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Audience Rhetoric: Foundations and Construction — A Reading of the Rhetorical Project of Dr. Imad Abdel Latif

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ABSTRACT: The theory of Audience Rhetoric is regarded as one of the modern rhetorical projects that seeks to renew Arabic rhetorical studies by shifting the focus from the speaker to the audience and its actual responses. Dr. Imad Abdel Latif established this approach on the basis of a critical vision of constructive rhetoric, which had treated the addressee as an object of control and persuasion. Audience Rhetoric is concerned with studying verbal and non-verbal mass responses within both public and digital spheres, adopting discourse as a means of awareness, resistance, and liberation. Moreover, this theory has opened itself to multiple fields of knowledge, making it an interdisciplinary specialization that contributes to discourse analysis and to understanding the dynamics of contemporary communication.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic rhetorical scholarship in the modern era has witnessed a series of calls seeking to renew its concepts, free it from traditional rigidity, and reconnect it with the reality of discourse and its social and communicative functions. Within the context of these efforts, the project of Imad Abdel Latif emerged, establishing the theory of Audience Rhetoric, which proceeded from a critical stance toward constructive rhetoric and the dominance of the speaker over the rhetorical act. This theory sought to make the audience a genuine actor in the communicative process, by studying its responses and its forms of resistance to authoritarian discourse. Modern means of communication and digital spaces have also contributed to reinforcing the audience's presence and expanding the scope of its interaction and discursive production. This research aims to clarify the foundations of Audience Rhetoric, trace its roots in the rhetorical heritage, and uncover its most important theoretical and epistemic underpinnings.

1. Audience Rhetoric: Foundation and Construction

The theory of Audience Rhetoric is one of the contemporary developmental epistemic projects in Arabic rhetoric; it was founded on a critical stance toward the received Arabic rhetorical achievement. It is a critical discourse-analysis theory that falls within the framework of critical analytical approaches (such as critical discourse analysis, critical rhetoric, and counter-speech); it may therefore be considered a discipline reinforcing discourse analysis in its critical orientation, being an offshoot of Fairclough's approach in the second stage of his three-dimensional model, in addition to filling a gap in discourse studies, which had not given sufficient attention to studying the audience through its responses.

Audience Rhetoric has concerned itself with the four components of discourse — production, circulation, reception, and response — but focuses centrally on the fourth component, which theories and methodologies of discourse analysis have neglected; it gives great attention to audience responses to discourse in all their dimensions, directing its inquiry toward the relationship between the linguistic phenomena constituting a given discourse and the actual responses produced by those targeted by that discourse, the relationship between power relations and audience responses, and the methods by which these responses are manipulated. It focuses on the responses an audience produces while receiving a given discourse, and the relationship between these responses and the authority the discourse represents, whether mass discourse seeks to entrench or legitimize that authority. It is therefore not concerned with studying ancient literary rhetorical discourses; rather, its subject is

mass discourses, which include: the sermons of new preachers, political debates, street propaganda posters, the speeches of political officials, newspaper, radio, and television advertisements, street vendors' calls, parliamentary debates, verbal disputes on street walls, lecture halls, and public restroom doors, and institutional and personal websites on the internet.

Audience Rhetoric represents a new paradigm imposed by the transformations rhetoric has undergone across the ages; it was once a tool by which those who used it could control the audience. Gorgias, in the dialogue that Plato devoted to critiquing rhetoric, stated that those who know how to speak can harness audiences to serve them, and can easily strip them of what they possess. This rhetoric also attempts to redraw the boundaries of Arabic rhetoric, opening it to everyday rhetorical discourses, producing a new demarcation of its relationship with other sciences, and making it an interdisciplinary field in which communication studies, sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, and discourse analysis converge. It has also thrown open the door of rhetorical research to embrace a wealth of new rhetorical material that rhetoricians had not previously attended to, such as: applause, cheering, whistling, gestures, murmuring, comments, interruption, spontaneous questions, cries of approval and disapproval, wall drawings, phrases written on doors, Facebook comments, counter-tweets, phrases recorded on television news tickers, readers' letters to newspapers, and others — responses produced in all contexts of technical and direct public communication today.

Audience Rhetoric came to constitute, together with speaker-rhetoric, the previously absent part, under a rhetoric of power that does not recognize the addressee unless compliant and submissive. It is a rhetoric that restored to the audience the standing it had lost, enabling it to deconstruct authoritarian discourse and reproduce it using the prior epistemic tools it possesses regarding the discourse's dominance and effectiveness. New means and technologies of communication — including the internet, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and live-broadcast tools — played a role in helping the audience climb the ladder to platforms of speech and arenas of action, to vent its anger and express its emotions, a development that angered the political, intellectual, and religious elites accustomed to viewing the audience as an obedient ear for carrying out orders. Accordingly, the critic Abdullah al-Ghadhami linked modern means of communication with the audience, arguing that once the audience possessed the medium it became able to announce itself and its opinions, that literature was never truly the voice of the people, and that the man of letters was never their conscience, whereas the people do have a voice, a conscience, and an opinion. The writings of the Egyptian rhetoric scholar Imad Abdel Latif formed the leafy tree under whose shade the study of contemporary Arabic rhetoric flourished anew, transcending the traditional conceptions that confined rhetoric to mere repetitive exercises rehearsed by the tongue without offering anything that helps critique and change society — breaking the authoritarian dominance of the speaker, so as to open onto the addressee (the audience) as a rhetorical being that produces eloquent rhetorical responses, and possesses rhetorical power to produce influential discourses once freed from the constraints of reality, moving into virtual spaces that afford it the opportunity to interact with political, authoritarian, moral, and social discourses.

This new rhetorical orientation that Dr. Imad Abdel Latif advanced falls within the general context of the calls that emerged in the modern era to renew Arabic rhetoric and free it from its traditional rigidity. Those calls sought to move beyond viewing rhetoric as a science concerned with embellishing wording and improving phrasing, and to reconnect it with discourse and its communicative and social functions. From this standpoint, Audience Rhetoric emerged to broaden the horizon of rhetorical study, shifting the focus of attention from the speaker and mechanisms of influence to the audience and the types of its responses. Although Imad Abdel Latif's project converges with those calls in seeking to renew rhetorical scholarship, it distinguishes itself by shifting the center of gravity from speaker-rhetoric to addressee-rhetoric, and by making the audience — or its resistance — central. This shift represents a notable step in the path of renewing rhetoric, since it moves it from the narrow field of linguistic analysis to an understanding of the communicative dynamics that take shape in the public sphere.

2. The Audience (Addressee) in the Arabic Critical and Rhetorical Heritage

Since its inception, Arabic rhetoric has concerned itself with speech and the speaker; the speaker (the producer of the text) was the axis and purpose of the rhetorical act. Arabic rhetoric sought to furnish the speaker with all the tools that would help him control and influence the addressee, and to provide him with guidance and advice enabling him to achieve his purposes in speech, which were most often centered on influencing addressees. In the rhetorical act, the speaker holds authority, because he is the one who predetermines the meanings of his speech; it logically follows from this that the recipient has no role whatsoever in conferring meaning upon words, since meaning is the product of a prior intention that was already responsible for its earlier manifestation, and the reader has only to search for it through the words themselves, or strive to attain it if it lies hidden behind them. Addressees in the rhetorical heritage were, in Dr. Imad Abdel Latif's words, "prey to be hunted and targets

to be struck,” and even the limited attention given to addressees (recipients) was deployed for the purpose of tightening control over them. Ibn al-Athir (d. 637 AH) states that “the whole compass of rhetoric turns upon drawing the adversary toward submission and acquiescence, for there is no benefit in producing charming, polished ideas or subtle, refined meanings unless they are marshaled to achieve the addressee’s purpose.” For this reason, rhetoric acquired a poor reputation in some societies and was harshly criticized. It appears that the reason behind rhetoric’s neglect of the addressee lies in its focus on studying persuasion and influence through spoken and written language in texts produced by literary, political, or intellectual elites — the texts referred to as “elevated texts” — in addition to its study of transcendent texts attributed to the divine speaker, who possesses authoritative knowledge of what is best for His servants, an idea that rhetoricians later appropriated, so that the authority became that of the speaker who knows what best suits addressees, and the sayings of prophets or saints — a devotion Arabic rhetoric maintained because of its close association with the Qur’anic text, since fields of knowledge derive their nobility from the nobility of the subject matter they study. Arab rhetoricians therefore did not risk exposing their discipline to defilement by studying the speech of common people, their texts, or the discourses of everyday life, let alone attending to popular literature. In addition to all this, rhetoric arose in an environment in which the ruler was the dominant speaker who did not listen to the language of dialogue and did not accept counter-argument.

One contemporary researcher notes that the absence of the addressee in the Arabic rhetorical heritage has numerous causes that vary according to the geographical area of that audience (addressee), the era to which it belongs, or the situation in which the audience found itself. Moreover, critics’ and rhetoricians’ neglect of the audience is attributable to differing views regarding the responses the audience produces, since these responses are tied to reality rather than to imagination, and thus fall outside the circle of creativity. Despite this neglect of the addressee in the rhetorical and critical heritage, and despite the fact that no independent chapter was devoted to studying it, rhetoricians did offer noteworthy references, ideas, and observations embodied in their definitions of rhetoric; they defined eloquent speech as speech that matches the addressee’s situation (*muqtadā al-ḥāl*), since the contexts of speech vary — the context calling for indefiniteness, unrestricted, foregrounding, and explicit mention differs from its opposite, just as addressing an intelligent person differs from addressing a dull one. This shows that rhetoricians were well aware of the importance of describing the addressee’s condition and its effect on many rhetorical judgments, or that they recognized that many rhetorical rulings were in fact responses to the addressee’s condition.

Another manifestation of Arab rhetoricians’ attention to the addressee, and their emphasis on his role in directing discourse, is their linking of *muqtadā al-ḥāl* to the state of the listener — whether his mind is empty of the matter, hesitant in judging it, or denying it outright — and speech may sometimes be produced contrary to the apparent requirement, as when one who is not a denier is addressed as though he were a denier, and vice versa. This means that the addressee governs the direction of discourse addressed to him so that its benefit is realized, since speech addressed to the hesitant differs from speech addressed to the denier. Among these indications is also the multiplicity of the modes of declarative statement (*adrib al-khabar*): the speaker must, each time, adjust his discourse according to the addressee’s condition, so that declarative statement came to be of three modes: the initiatory, the responsive, and the denial-refuting.

Dr. Imad Abdel Latif affirms Arabic rhetoric’s bias toward speakers, stating: “constructive Arabic rhetoric was concerned with the addressee as the object it sought to control, but as a scholarly practice it does not serve the addressee; rather, first and last, it aims to serve the speaker who wishes to influence or overcome the addressee... that is the focus of its concern.” He then excepts five rhetorical phenomena in the rhetorical heritage that did attend to the recipient — phenomena not studied within Audience Rhetoric because they issue from a single individual, whereas Audience Rhetoric is concerned with studying the responses of audiences in public spaces, with particular focus on virtual spaces, and with the rhetorical analysis of non-linguistic signs of communication, such as cheering and applause. These phenomena are:

1. The Wise Style (*al-uslūb al-ḥakīm*): defined as “meeting the addressee with other than what he expects... or the questioner with other than what he demands.” An example is the divine saying: “They ask you about the crescent moons. Say: They are markers of time for the people and for the pilgrimage” [al-Baqarah: 189], where the question concerns the moons’ nature and essence, while the answer centers on their function and benefit.

2. Silencing, Confounding Answers: defined as “delivering a response that confounds the one who initiated the question, and silencing the disputant with argument through demonstrative proof.” An example: “A man said to al-Ahnaf, ‘A trustworthy person told me something bad about you.’ Al-Ahnaf replied, ‘A trustworthy person does not slander.’”

3. Speaking According to What Is Conceded (*al-qawl bi'l-mūjab*): the interpretation of the speaker's words in a sense different from what he intended, or "turning the speaker's own words back on him and reversing their meaning," as in the poet's verse:

She said: my eyelids are darkened with drowsiness. I said: in anticipation of your lovely apparition. She said: you found solace after our parting. I said: solace only in losing my home and my dwelling.

4. Matching the Opponent's Terms (*mujārāt al-khaṣm*): defined by al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH) as "going along with the opponent so that he stumbles, by conceding some of his premises where the aim is to confound and bind him." An instance of this is the divine saying: "They said: You are but human beings like us; you wish to turn us away from what our forefathers used to worship. Bring us then a clear authority. Their messengers said to them: We are indeed but human beings like you, but God bestows favor upon whom He wills among His servants" [Ibrahim: 10–11]. In this verse, "the messengers conceded part of their addressees' criticism — namely, that they were human — then moved from this concession to refuting the criticism, opening their reply with the particle of qualification (*lākin*, 'but')."

5. The Question-and-Answer Style, or the Style of Review (*uslūb al-murāja'ah*): defined as "the speaker's narrating a review in speech, and a dialogue between himself and another, in the most concise phrasing, the most graceful composition, and the most refined meaning," or the inclusion within a text of a question and answer in dialogue form, such as the dialogue that took place between the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and his people concerning the slaughter of the cow.

A survey of the critical and rhetorical heritage shows that it regarded the audience negatively, as is clearly evident from the names applied to it, such as: the rabble, the mob, the common herd, the riffraff, the base sort, the vulgar, the dregs, the refuse, and other such designations. Confirmation of this is found in the books of al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH), who disparaged the mass of addressees and described them in the ugliest terms, saying: Wasil ibn Ata said, "They never gathered without doing harm, nor dispersed without doing good." He was asked, "We understand the harm of their gathering, but what is the benefit of their dispersal?" He said, "The plasterer returns to his plastering, and the weaver to his weaving..." And Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, whenever he looked upon the rabble and the riffraff, would say, "May God disfigure these faces; they are recognized only in times of evil." Shabib ibn Shaybah said, "Draw near this base sort and keep your distance from them, be with them and part from them, and know that victory belongs to whoever has them on his side, and that the vanquished is whoever they turn against... As for the common people — may God preserve you — when scattered, their affair is easier and the duration of their agitation shorter; but when they have a shrewd and obeyed leader and a figurehead imam to follow, then the danger is at hand. It is understood from this passage that the ancients' stance toward the audience carried a duality of contempt and hope: they held it in contempt and saw in it an absolute evil, a view held by many of the ancients across the course of history.

It is worth noting that disparaging the audience and describing it in ugly terms was not confined to Arab rhetoricians; the writings of Le Bon, Freud, Ortega y Gasset, and others remained a scholarly form embodying the "herd metaphor" as a major cognitive metaphor that portrays audiences as cattle or other animals spontaneously led by their shepherd, dealing harshly with audiences while forgetting that they are the product of power itself.

From here, Imad Abdel Latif's contribution to Audience Rhetoric moves toward recentering the audience as a genuine actor in the rhetorical process, one empowered to resist authoritarian discourse, understand the speaker's aims and strategies, and produce effective rhetorical responses. This vision broadens the scope of rhetoric to include the study of the audience at the site of the event and in digital spaces and social media, transforming rhetoric from a tool of domination into a liberatory critical method that values the recipient's role and restores to it agency in the production of meaning.

3. Establishing the Theoretical Framework of Audience Rhetoric

In 2005 the researcher Imad Abdel Latif published a study titled *The Rhetoric of the Addressee: Arabic Rhetoric from the Production of Authoritarian Discourse to Its Resistance*, in which he presented a project for founding a rhetorical orientation he then called "the rhetoric of the addressee." In a 2009 study titled *Why Do Egyptians Applaud?*, he spoke of the same project under the name "Audience Rhetoric," broadening his project in awareness of the changing nature of the addressee and the transformations occurring today in the field of reception in the age of informational flow, across numerous and diverse media, especially since the modern era is, par excellence, the age of the masses. This became the name later adopted for the project, followed by a number of scholars in this new field of study; the researcher Said Bakkar considered it a discipline reinforcing discourse analysis

in its critical orientation, being an offshoot of Fairclough's approach in the second stage of his three-dimensional model — namely, text production and consumption — in addition to its filling a gap in discourse studies that had not given sufficient attention to studying the audience through its responses. In this project, Abdel Latif attempted to reformulate the traditional orientations in Arabic rhetoric on the basis of fixed determinants — the discipline's subject matter, its object, and its function — tracing the problems these orientations face and how they might be remedied. He states: "In early 2004 I was fully devoted to studying twentieth-century Arabic political oratory... After a period of continuous engagement with political speeches, Western methodologies for analyzing them, and the Arabic rhetorical heritage that had dealt with similar material, I arrived at the conviction that the science of rhetoric ought to be turned upside down, so that it shifts from being a tool for accomplishing manipulation and domination into a tool for accomplishing awareness and liberation, and that this shift necessarily requires shifting the science and practice of rhetoric from the centrality of the speaker in the rhetorical act to the centrality of the addressee (the audience)."

Thus Imad Abdel Latif offered a new rhetorical proposition that departed from the conventional conceptual and epistemic image of rhetoric. He holds that in rhetoric the speaker is the axis and purpose of the rhetorical act, while the addressee is the target of correction — a view that, together with his deep conviction in the role of knowledge in human liberation, drove him to focus on the addressee (the audience), making it a tool for achieving awareness and liberation through the rhetorical responses it issues. He states: "The belief that the audience can play a major role in contemporary mass communication was the motive for proposing a rhetorical orientation aimed at studying the responses produced by an audience receiving a given mass discourse... I called this orientation Audience Rhetoric." This idea is the first point of departure and the foundation of his project.

It can thus be said that Dr. Abdel Latif is among the first modern rhetoricians to move rhetoric from a rhetoric that targets the audience, uses language to control it, and mobilizes it to serve its own interests, toward another rhetoric that wagers on the rhetorical capacity of audiences and seeks to actualize it by offering conceptions and tools that enable them to acquire a critical awareness leading them to expose authoritarian and non-authoritarian discourses alike — a rhetoric grounded in the addressee's (audience's) awareness and in the importance of enabling it to know the motives and factors that work to steer it and constrain its understanding.

The great attention given to the addressee's role in the theory of Audience Rhetoric was not the first such attempt; multiple theories concerned with this side had existed before it, among them Reception Theory, which focused on the reader as a producer of meanings after reading a given work, by filling in its gaps, an interpreter armed with knowledge upon whom the author places the burden of understanding the text, taking the reader's response as a constituent element of literary interpretation, so that "the reader becomes a participant in conferring meaning on the text, rather than being confined to its internal structure as was customary before the age of reading."

In light of the foregoing, it can be said that although the addressee is a targeted focus shared between these two fields of knowledge (Audience Rhetoric and Reception Theory), his function, role, designation, and modes of response differ between them. The recipient in Audience Rhetoric is not a recipient in the general sense but an addressee in a specific sense; he has thus shifted from being an addressee to being an audience — that is, from a discourse produced by an individual to a discourse produced by masses. The recipient in Reception Theory, by contrast, is an elite recipient capable of understanding and possessing an interpretive competence enabling him to produce the meaning of the text; its concern is thus confined to elite written literary texts, whereas Audience Rhetoric is directed toward verbal and non-verbal, recorded and unrecorded mass responses. Moreover, Reception Theory operates within a space of possible meanings, since its recipient's engagement is tied to interpreting the text and producing meaning, whereas Audience Rhetoric operates on the ground of actually realized responses.

Abdel Latif did not neglect to mention three important tributaries that inspired him in the Audience Rhetoric project: Greek rhetoric, ancient Arabic rhetoric, and the New Rhetoric. He grounded Audience Rhetoric by returning to Plato and Aristotle, clarifying their respective positions on audiences: Aristotle stresses the importance of the audience in oratory and explains how the nature of audiences governs the construction of a speech and the selection of its appropriate arguments, while Plato stressed the grave role that oratory/rhetoric plays in controlling audiences and harnessing them to serve speakers. Whatever the views of Aristotle and Plato, what matters to Imad Abdel Latif is building a new rhetorical orientation on rhetorical foundations drawing on the Greek wellspring; he deduced that the audience — even though Greek rhetoric focused on production —

constituted a pivotal party in the equation of rhetorical communication through oratory. He likewise addressed the study of the audience and its position in classical Arabic rhetorical theory, citing the most important references found in the Arabic heritage, from which he concluded that although Arab rhetoricians' attention to the addressee was limited, it was nonetheless one of the inspiring tributaries underlying the founding of Audience Rhetoric theory. He then moved on to what Western thought had offered, counting the work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca among the most important of these contributions, discussing their input to what is known as the New Rhetoric, and considering it an important contribution to the study of the audience in the second half of the twentieth century; they offered a radical revision of the concept of the audience in Aristotelian rhetoric, in addition to founding a new argumentation theory concerned with the addressee and conviction (*al-iqtina'*) rather than with the speaker and persuasion (*al-iqna'*). From this perspective, the rhetoric of persuasion is directed toward a specific audience comprising orators, speechwriters, and those engaged in propaganda, advertising, and marketing, while the rhetoric of conviction is directed toward the universal general audience, in Perelman's terms. Abdel Latif also focused on considering the audience to be everyone the speaker holds in mind in order to persuade and build arguments for — what is called the ideal audience. The audience in the New Rhetoric of Perelman and his colleagues resembles the model reader in Umberto Eco's sense, as an abstract conception of an imagined entity that guides the act of writing/argumentation, which may or may not have a textual presence, and which may or may not coincide with the actual recipient.

Abdel Latif distinguished between the concept of the audience in the Western New Rhetoric and its concept in Audience Rhetoric: in the latter, the audience is viewed as a specific actor located in a defined place, not an ideal or model audience, but rather an audience of known character and presence — an audience “of flesh and blood,” in Imad Abdel Latif's own phrase. Audience Rhetoric is concerned with what is actually produced in speech, whether spoken or written. Founding the Audience Rhetoric project required directing attention back to the Arabic rhetorical heritage and rereading it; Dr. Abdel Latif reclassified Arabic rhetoric in order to develop rhetorical scholarship, relying on three criteria: the subject matter that a given rhetorical orientation specializes in studying, the object that the rhetorician addresses, and the function that this orientation seeks to accomplish.

Dr. Adel al-Majdawi coined the term “epistemic substitution” (*al-ibdal al-ma'rif*) to clarify Imad Abdel Latif's vision, by focusing on the domain of the audience that had been marginalized in the history of Arabic rhetorical research, noting that Abdel Latif himself pointed to this matter, stating: “I proposed a fourth orientation for rhetorical scholarship, proposing a radical change in the guiding paradigm of Arabic rhetoric.”

On the basis of these criteria, Abdel Latif distinguished among three types of rhetoric, proposing a fourth which he called “Audience Rhetoric.” These three rhetorics are:

- 1. Qur'anic Rhetoric:** its subject matter is the Noble Qur'an, its object is the rhetorical dimensions of the Noble Qur'an, and its function is to account for its rhetorical inimitability (*i'jaz*) and to contribute to its exegesis.
- 2. Literary Rhetoric:** its subject matter is literary texts, poetry and prose, its object is the aesthetic qualities of literary texts, and its function is to extract and analyze the aesthetic qualities of literary texts.
- 3. Constructive Rhetoric:** its subject matter is the language used in daily life to achieve persuasion and influence, its object is the production of eloquent speech, and its function is to establish standards for eloquent speech and to provide guidance enabling its production.

Dr. Imad noted that religious academic institutions, foremost among them al-Azhar, directed their attention to Qur'anic rhetoric, while civil institutions occupied themselves with literary rhetoric, and over the course of a century hundreds of books, treatises, and articles concerned with both accumulated. Because of the religious institution's devotion to Qur'anic discourse and the academic institution's devotion to the Western import, students of rhetoric were driven either to attach it to the new import — stylistics — or to reduce it to a level within literary criticism, or to treat it as a dead science, neither studied nor taught.

As for constructive rhetoric, despite the diversity of its practices, it presents itself as a tool for achieving the speaker's purposes and supporting his authority, since it “enables him to accomplish control and dominance over the addressee, and because the tools of power are inherently authoritarian, constructive rhetoric, in many of its practices, represents an authoritarian form of

knowledge that excludes the addressee from being a consumer of its discourse, while making him an object of study, aimed at accomplishing or supporting the speaker's dominance and control over him."

On the basis of this critical stance toward Arabic rhetorical scholarship in its three orientations, the theory of Audience Rhetoric was established, and Dr. Imad Abdel Latif sought to defend it by refuting the claims of certain modern rhetoric scholars who argued that ancient rhetoric was in fact biased toward its second party (the addressee) at the expense of its first party (the speaker). Among these scholars is Amin al-Khouli, who considers one indication of this to be the distortion in the method of the ancients, namely "their calibrating speech and measuring its proportions solely by the conditions of the addressee"; and Jabir Asfour, who holds that "the speaker is effaced in favor of the listener — the recipient"; and Mustafa Nasif, who holds that a person thinks for the sake of thinking about the addressee and influencing him.

It appears that Mustafa Nasif was being fair, for constructive Arabic rhetoric attended to the addressee for the purpose of controlling him; as a scholarly practice it does not serve the recipient, but rather its first and last concern is to serve the speaker who seeks to influence and overcome the recipient — according to Nasif. In fact, the addressee in Arabic rhetoric is not present in order to express himself, but is present so that discourse may be constructed upon him — a presence of a strategic nature falling within what Ibn Rashīq (d. 463 AH) called "skillful approach and management, and knowledge of the purposes of speech."

For this reason, Dr. Imad Abdel Latif refuted the claims of some modern scholars, affirming that rhetoric's attention to the addressee's conditions was aimed at achieving the speaker's purpose and controlling the addressee, since it seeks to serve the speaker who wishes to influence and overcome the addressee. Accordingly, constructive rhetoric is a tool for sharpening, and it is only natural that the victim (the audience) should be the focus of this attention, with the aim of influencing and controlling it, since it regards "addressees as prey to be hunted, and targets to be struck."

RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. The research showed that the theory of Audience Rhetoric represents an epistemic shift in Arabic rhetorical scholarship, in its move from the centrality of the speaker to the centrality of the audience and its responses.
2. The research demonstrated that traditional constructive rhetoric regarded the addressee as a means for achieving the speaker's purposes and a tool for control and persuasion.
3. The research revealed that Imad Abdel Latif founded Audience Rhetoric on the basis of multiple tributaries, including Greek rhetoric, ancient Arabic rhetoric, and the New Rhetoric.
4. The research established that modern means of communication and digital spaces have contributed to reinforcing the audience's role and transforming it from a passive recipient into an actor producing influential rhetorical responses.
5. The research concluded that Audience Rhetoric has become a critical discipline reinforcing discourse analysis, owing to its openness to the social and political sciences and to communication studies.

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