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The Presence of Women in the Poetry of Emir Abdelkader

Abdelhafid Kheit, Université de Catania Italia, abdelhafid.kheit@phd.unict.it

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Abstract:

Emir Abdelkader represents a remarkable poetic exception in terms of the breadth of his intellectual knowledge. In addition to his conservative religious culture, he explored numerous fields of thought, emerging as a knowledgeable Sufi mystic, a humanist philosopher, and a distinguished poet. The latter aspect, in itself, presents another paradox: the Emir was not merely a statesman burdened with the weighty responsibilities imposed by his confrontation with colonialism; we also encounter in him a sensitive and tender poet who grants women a significant place in his poetry, expressing his admiration for them and giving voice to moments of longing and yearning.

This study will adopt, at times, an archaeological approach and, at other times, a thematic one, with the aim of examining the presence of women in Emir Abdelkader's poetry and exploring their representations through imagination and symbolism.

Keywords: Poetry; Women; Love Poetry; Religion; Sufism.

Introduction:

To begin with, it should be noted that the political and cultural momentum of Emir Abdelkader's state (1808–1883) forms part of the broader momentum of the modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*), as it chronologically falls within its framework. It seems that the Emir's state, owing to its association with resistance and its well-known outcome, was excluded from the circle of prominent Arab Renaissance movements and experiences, particularly since the failure of the Emir's resistance facilitated French colonial domination over Algeria for nearly a century and a half.

This failure may, in fact, provide part of the answer to a major question that some voices have begun to raise within our academic circles: What accounts for the absence—or deliberate omission—of his poetic experience from the context of the Arab poetic revival (*Ihyā'*)? This question derives its legitimacy, according to those who have raised it, from the fact that the Emir's poetic experience chronologically preceded the modern Arab poetic revival and its leading figure, the Egyptian poet Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi (1839–1904). This precedence may encourage some voices to go even further; by this, I mean calling for the restoration of primacy to the Emir on the basis of this chronological precedence, which undoubtedly deserves to be taken into consideration. However, it would hardly be wise to declare war on an established historical reality and seek to displace it—a reality that has become firmly entrenched and has almost assumed the status of historical certainties or self-evident truths. It would be more appropriate to call upon scholars to undertake the task of incorporating or taking into account forgotten poetic experiences within the process of the poetic revival or its precursors, among them the experience of Emir Abdelkader of Algeria.

Such a call will remain within the realm of assertion, or confined to intuition and generalization—or, at best, a mere hypothesis devoid of substantiating procedures—unless it is supported by rigorous academic studies capable of determining the true scope, impact, and influence of this experience, and of assigning it its appropriate place within the modern Arab creative landscape.

As for relying solely on chronological precedence to establish Emir Abdelkader as the pioneer of the modern Arab poetic revival in place of Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi, this would constitute an academically questionable venture, because it comes closer to a form of regional rivalry that overlooks the structural and almost natural dimension of the center's dominance over the periphery. The voice of the center is often characterized by its wider reach and its rapid dissemination across most peripheral spaces and margins, whereas the voices of these peripheries and margins are rarely received or gain recognition immediately. Even when attention is eventually drawn to them, they are usually received as an echo, even when they belong to a figure as rich and substantial as Emir Abdelkader—a figure whose multifaceted personality invites exploration through the broader field of literary creativity and, more specifically, through his poetic experience.

In general, our present study, in view of the absence—or, at the very least, the limited dissemination—of studies framed within systematic and organized research strategies, will confine itself to pointing to this broad intellectual and cultural momentum, but it will not fabricate a literary glory for the Emir—and, consequently, for Algerian poetics—only to create the impression, or delude itself into believing, that it is struggling to restore what has been lost or to demand that he be retrospectively crowned with the laurels of primacy. At the same time, we do not conceal our fundamental conviction that the casual classification of poets and their easy inclusion in, or exclusion from, poetic schools or movements is incompatible with the requirements of academic rigor. Hence, it must be emphasized that no one can exclude the Emir from the sphere or landscape of the poetic revival and the literary Renaissance. Conversely, it would be equally inappropriate to assign his poetic experience and its influence a significance or magnitude greater than that which it actually possesses.

Perhaps the soundest way to examine Emir Abdelkader's poetic experience is to move beyond the realm of celebration and place its various elements and dimensions under the scrutiny of academic research, examining each element and each aspect separately

1. Concepts Related to Women's Poetry - A Foundational Perspective:

Literary critics and scholars interested in poetry, as well as discerning readers, generally situate the presence of women in poetry—*lomeni*.

It appears that the classical Arab critic perceived variations in poetic style and identified a distinction between two modes of expression: the first manifests itself when the poet speaks to women and engages in playful interaction with them, while the second emerges when he speaks about them and evokes their qualities. He therefore regarded them as two distinct modes, naming the first. He called the former *ghazal*, while he termed the latter *tashbīb*. It is also important not to overlook the fact that the classical Arab critic did not neglect the thematic dimension of *ghazal*. This is evident from his observation that “*nasīb* is a meaning composed of three elements: the first concerns the woman herself, in terms of her physical and moral qualities, as well as her proximity and distance. The second concerns the person who composes *nasīb* about her, in terms of his infatuation, anxiety, love, anguish, union, and separation. The third concerns the circumstances shared by him and her, such as his estrangement from her and his yearning for her, his union with her and her rejection of him, and the various experiences that have taken place between them” ii.

The conclusion to be drawn from this classification is that we are faced with three thematic axes that guide us toward the themes of *ghazal* or *nasīb*. These are composite axes that cause this poetic genre to intersect, in one way or another, with other poetic purposes, as Ibn al-Athīr al-Ḥalabī observed and recorded: “These three circumstances described in *nasīb* are composed of several meanings, including praise, satire, description, complaint, apology, supplication for sympathy, reproach, gentleness, seeking the fulfillment of a promise, and other beautiful forms of expression” iii.

Although the intersection of *ghazal* with these poetic purposes reveals the tensions and appealing dynamics of the emotional relationship, it is certain that this fluctuation and mutual attraction elevate *nasīb*, or *ghazal*, to the status of a “memory of the hearts” or a “record of the pulse.” This, in turn, helps us understand why it was regarded as one of the poetic purposes most beloved by ordinary people; for it is deeply. It is closely connected to the human psyche and the subtle emotions that stir within it, and is deeply bound to the heart and the intimate feelings that surge within it. If we were to take this reflection further and consider the lover as he carefully chooses the sweetest words and most delicate expressions, adorning and refining himself in his eagerness to appear in the most beautiful and appealing form he believes will win the beloved over, we would understand why the style of *ghazal* is expected to be characterized by refinement, tenderness, and elegance. For if the poem is not a love letter, it is a record of the heart.

The Arab poet understood these dimensions and requirements, as well as their implications, profoundly. He therefore took great care to present the *ghazal* poem in its most beautiful and refined form. This is exemplified by the well-known piece of advice transmitted in classical Arabic works of literary criticism, which Abū Tammām is said to have given to his disciple al-Buḥārī: “When you wish to compose *nasīb*, make the diction tender and the meaning graceful; abound in expressions of passionate love, the pain of melancholy, the restlessness of longing, and the anguish of separation...” iv.

It seems that the principles contained in this advice assumed the status of a kind of rule, for centuries later we find their clear influence extending into works of rhetoric. Ibn al-Athīr al-Ḥalabī, for instance, urged the practitioner of *nasīb* or *ghazal* “to seek words that are sweet in expression, easy to grasp, close in meaning, neither coarse nor obscure, manifestly beautiful and pleasing in style.” He further emphasized that when the poet composing love poetry “employs this approach, he has fulfilled the requirements of the craft” v.

In a related context—albeit by way of comparison—Ibn Rashīq attributes the following statement to his teacher, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Nahshalī: “It is customary among the Arabs for the poet to be the ardent lover, consumed by passion, whereas it is customary among the Persians to portray the woman as the one who seeks, desires, and addresses her lover. This is evidence of the strength of the natural disposition among the Arabs and of their jealousy regarding the sanctity of their women” vi

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that the position of *nasīb* or *ghazal* in the structure and architecture of the Arabic poem is one of primacy and precedence. Poems were traditionally opened with it, as it was customary among the Arabs to begin their poems with *ghazal* before moving on to secondary purposes accompanying the principal poetic purpose, which was usually praise. This convention became firmly established in the gatherings and settings where poetry was recited, since nothing was more effective than *ghazal* in attracting the audience's ears and securing their attentive listening. Accordingly, opening the poem with *ghazal* constituted a strategy for controlling the process of reception.

The styles of poets varied and differed considerably. Some described their relationships with their beloveds in ways that went so far as to reveal intimate relations and portray them explicitly, as in the case of Imru' al-Qays in the pre-Islamic period. Others depicted women and described them in sensuous terms, as did 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah, while still others portrayed women in a chaste and restrained manner, as exemplified by the 'Udhri poets.

Through all these detailed contexts, *nasīb* or *ghazal* acquired its established position within Arabic poetics and its various poetic purposes. The poems, collections, and poets of *ghazal* gained considerable fame, and their resonance remains strong to this day.

2. Islam and Ghazal:

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) heard the *ṭalal* preludes of Ḥassān ibn Thābit and Ka'b ibn Zuhayr without objecting to them. It is well established that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) would not delay clarification when clarification was required; had he found in the words of poets who composed chaste love poetry anything incompatible with the teachings of Islam, he would not have hesitated to object to it. This provides further confirmation that Islam recognizes the love between a man and a woman as an intrinsic aspect of human nature.

The eminent scholar al-Zabīdī states: "Among such instances is Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's recitation, in his presence, of his famous *Lāmiyyah*, which contains, as is well known, passages of *tashbīb* and considerable exaggeration, yet he did not object to it" vii.

His wife, 'Ā'ishah, likewise listened to *nasīb*. According to the report transmitted by Masrūq: "I entered upon 'Ā'ishah, may Allāh be pleased with her, while Ḥassān ibn Thābit was with her, reciting poetry containing *tashbīb* in some of his verses..." viii.

Commenting on the poem *Bānat Su'ād*, al-Qurṭubī states: "This poem contains metaphors and similes of every kind of excellence, while the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) listened without objecting to his likening of her saliva to wine" here refers to wine. *rāḥ* The term ix.

The writings of jurists and scholars contain numerous examples of chaste love poetry scattered throughout biographical and historical works. However, an important point should be borne in mind when engaging with this particular poetic mode: one must avoid composing *tashbīb* about a specific woman or about a woman who can be identified through x. indirect indications; one must also avoid expressions and descriptions that arouse sexual desire. Likewise, *nasīb* addressed to young men or effeminate individuals is categorically prohibited, as it is regarded as one of the gravest forms of the forbidden xi.

Some Sufis, moreover, became accustomed to interpreting such love poems in religious terms, claiming through them to express love and passion for the Divine Essence. They would become emotionally exhilarated and enter states of spiritual ecstasy when these poems were recited. This, however, is regarded as one of the most egregious forms of fabrication. Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī strongly condemned such practices in his Qur'ānic commentary, emphasizing their prohibition xii.

When engaging with this type of poetry, it is necessary to delineate an honorable and morally sound relationship between man and woman, within the framework sanctioned by religious belief and accepted by human nature, namely, through the institution of marriage alone. How apt, in this regard, are the words of Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī xiii:

Who is there for the lover, and who will come to his aid,
When love is sweetest in its sorrow?
I have known nothing but its harshness,
Yet they ask me: How could it be gentle?
If the debts of those in love are ever repaid,
I am the one whose debt remains unpaid.
My heart is the precious gold,
And its ringing never leaves it.
My heart loves, yet within it
Are character and faith.
O you who love your beloved,
Yet, through suspicion, have come to wrong them,
And whose outward appearance may seem pure,
While inwardly your conviction is impure.
If the thief of chastity turns
Toward the one you love, who can vouch for him?
What pleasure can there be for the lovesick heart
When its longing is never allowed to last?
Love is a pure horizon,
And betrayal must never defile it. xiv

Thus, love is purity, sublimity, and spiritual elevation—not secret and illicit relationships. Among the xv. commendable examples of *nasīb* is the following verse by Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī: xvi

Do you think the leaves in the grove are singing,
When they conceal a sorrow like mine?
May God never let you see Najd after her,
O driver of the caravan, if you will not answer me.

Would she dare compete with me in revealing the anguish of longing,
 There, in the dwellings of the tribe, that graceful, intoxicated beauty?
 Grant her precedence if you will; yet our sorrow has surpassed hers,
 For we weep over her, while she merely sings.

One notable observation in this regard is the scarcity of modern Islamic poetry addressing this particular field, as though Islamic poets have been preoccupied with the major issues confronting the Muslim community to the exclusion of everything else. This has led younger generations to circulate the poetry collections of modern poets associated with frivolity and libertinism, resulting in the erosion of moral standards and the decline of values.

The pressing question that arises here is: Why do we not provide a suitable alternative to these “red” poetry collections that are sold here and there? Is it permissible to neglect such an important dimension of our social and emotional lives?

3. Women and Existence:

Is it in any way an exaggeration to describe the relationship between woman and man as synonymous with life itself? Setting biology aside—and regardless of any recent developments that may shape this relationship and direct it in the interests of ideology or pressure groups—human history has preserved no description more enduring than this one. By the consensus of the world’s religions, Divine Providence chose a woman as the first gift bestowed upon the first human being. Numerous references in sacred texts have highlighted the value of this gift. In addition to being, in terms of creation, a part of man himself—a powerful indication of the love and harmony that should characterize this relationship—these texts go on to emphasize that woman is the only being capable of fulfilling the emotional dimension of existence, whether as a beloved or as a mother: “And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them” (Qur’an, Sūrat al-Rūm, 30:21).

Within this relationship and proximity between the two sexes, each becomes a refuge for the other in times of turmoil and adversity. Moreover, even the strongest of men cannot perform the role of a woman, because the matter is not so much one of physical abilities as it is of an innate disposition and a predisposition to undertake such roles. Nor is it a coincidence that narrators, throughout the centuries, have been keen to transmit the stories of lovers to subsequent generations, so that these stories may serve as sources of inspiration, shape the tender human psyche, and contribute to securing its emotional balance.

Furthermore, no text can emerge in existence without woman having some degree of influence on it or within it, because a text is, “in the end, an act of the heart, the product of an oppressive system, and an attempt to establish a counter-system” Moreover, the movement of history could not have unfolded dialectically without women’s participation. It ^{xvii} is true that, for a period of time—and perhaps still today—women have been victims of patriarchy; yet, ultimately, they have remained the sole partner in existence, whether in matters of governance, society, or culture.

Hence, no philosophy of history has been able to transcend the theme of woman. Even those philosophies renowned for their excessive misogyny could not entirely dispense with it. This was not merely a concession imposed by the history of ideas; rather, it was because woman is, by her very nature, a force that exerts pressure—yet throughout many periods of history, it was overlooked that she constitutes existence in its entirety.

In all of this, we cannot overlook the injustice to which women have been subjected throughout history, an enduring stigma for which patriarchal society was responsible and from which it suffered significant losses. Paradoxically, women in ancient societies once held positions of sovereignty: “The grandmother in the ‘Emstian’ (matriarchal) societies was the one who led the tribe and determined its destiny, while she was also responsible for caring for its members, since the man was absent on hunting expeditions”^{xviii}. Yet, just as man was occupied with hunting, he was also occupied with creating religions. From this emerged the early manifestations of the “Ibstian,” or patriarchal, society, which relegated women once again to the realm of pleasure.

4. Woman and the Experience of Transcendent Love in the Prince’s Poetry:

Woman occupies a distinctive emotional presence in the poetry of Emir Abdelkader. However, this presence does not, for the most part, take the form of physical or sensual love poetry; rather, it manifests itself within the framework of chaste spiritual love, deeply influenced by his religious formation and Sufi inclination. This kind of love poetry is particularly evident in his poems addressed to his wife, Umm al-Banin, in which the meanings of longing, anguish, and deprivation become increasingly intense, far removed from direct sensual description.

As is well known, Emir Abdelkader’s love poetry, distinguished by its sobriety, virtuous morality, and noble lineage, is not the vulgar and materialistic kind of love poetry found in the works of many poets. Rather, it belongs to what may be described as “**a form of spiritual love poetry**,” in which he expresses his yearning for his wife, Umm al-Banin. His love for her is sincere and overflowing with noble emotions. When he is away from her, he complains of his longing; when he remembers her, he sighs with sorrow; and when night falls while she is far from him, he cries out from the depths of his soul in verses imbued with the warmth of love and shaded by longing, anguish, and burning passion:

Tell the one who has stolen my heart,
 And left me wandering, lost in every valley.
 You have left the lover with a burning heart,
 A companion to sorrow, melting wherever he goes.
 And I have no share in life’s pleasures;
 I leave them behind, bereft of heart.^{xix}

When his passion intensifies and his longings overwhelm him, he is seized by anxiety and driven to rebellion, prompting him to reproach himself, saying:

How long, my heart, will you yearn for the beloved?
 While the fire of longing within my ribs continues to flare?
 And with every passing hour, my sorrow is renewed,
 While my night grows long, and sleep shuns me.
 How long shall I keep watch over the stars, conversing with them,
 As tears well up in my eyes and overflow?

If we examine Emir Abdelkader's love poetry closely, we find that its primary purpose is to express his grievances and portray the burning anguish he experiences in relation to some of the women he loved. This form of love poetry is particularly valued by those who are inclined toward viewing woman from a spiritual perspective. Perhaps what led the Emir to adopt this approach was his study of Sufi literature. Among his works is a fine poetic piece composed in 1272 AH, in which he describes his longing for his wife in Bursa. The poem is characterized by a sincere and ardent emotion, as well as an intense lament over his separation from her and his deprivation of seeing her. It combines the courtly tenderness of the knight, the humility of the lover, and the plaintive sighs of one deprived of his beloved, all expressed in a light and accessible style, with mournful spiritual overtones. In it, he says:

I say to a beloved who remained behind after my departure,
 Stricken with the pain of separation and the anguish of distance:
 Had you truly seen the depth of my longing,
 The intensity of my yearning would have made the matter easy for you to understand.
 You would have said: "I see this poor soul, tormented by love,
 And truly worn away by it to the utmost degree."
 You would have been saddened by what I have endured of such intense longing,
 And said: "Why does longing assail you with such force?"
 Yet, by God, I remain forever consumed by anguish,
 While the fire of longing burns fiercely within my ribs.
 Drowned and captive, afflicted by the wounds of the heart,
 Scorched by the fire of estrangement, yearning, and rejection.^{xx}

The Emir marvels at the power of love and at how his formidable courage is humbled before it, saying:

How wondrous is my patience in the face of every hardship,
 And my bearing of burdens that surpass all measure.
 I do not fear the flashing swords, nor the spears,
 On a day when heads become for the blades like sheaths.
 Yet the separation from the one I love has truly overwhelmed me,
 Made my tears flow, consumed my heart, and exceeded all bounds.
 The separation from the one whom I have loved in both youth and old age,
 While my heart has been emptied of Su'ād and of Da'd.^{xxi}

Before delving further into the world of love poetry in the works of Emir Abdelkader, it is worth turning to an important question raised by the researcher Fouad Saleh Al-Sayyid, who asks why Emir Abdelkader submitted to women. Through this question, the researcher seems implicitly to suggest that this valiant warrior, who humbled the most powerful generals of the French army and inflicted one defeat after another upon them, would hardly be expected to weaken before, or submit to, a woman.

The answer to this question may appear easy, **but in fact it is difficult**, because the Emir himself, at first, could find no explanation for this strange condition that had overcome him. He was astonished by the power of love over his heart and soul, which ultimately caused his formidable courage to falter. These reasons can be reduced to two fundamental factors: **motherhood and beauty**.

The secret behind his submission to women lies in his profound admiration for his mother, his love for her, and his intense attachment to her. The Emir held her in the highest regard, followed her advice, and consulted her regarding difficult circumstances and challenging matters. He was even accused of submitting to the letters, reports, and correspondence that were issued and signed in his name.

The Emir was deeply attached to his mother. He would take her with him on his travels, as though he sought in her sound judgment and spiritual strength the support, reassurance, and consolation his troubled soul needed. She accompanied him into captivity, and he took her with him to Istanbul, Bursa, and Damascus.

The influence of his mother on her son became particularly evident following her death. The Emir was deeply stricken by her loss and grieved for her profoundly. After returning from her burial at al-Dahdah Cemetery to his home in the al-'Amarah district of Damascus, he stopped several times along the way, overwhelmed by the enormity of his grief. Some of those accompanying him said, "**Be gentle with yourself!**" He replied, "**How can I, when I have lost the person who loved me most in the whole world?**"

Perhaps this profound love, complete submission, and intense admiration that the Emir displayed toward his mother had a decisive influence in shaping and directing his love, submission, and admiration toward women in general.

As for the power of beauty, the Emir himself marvels at his own extraordinary condition, only to reconsider the matter and remind himself that he is a knight, and that a true knight ought to submit to only one sovereign: **the sovereignty of beauty**, which possesses the hearts and souls of knights and brings them under its dominion. In this regard, he says:

How strange that lions should fear my might,
 Yet a gazelle can keep me from achieving my desire!

And what is it but that he possesses such beauty,
That it has taken possession of my heart, reigning over it with sovereign power?
For the sovereignty of beauty holds dominion,
Over both horsemen and valiant knights^{xxii}.

Emir Abdelkader was a heroic and valiant warrior who “bewildered the generals of France with his political steadfastness and his military courage, displaying boldness and valor, without ever allowing his resolve to waver in matters that served neither his homeland in political negotiations nor his cause in military confrontations.” Yet the one who truly bewildered him was his beloved wife, Umm al-Banin, who remained especially dear to him. He married her in Oran around 1822, when he was fifteen years old, that is, before his journey with his father to perform the pilgrimage in 1825.

She soon came to hold sway over his heart and mind. He longed for her both in war and in peace, lamenting her rejection and coldness. Thus, Emir Abdelkader, the lion who roared on the battlefield and confronted generals, appeared before Umm al-Banin as a gentle and seemingly helpless lamb. He bleated, only to hear the echo of his bleating return to him, mournful and cold. He would sigh in complaint and reproach, whether he was near her or far from her, just as he did amid the battles he fought. Such is the fate of great souls, in whom opposites converge.

Emir Abdelkader, who would sever the heads of his enemies with his sword and wade joyfully through their blood, exulting in victory, could nevertheless be overcome by fear in the very realm of beauty itself: the sight of a beautiful woman’s cheek being subjected to tattooing and thereby scratched could evoke terror in him. He expressed this sentiment in one of the poems included in his *Dīwān*, when it was reported that a discussion of the subject took place at a gathering in the city of Taif, which the Emir attended. I believe this occurred during his third pilgrimage, after his settlement in Damascus. He then said:

For with a mere glance, not even a razor, may scratch a cheek—Alas, my sorrow! How long my regret!

Here, we encounter an aesthetic dimension in the way the woman is viewed. The Emir does not suggest that tattooing is forbidden, nor does he imply that adornment in its natural and legitimate form is prohibited. Rather, what dominates his thought is an aesthetic and moral image that reflects one of his fundamental values concerning women: **modesty**. A chaste and modest woman blushes with shyness and embarrassment in response to a situation or a gaze, thereby becoming even more beautiful, without the need for a razor to disfigure a single cheek in pursuit of an artificial form of adornment that ultimately distorts the natural beauty with which God created her and violates the integrity of nature.

This characteristic seems to have been present in Umm al-Banin. She was apparently so modest that she was even shy about reciprocating her husband’s feelings of affection and compassion, which God has placed between spouses. Perhaps the traditions of the surrounding social environment had become deeply rooted in her consciousness, viewing the essence of the marital relationship as nothing more than a human and animal instinct.

Against this background, there is a measure of consolation for the poet in his passionate yearning, supplication, and, at the same time, his understanding of her position. Nevertheless, in some of his poems, this passion leads him into a degree of directness that is not entirely free from vulgarity and superficiality, producing a materialistic image devoid of artistic depth or imagination. Instead, it presents immediate and openly expressed physical desires, centered primarily on deprivation and rejection, both of which stem fundamentally from the nature of life and the values of society.

I suffer the pangs of love for one hard of heart,
Whom I cherish, though she shows no care for my affection.
I weep for her, while she laughs heartily,
And I lie awake while she sleeps peacefully.
I would gladly give my very soul to kiss her lips,
Yet she refuses me, and I return utterly rejected.
She remains ever distant, proud and exalted,
While I remain forever humbled, calling out to her^{xxiii}.

The primary reason for Emir Abdelkader’s avoidance of licentious, materialistic love poetry can be traced back to his religious upbringing during childhood and to his family’s emphasis on moral and spiritual values, while keeping him away from material concerns. Thus, the Emir grew up cherishing purity and chastity. In addition, he was deeply influenced by Sufism throughout the various stages of his life in Algeria, France, Bursa, and Damascus.

It is well known that Sufism cultivates the spiritual and moral dimensions of the human being and distances him from narrow and restrictive material concerns. It is also undeniable that divine love and mystical love poetry constitute fundamental elements of Islamic Sufi poetry.

The harmony between Sufism and the Emir’s psychological disposition, desires, and innate inclinations consequently led to the clear prominence of spiritual and moral values in his everyday conduct and actions. This spiritual and moral dimension was reflected in his love poetry, giving rise to the ‘*Udhri*’ tendency in his verse: a poetry of longing and lamentation, of sorrow, anguish, and deprivation.”^{xxiv}

Among the most prominent characteristics revealed to those who contemplate the Emir’s love poetry is the prominence of his personality and the manifestation of his suffering. This is evident in his saying:

**“My longing, my sighs, my tears, my submission, and my suffering—
All have revealed what lies within me.”**^{xxv}

His love poetry also reflects his emphasis on the beloved’s chastity, as well as the complete domination of love over both the rational and emotional dimensions of the self—that is, over both the heart and the mind. This is manifested in his saying:

**“Is there anyone to grant me justice against a gazelle of the wilderness,
Whose pasture has now become my very heart?”^{xxvi}**

In other words, the beloved has gained complete control over his entire emotional being. This is also evident in his saying:

**“Within me is something that drives reason from its proper place;
So do not be surprised if it is said that I have lost my mind.”^{xxvii}**

His concern for chastity and purity is also evident in his saying:

**“I would offer my very soul to kiss her lips,
Yet she prevents me, and I return from her rejected.”^{xxviii}**

This is likewise expressed in his saying:

**“I have no share in the pleasures of life,^{xxix}
For they leave me deprived of sleep.”**

He also alludes implicitly to this matter in his saying:

**“If he finds no way at all to attain union,
And the phantom of the beloved draws near to my dwelling and home,
I say to my soul: Alas, dissolve away,
And die, for the decree has been passed upon you.”^{xxx}**

Another of the most important characteristics and defining features of the Emir's love poetry is his careful depiction of separation through remarkably vivid images, to the extent that the reader can almost see the scene embodied before him. His love poetry also reveals his fondness for wakefulness and nocturnal hours, during which he addresses his absent beloved. His humility, brokenness, and profound sorrow become apparent through the numerous questions he raises and the successive appeals he makes. These, in turn, reveal various forms of reproach directed at the beloved for her absence, harshness, and distance from him.

Conclusion:

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- There is a distinction between *ghazal* (love poetry) and *tashbib* (amatory verse) in terms of their technical and terminological implications. While the former generally concerns the female beloved, the latter is more often associated with questions of values and moral conventions.
- Religion was not opposed to human emotions or to the forms of expression arising from them; rather, it opposed creative works that undermine values and social conventions. In accordance with this value-oriented approach, Emir Abdelkader maintained an attitude of chastity and restraint.
- The presence of woman in creative production cannot be regarded as an unusual or unprecedented phenomenon. Indeed, most literary texts are shaped, in one way or another, by the influence of woman, for she is a partner in existence and an active participant in the dialectic of history.
- The Emir's encyclopedic intellectual knowledge, alongside his immense responsibilities in confronting colonialism and building the modern state, enabled him to produce a rich experience of imagination and symbolism. It is for this reason that historians of Arabic poetry regard him as one of the pioneers of the Nahda (Arab Renaissance) poetry.

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Research Footnotes:

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- ii Ibn al-Athīr, *Jawhar al-Kanz*, op. cit., p. 451.
- iii Ibid., p. 452.
- iv Ibn Rashīq, *al-‘Umda*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 114.
- v *Jawhar al-Kanz*, op. cit., pp. 451–452.
- vi Ibn Rashīq, *al-‘Umda*, vol. 2, p. 124.
- vii *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn*, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 494.
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- ix *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, op. cit., vol. 13, p. 147.
- x *Fath al-Bārī*, op. cit., vol. 22, p. 343.
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- xix *The Poetry Collection of Emir Abdelkader al-Jazairi*, Dar al-Yaqazah al-‘Arabiyyah for Authorship, Translation and Publication, edited by Mamdouh Haqqi, 1st ed., 1960, p. 58.
- xx Ibid., same page.33
- xxi Omar Ben Qina: op. cit., p. 98 ff.
- xxii . Fouad Saleh Al-Sayyid, op. cit., p. 214 ff.
- xxiii Omar Ben Qina, op. cit., p. 95 ff.
- xxiv Fouad Saleh Al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 217.
- xxv *The Poetry Collection of Emir Abdelkader al-Jazairi*, p. 98.
- xxvi *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- xxvii *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- xxviii *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- xxix *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- xxx *Ibid.*, p. 47.