo, lo que se convertirá en una constante en la poesía amorosa árabe" (p. 43).

Chapter three ("Naturaleza del amor", p. 47-59) begins with the anecdote of Ibn Qayyim and the question about the *ʿišq* love to a Bedouin woman, that explains the different conception of love between the urban context and the Bedouin tribes. Along this chapter, the author makes a chronological overview through the different nature of love of the medieval authors: al-Waššā' (d. 936), the Iḥwān al-Ṣafā' (philosophical group of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn al-Ġawzī and Ibn Qayyim. He describes a journey from the pre-Islamic melancholy love towards the intense pleasure of later times, where it analyzes the Greek and Arab sources in the writings. Instead of an arduous theoretical explanation, he includes numerous citations that allow seeing directly the evolution of the Islamic aesthetic thought.

Concerning the fourth chapter ("Sujeto y objeto del amor", p. 60-80), Emilio Tornero emphasizes how in the Arabic literature, the man is usually the "subject", i.e. the lover, and the woman is "the object", i.e. the beloved. In the earliest treaties, the idea that only lovers (men) are real humans is extended, and women (the "objet") gather the graces that attract men and arouse passions. In this chapter there are numerous references to singing slaves (*qiyyān*), mostly in the direct citations of the texts by al-Ġāḥiẓ (d. 868) and al-Waššā'. Within

the ideas of these authors, certain misogyny can be found, in contrast to Ibn Ḥazm, who insists on equality between men and women in the positive and negative aspects of love, as infidelity (p. 77-78).

In the fifth chapter (“Causas y proceso del enamoramiento”, p. 81-98), the author lists two main causes of the amorousness: beauty and affinity. The first one is a very present idea in the Arabic aesthetic, because “Dios es bello y ama la belleza” (p. 83). In the case of the affinity, it is considered as the main cause of love. According to Ibn Ḥazm, “dicha afinidad proviene de una comunidad de las almas anterior a su existencia en este mundo [...] Toda cosa busca siempre a su semejante, y en el caso del alma, que es una sustancia sutil, este fenómeno ocurre en mayor grado” (p. 88). Regarding the process of falling in love, Emilio Tornero narrates different possibilities: “Amor a través de un sueño”, “Amor de oídas”, “Amor a través de la mirada y del trato” and “Amor a través de la audición de los poemas amorosos y del canto”. The chapter ends with a section about the gradation of love (“Gradación del amor”, p. 96-98), from the lowest degree, related to friendship, to the highest one, called *šagaf* (amorous passion) by Ibn Ḥazm (p. 97).

The aim of love is contained in the sixth chapter (“La unión amorosa”, p. 99-109), as the author cites in words of Ibn Ḥazm: “Ni el murmullo de los arroyos que serpentean entre los arriates de flores; ni la belleza de los blancos alcázares orillados por los jardines verdes, causan mayor placer que el que siente el amante en la unión amorosa” (p. 100). Nevertheless, along this chapter, the paradox of the loving union in the Arabic literature is described in its two senses: on the one hand, as the perfect pleasure (Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Qayyim); and on the other, as the end or corruption of love after the loving union (al-Waššā’, al-Ḥarā’iṭī, Ibn al-Ġawzī).

Following this chapter, in the seventh one (“Efectos y señales del amor”, p. 110-121) Emilio Tornero analyzes the positive and negative effects of love, once again throughout the direct citations of the treaties by al-Waššā’, Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Qayyim and Ibn al-Ġawzī. In the second part of the chapter (“Señales del amor”, p. 115-121), the author includes a long citation from *Ṭawq al-Ḥamāma*, to show the deep psychological analysis of love made by Ibn Ḥazm.

The next chapters contain several lists related to different aspects of love. For example, in the eighth chapter (“Personajes en torno a los amantes”, p. 122-126), the author

enumerates the different characters around lovers and their characteristics. Most of them are present in the Arabic literature since the pre-Islamic times: “El que saca faltas”, “El amigo”, “El mensajero”, “El espía” and “El calumniador”. Following, in the ninth chapter (“Vicisitudes y final del amor”, p. 127-136), the most frequent causes of the conclusion of love are listed: “Celos”, “Maltrato”, “Traición”, “Tedio”, “Ruptura”, “Separación” and “Olvido”. In the tenth chapter (“Remedios contra el amor”, p. 137-141), the author compiles several cures to treat the amorous passion, which is considered a disease. In this way, Emilio Tornero cites one fragment from Ibn Qayyim, about the benefits to look away to avoid the amorous passion: “[Desviar la mirada] libera al corazón de la borrachera de la pasión y del sueño del descuido, pues la Mirada es como un vaso de vino y el amor es la borrachera de esa bebida, teniendo en cuenta que esta borrachera del amor es más grande que la del vino” (p. 141). At last, in the eleventh chapter (“Negadores de la passion amorosa”, p. 142-148), the author includes the three elements which usually refuse and criticize the amorous passion: the reason, the religion and the philosophy.

At the end of the book, three annexes from various articles by the same author are included: “El amor *‘udrī* y la leyenda de Mağnūn y Laylā” (p. 149-179), “Un simposio sobre el amor en la Bagdad de ‘Las mil y una noches” (p. 180-193) and “¿Influencias en Europa de estos tratados árabes sobre el amor?” (p. 194-208). In the first two annexes, the author begins with a contextualizing introduction and the summary of the texts that he then translates. The reading of the diverse opinions about love of the participants in the symposium at Bagdad, with many references to the Greek authors, is delighting. The subject of the third annex is slightly more controversial, where Emilio Tornero merely presents a state of the art. The text is divided in two parts: “Amor cortés” (p. 194-201) and “El *Libro de buen amor* y los libros de buen amor árabes” (p. 201-208), where the author compares the similarities and differences between the Arabic treaties about love and other contemporary texts with the same theme.

After the last annex, the footnotes of all chapters are included (p. 209-228). This system hinders the reading to the specialist, who appreciates the direct inclusion of footnotes in the annexes. All these notes are well documented with plenty of sources.

Regarding the bibliography (p. 229-234), the author specifies that only the main works related to the study are included.

Relative to other aspects of the book, despite the careful selection of citations from the treaties made by the author, due to their high number, the book occasionally becomes a bit reiterative in the collection of the assertions from the amorous theories. This is the case, for example, of the two different types of jealousy analyzed by Ibn Qayyim in chapter eight; or the case of the theories of the Iḥwān al-Ṣafā', whose idea about that the main goal of love is the union with the beloved is repeated several times along the text. On the other hand, the title chosen for the book itself is as well controversial, because the election of the expression "Arab medieval culture" –since the author collects in the book, among others, treaties by Ibn Ḥazm (Andalusi) or Ibn Qayyim (Damascene)-, is, at least, questionable. However, in spite of these details, the reading of *Teorías sobre el amor en la cultura árabe medieval* results enjoyable and satisfying.