

Spoken Rhetoric in Arabic Heritage

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Abstract : The Arabic heritage has two types of spoken rhetoric: the first type which al-Jaahiz calls “the rhetoric of the sign,” which means body language, and the rhetoric of silence which is of no less importance than the rhetoric of the sign, the speaker’s appearance and movements, etc. The second type is the spoken performance of utterances which bears written rhetoric arts like metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc. Rationale of the study: First: in spite of the factual existence of rhetorical phenomena in the Arabic heritage, there has been no contemporary study handling the spoken rhetoric in the Arabic heritage. Second: Arabic Civilization is originally a spoken one. Comparing the Arabic culture and civilization, from one side, to the Greek, roman or Pharaonic cultures and civilizations, from the other side, shows that the latter cultures and civilizations started and flourished written while the former started among illiterate people who had no interest in writing until recently. That sort of difference on the part of the Arabic culture and civilization created a rhetoric different from rhetoric in the other cultures and civilizations. Third: the spoken nature of the Arabic civilization influenced the Arabic rhetoric in the sense that specific rhetorical arts have been introduced matching that spoken nature. One of these arts is the art of concision which compensates for the absence of writing’s means of preserving the text. In addition, this interprets why many of the definitions of the Arabic rhetoric were defining rhetoric as the art of concision. Also, this interprets the fact that the literary genres known in the Arabic culture were limited by the available narrow space like poetry, anecdotes, and stories, while the literary genres in the Greek culture were of wide space as epics and drama. This is not of any contrast to the fact that some Arabic poetry would exceed 100 lines of poetry as Arabic poetry was based on the line organic unity, which means that every line could stand alone with a full meaning that is not dependent on the rest of the poem; and that last aspect has never happened in any culture other than the Arabic culture.

Keywords : Arabic rhetoric, spoken rhetoric, Arabic heritage, culture

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