

Arabic Rhetoric in the Eyes of Russian Orientalists

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Abstract:

Russian Orientalism is considered one of the most important schools of Orientalism that has influenced literary studies, characterized by moderation and objectivity in approaching Arabic literature. One of its most prominent figures is the orientalist Ignatius Krachkovsky (1883–1951), who was particularly interested in the study of Arabic rhetoric, especially the science of al-Badi' (embellishments). He edited the book **AL-BADI'** by Ibn al-Mu'tazz and followed the development of this science in the 9th century AD. Krachkovsky contributed to the dissemination of Arab heritage and the editing of highly valuable manuscripts. His studies demonstrated that Russian Orientalism had purely scholarly objectives, unrelated to colonialism, which helped in fairly presenting Arab-Islamic civilization and promoting its heritage.

Keywords: Orientalism; Arabic al-Badi'; Russian Orientalists; Krachkovsky the Russian Arabist.

1.Introduction:

The relationship between the East and the West has always been, and will continue to be, a subject of conflict that takes various forms—military, economic, and cultural. This is because each side seeks to impose its religious and cultural values on the other, while also aiming to make the other a source of economic benefit. At times,

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this extends even further, with one side attempting to impose its way of life on the other.

Western colonial thought stirred its inherent racism, starting from an unquestionable premise: the superiority of Westerners and the backwardness of Easterners. With this notion, Orientalists firmly implanted this idea in their students, both Arabs and Easterners. As a result, regional and religious isolationism transformed into an attempt to dominate the other and alter their way of life, thinking, and behavior to align with those deemed superior and refined. This process encouraged them to abandon the values of their own people, which the West persistently labeled as backward and regressive.

On the other hand, Arab thought did not adopt a clear stance towards Orientalism, leading to varied responses among Arab scholars regarding the ideas that reached them through the numerous works written—and still being written—about Muslims and Arabs. Some approached Orientalist thought with hostility, which led them to reject everything that came from it. These scholars believed that Orientalism existed solely to serve colonial interests and achieve their objectives. They saw the study of Eastern heritage as a form of quiet warfare aimed at undermining Islam by casting doubt on its sources. The ultimate goal of this skepticism, they argued, was to divert Muslims away from their religion.

The issue at hand can be summarized in the following question: How can we understand the historical relationship between the East and the West in light of the conflict that has taken on military, economic, and cultural forms, where each side seeks to impose its religious and cultural values and achieve its economic interests? Can Orientalism be regarded as merely a tool of Western dominance, aimed at changing the way of life of Easterners and distorting their religion, or are there other aspects of Orientalism that may be objective and scholarly?

Three hypotheses can be formulated to understand the relationship between the East and the West in the context of Orientalism. First, Orientalism can be viewed as a tool of Western dominance, used to alter the way of life of Easterners and distort their religious and cultural heritage to serve colonial and economic interests. Second, Russian Orientalism, as exemplified by the work of Krachkovsky, was characterized by its scientific and objective approach, aiming to do justice to Arab-Islamic civilization by studying literature, rhetoric, and editing manuscripts without colonial ties. Lastly, there may be an overlap between the scientific goals of Orientalism and colonial influences, as some aspects of Orientalism reflected a tension between genuine scholarly inquiry and the colonial interests that accompanied this movement at certain times.

2.Theoretical Framework:

The word "Orientalism" is derived from the term "East," which refers to the direction where the sun rises and symbolizes the geographical and cultural focus on this part of the world. It encompasses the rich array of sciences, knowledge, and diverse civilizational and cultural features found in the East. An orientalist is a person who dedicates themselves to studying and exploring various aspects of the East, from its knowledge systems to its cultural traits. Conversely, we also find the terms "Occidentalism" and "Occidentalism," which denote an inclination towards the West, characterized by admiration, imitation, and scholarly study of Western civilization and culture (Muhammad Fathallah, 1983: 55) .

When the Arabic prefix "alif," "seen," and "ta" (forming "istishraq") is added to the word "sharq" (East), it implies "seeking the East," meaning the pursuit of knowledge, literature, and religions of the East in a comprehensive sense. This is the Arabic interpretation. However, some researchers in the field of Orientalism argue that its meaning in European languages differs significantly from this definition. For some Western scholars, the "East" does not refer solely to the geographical region but is associated with the idea of sunrise, light, enlightenment, and guidance.

This understanding is highlighted by researcher Sayyid Muhammad al-Shahid, who, drawing upon Western dictionaries, explains that the term "Orient" is not limited to the geographical East. He argues that the East represents the rising of the sun, symbolizing light, enlightenment, and guidance, in contrast to the West, which metaphorically signifies sunset, decline, and disappearance.

Al-Shahid refers to European linguistic dictionaries (German, French, and English) and found that the term "Orient" in those languages refers to the "Land of the Morning" (Morgenland in German), which is where the sun rises. This conveys a metaphorical shift from the geographical or astronomical meaning of the East to an emphasis on the morning's symbolism of light, awakening, and enlightenment. In contrast, the term "Abendland" (Land of the Evening) refers to the West, symbolizing sunset, decline, and darkness (Al-Mutabagani).

In the **Oxford Dictionary**, an **ORIENTALIST** is defined as someone deeply versed in the languages, literature, and sciences of the East. The German Orientalist **Bart** sees the term "Orientalism" as having two meanings: "Orientalism is a science primarily concerned with philology. We must consider the meaning attached to the word 'Orientalism,' derived from the word **SHARQ**, which means the rising of the sun. Hence, Orientalism is the study of the East or the Eastern world, and up to this point, the meaning is clear. But what does the word **EAST** specifically mean in this context?"

Bart further explains that the meaning of **EAST** has shifted over time. For the Germans, for example, the East does not only refer to the geographical East but also to the Slavic world, the region behind the Iron Curtain, as it was called in the past. This region, which includes Eastern Europe, falls under the domain of scholars specializing in the study of Eastern Europe. Thus, the term **EAST** has evolved to encompass different meanings depending on the cultural and political context (Nayef bin Thunayan, 1414 AH).

There is also a difference in defining the concept of the "East." Does it specifically refer to the Arabs and the Islamic world, or does it encompass Eastern nations and civilizations in general? Some researchers believe that the term **ORIENTALISM** (Orientalisme) refers to the "study of the East in all its aspects." For Europeans, the concept of the "East" often primarily referred to the Arab East, which included the Islamic East as well, since both fell under the banner of Arab-Islamic civilization and shared its general features and characteristics.

This view reflects the tendency of Western scholars to associate the broader Islamic world with Arab culture, due to their intertwined histories and the significant influence of Arabic on Islamic thought and civilization. Thus, in the European imagination, the East often became synonymous with the Arab-Islamic world.

However, the term *Orientalism* became somewhat broad after Europe entered the modern era, following the geographic discoveries and the Industrial Revolution. Driven by colonial ambitions, Europeans expanded their reach into countries beyond the Arab-Islamic regions, particularly in Africa and Asia. This expansion led to the inclusion of studies of various languages and civilizations, such as those of India, China, Japan, and Indonesia, among others. Consequently, the concept of Orientalism expanded to encompass the languages and cultures of these countries.

This broadening necessitated the emergence of a more specific and precise term within the larger Orientalist movement: *Arabization* (Arabisation). This term refers to those who focus on studying the Arabic language and Arab civilization. The collective body of research conducted by scholars interested in these areas is referred to as *Arab studies*. This differentiation highlights the significance of the Arabic language and culture within the broader context of Oriental studies, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the Arab world specifically (Al-Muqdad, 1992).

The contemporary and controversial orientalist **Bernard Lewis** presents a different perspective on the concept of Orientalism. He argues that the term is used in two main senses. The first is that Orientalism is akin to a school of painting, where a group of artists, mostly from Western Europe, visited the Middle East and North Africa and depicted what they saw and imagined in a romanticized manner.

The second and more common understanding is that Orientalism is an academic discipline that emerged during the Renaissance. In this context, the Hellenistic school studies Greek civilization, the Latin school focuses on Roman civilization, and the Hebrew school examines Hebrew history and language. Lewis posits that the Hellenistic and Latin schools are referred to as **CLASSICAL STUDIES**, while the Hebrew studies are termed **ORIENTAL STUDIES**. Over time, attention has also turned to other languages and cultures, expanding the scope of what Orientalism entails. This distinction highlights the artistic and academic dimensions of Orientalism, suggesting that it encompasses both creative interpretations and serious scholarly pursuits (Bernard, 1994: 41).

3. The Russian School of Orientalism

Russia's relationship with Muslims has a long history, stemming from its proximity to Islamic republics and through trade routes, particularly involving merchants from Iraq and Central Asia, as well as missions to the Holy Land in Palestine. The stories shared by these traders served as the initial spark for Russia's interest in Arab-Islamic culture.

Russian Orientalism has undergone several phases, including a period before the Bolshevik Revolution, during which both Russian Orientalists and Arab scholars contributed to the field. The Tsarist government in Russia aimed to educate its citizens in Eastern languages, especially Arabic, viewing it as a gateway to Islamic sciences and arts. Consequently, Russia sought to understand the beliefs, culture, and languages of these Islamic states.

While Russian Orientalism was influenced by European Orientalism, it did not aim to confront Arab culture in the same way as Dutch Orientalism did. Instead, it focused on adopting names and institutions that would be accepted by Muslims, such as the Institute of Oriental Arts and the Russian-Arab Friendship Society. This approach reflected a desire to foster positive relations and a mutual understanding between Russia and the Arab-Islamic world, emphasizing respect for the cultural and religious values of the region.

In the 19th century, Russian interest in Oriental studies significantly increased, marking the beginning of a more organized Orientalist movement. The Russian government established a university system that offered courses in Eastern languages, with Arabic being the primary focus.

Arab scholars who traveled to Russia played a crucial role in educating and training Russian Orientalists in the Arabic language, introducing them to the linguistic treasures of Arabic. Notable figures included Sheikh Muhammad al-Tantawi, who

worked as a professor at St. Petersburg University, and Mikhail Attaya, who taught at various Russian universities and institutes. These scholars delivered lectures that greatly enriched the understanding of Arabic language and culture among Russian students, helping to lay a solid foundation for the study of Arab-Islamic heritage in Russia.

Russian Orientalism distinguished itself from other forms of Western European Orientalism through several key characteristics. Notably, it exhibited a profound interest in Eastern literature, particularly Arabic literature, with Russian scholars focusing on the study and analysis of Arabic literary texts. They also placed significant emphasis on Arabic manuscripts, striving to edit and publish them. Moreover, their focus on the Arabic language, especially in the areas of grammar and morphology, allowed them to contribute effectively to the preservation and study of Arab-Islamic heritage with objectivity.

Krachkovsky, a prominent figure in Russian Orientalism, opted to replace the term *Orientalism* with *Arabization* due to the negative connotations associated with the former, particularly its links to colonialism. He expressed his concern that the term *Orientalism* had long been associated with colonial endeavors, prompting his decision to adopt a new terminology. Russian Arabization, while initially drawing on European sources, soon evolved to embrace several concepts, the most important of which is the belief that understanding the East should come from within the East itself, rather than from an external perspective. This perspective underscored the importance of engaging with Eastern cultures and knowledge on their own terms.

4. Sheikh of Russian Arabists: Krachkovsky, the Lover of Arabic.

He is called the Dean of Russian Arabists (al-Mu'tazz, 1982).

He is noted to have authored 450 books and research papers on Arab heritage. Born in Vilna in 1883, he studied at the Faculty of Eastern Languages, where he focused his attention on the Arabic language and was awarded a gold medal for his research on the caliphate during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mahdi. Professor Najib Al-Aqqiqi mentions the motivations behind this Orientalist's interest in Arabic literature, stating: "The reason for his engagement with the Arabic language was his fascination with it, its grammar, and its manuscripts.

Krachkovsky outlines the topics he addressed in the study of the history of the Arabic language and literature within three main circles: the history and criticism of Arabic poetry, Arabic literature produced by non-Muslim authors, and the history of Arabic literature since the beginning of the religious renaissance in the 19th century.

Dr. Abdel Rahman Badawi noted that Krachkovsky's output can be categorized into several sections, including the publication of ancient Arabic texts, the translation of those texts into other languages, and the study of specific conditions in the Arab world. This reflects the diversity and depth of his interests in Arabic literature and its history.

Krachkovsky's works are compiled into six volumes. The first volume includes references on Arabic history and geography, while the second volume focuses on his contributions to literature, both poetry and prose. The third volume discusses modern Arabic literature and its prominent figures. The fourth volume features a comprehensive book titled **GEOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE AMONG THE ARABS**. The fifth volume addresses the movement of Western and Russian Orientalism, and the sixth and final volume is dedicated to the book **Al-Badi'**, authored by Ibn Mu'tazz.

The book **Al-Badi'** is considered one of the most important works authored by Ibn Mu'tazz. Its significance lies in being a pioneer in theorizing this science and laying the groundwork for the theory of innovation during the Abbasid era. It is noted that Ibn Mu'tazz is the first to categorize the art of **BADI'**. Dr. Zaki Mubarak mentions that Ibn Mu'tazz was not the first to be interested in the art of **BADI'**, as the Arabs during the pre-Islamic era were already advanced in this field. However, due to some ambiguity surrounding the matter, it became widely believed that Ibn Mu'tazz was the first to document the science of **BADI'**.

Arab interest in Ibn Mu'tazz's book was highlighted in a report presented by Dr. Taha Hussein at the Orientalists' Conference in Leiden in 1931, titled "A Report on the Greek Influence in Arabic Rhetoric." In this report, he discussed the existence of two critical trends among Arabs in the 3rd century Hijri: an Arabic trend and a Greek trend. Although Ibn Mu'tazz might have shown some influence from Greek culture, it turned out that his expectations were misplaced. After the book was critically examined, Shawqi Duf noted that it was entirely devoid of any such Greek influence. Instead, the book drew from a rich Arabic rhetorical heritage and pure Arabic sources. Ibn Mu'tazz authored it as a response to those seeking Arabic rhetorical rules in Greek writings.

Krachkovsky recognized that any evaluation of the author and the book could only be made after studying the content of the book, which revolves around the new doctrine in poetry. This new style, as defined by his contemporaries, is **BADI'**, which can be translated into critical scientific language as the "new style." This style was not invented by contemporary poets; rather, it has its roots in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the words of earlier poets. However, it was not frequently found in these earlier sources and only became more prevalent during the time of Ibn Mu'tazz, which

prompted him to write **AL-BADI'**. This will be further clarified through my presentation titled "The Arabic Badi' in the Eyes of Russian Orientalists: A Study of Krachkovsky's Writings."

Krachkovsky specifically: focused on the science of **BADI'** in Arabic rhetoric, largely overlooking the other two branches, which are **MA'ANI** (meaning) and **BAYAN** (clarity). His research in Arabic rhetoric centered on two main aspects: his edition of Ibn Mu'tazz's book **AL-BADI'** and the tracing of the development of the science of **BADI'** in the 19th century. He authored a book titled "The Science of Badi' and Arabic Rhetoric," which was translated into Arabic by Muhammad Al-Hajiri.

Krachkovsky conducted a critical study of the book on **BADI'** before its publication, presenting this study in the form of lectures at Russian scientific institutes. He later compiled and published these lectures alongside the Russian edition of the book. When examining his works, it becomes evident that his views on Ibn Mu'tazz and his era, specifically the 3rd century Hijri / 9th century CE, are clearly articulated.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARABIC **BADI'** AND GREEK RHETORIC:

During the time of Ibn Mu'tazz, there were three major classical approaches to **BADI'** that flourished in the 3rd century Hijri (9th century CE). The first was the Greek approach, which was the most widely adopted and discussed by Aristotle, gaining significant traction in Europe. The second was the Indian approach, which became known to Arabs through their interactions with Indians during the Abbasid era, particularly through works by Al-Jahiz on Indian rhetoric. The third was the Arabic approach, which Krachkovsky explored.

The pressing question that arises is whether Arabic **BADI'** constitutes an original method that stands on par with the Greek and Indian approaches, or if it is merely an influence or a branch of the Aristotelian framework. This question is particularly relevant given the expansion of translation activities during the Abbasid period, where translators were rewarded generously—often with gold—for their efforts.

While Indian **BADI'** did influence the Arabic language through Iran, it is crucial to assert that there is no substantial evidence to demonstrate that Indian **BADI'** had a significant impact on Arabic **BADI'**. This lack of influence is largely due to the absence of clear temporal boundaries for these influences.

The discussion about the influence of the Greek method on Arabic **BADI'** remains a given. Aristotle was known to the Arabs, but his works were not translated until the 4th century Hijri (10th century CE). In reality, there are notable differences in style and essence between Arabic **BADI'** and Aristotelian rhetoric. Krachkovsky reached a

firm conclusion that it is difficult to find traces of Greek influence in the emergence of Arabic **BADI'**, as the latter developed in a context that is fundamentally different from that of Greek **BADI'**.

Krachkovsky states that Ibn al-Mu'tazz is considered the pioneer of **BADI'** in the Arabic language. His book "Al-Badi'" is regarded as one of his most important works, where he established theoretical foundations for renewal in Arabic poetry during his time. His book was not limited to **BADI'** in the sense that has been established by rhetoricians, which involves various styles used to enhance speech. Instead, it addressed various methods of **BADI'** and rhetoric. It is unanimously acknowledged by researchers, both Arab and Orientalist, that it is the first book dedicated specifically to this rhetorical art

The concept of **BADI'** according to Ibn al-Mu'tazz is essentially a term that encompasses various arts of poetry. This concept becomes clearer when we recognize that Ibn al-Mu'tazz had an expansive view of **BADI'**, as he included elements from the science of rhetoric, such as simile, metaphor, and metonymy. His understanding of **BADI'** was broader than what was commonly accepted by later rhetoricians. Krachkovsky noted that Ibn al-Mu'tazz wrote his book in a simple and expressive language.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz acknowledges the efforts of his predecessors in his book **AL-BADI'**, recognizing that his work is an extension of previous endeavors. Krachkovsky highlights Ibn al-Mu'tazz's integrity and acknowledgment of earlier contributions, mentioning that Al-Asma'i had previously explored the arts of **BADI'** and identified **JINAS** (pun), while Al-Jahiz had discovered what is known as the rhetorical method.

Moreover, Ibn al-Mu'tazz does not merely acknowledge the merits of his predecessors; he also opens the door for future scholars to develop and enrich this science by inventing new forms that complement his work. He was fully aware that his book would stimulate the minds of later researchers from various angles. Some would discover new types of **BADI'** that he had not mentioned, while others might challenge the terms he used for these rhetorical arts. His acknowledgment of the potential for future attempts to advance this new science reveals a sophisticated mindset of a true scholar who understands that the terminology is not yet settled. Consequently, the field remains open for future researchers.

Indeed, Ibn al-Mu'tazz's ideas were prophetic, as after him the types of **BADI'** increased significantly, and a merging occurred between **BADI'** and beauty, leading to the introduction of other forms into this science. Modern scholars now refer to him as one of the pioneering researchers in poetic style.

6. Ibn al-Mu'tazz and the Book "Al-Badi'":

Kratshkovsky mentioned that the book "Al-Badi'" did not adhere to a specific criterion in classifying the arts, leaving us puzzled as to why some rhetorical arts were placed in **BADI'** while others were categorized under the merits of speech. For example, **TASHBIH** (simile) is considered among the merits, whereas **ISTIARAH** (metaphor) is included in **BADI'**. Kratshkovsky then defends Ibn al-Mu'tazz, stating: "Criticism can be directed towards the research, and the artistic means and techniques derived in the past, which have become standards for studying and critiquing poetry, are still alive." All of this compels us to recognize the connection between Aristotle's teachings and their reflections on the critique of poetry and literature, which still resemble the principles and standards of Ibn al-Mu'tazz that are applicable today in Arabic rhetoric.

7. Ibn al-Mu'tazz's Terminology: Kratshkovsky studied Ibn al-Mu'tazz's terminology in a comparative manner with European languages, clarifying the differences between the Arabic term and European terms. The first term for Ibn al-Mu'tazz is **ISTIARAH** (metaphor), which is expressed in European languages as **METAPHORE**. He then notes that **ISTIARAH** differs from **METAPHORE** in European languages, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz's examples make **ISTIARAH** broader than its European counterpart, thus indicating that the Arabic term is more expansive than the Western term.

The second term is **JINAS**, which Meirin translates as **HOMOGENEITAT**, while Fleiger translates it as **PLAYING WITH WORDS**.

The third term is *mutabaqa*, which in Ibn Mutazz's thinking does not mean mere comparison, but sometimes it does. Other terms emerged after Ibn Mutazz, such as *muqasama*, *takafu*, *tadaad*, and others. The fourth term is *radd i'jaaz al-kalam* (the return of the miracle of speech to its source), and Krachovski mentions that translating this term with a single word is difficult; even Ibn Mutazz himself used several words for this term, such as *masdoor*, which signifies the return of the ending to the beginning, representing the rhythm of beginning and ending. This corresponds to the term *Ploke* in Greek and Roman rhetoric.

The fifth term is **AL-MADHHAB AL-KALAMI**, which relies on logical persuasion in expression and refers to logical reasoning; it is not one of the arts of **BADI** (rhetoric). Ibn Mutazz mentioned that he took this from Al-Jahiz. This fifth art is related to logic, while all the previous arts took on a purely linguistic or literary historical character.

When he finished mentioning the terms of **BADI**, he addressed the merits of speech, tracing each term until he covered them all, noting the relationship of most of the terms to their counterparts in Western European **BADI**.

Kratshovsky discussed Ibn Mu'tazz's approach in presenting the material of his book, noting that he does not always provide a definition for the rhetorical art being studied at the beginning. Instead, he starts by presenting examples from the Qur'an, followed by examples from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and excerpts from the ancient period. These are then matched with examples from ancient poets and later poetic prose. However, this system may become disrupted, leading to poetic examples appearing in place of prose examples, or vice versa.

We also find that Ibn Mu'tazz, in his presentation of poetic examples, does not adhere to a chronological order, and his book ends without a conclusion.

8. Conclusion:

After an enjoyable journey through the efforts of Kratchkovsky, who did justice to Islamic civilization, his contributions are undeniable, and his merit in preserving our heritage must be acknowledged. He played a significant role in disseminating part of our Arabic heritage and worked on important Arabic manuscripts with substantial value in our literary tradition. He also conducted specialized studies in literature, rhetoric, and criticism. Through my study of Orientalism and Russian Arabists, particularly Kratchkovsky, it became clear that Orientalism has multiple and overlapping definitions. It is not entirely negative, nor does it necessarily have ties to colonialism. The best example of this is Russian Orientalism, which had scientific objectives that recognized the merits of Arab Islamic civilization.

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