

**The Art of Theatrical Direction and the Aesthetics of Stage Performance  
The play "Autumn" as à Case Study**

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**Abstract :**

This research examines the transformations in a theater actor's artistic performance according to the director's specifications in shaping the characters that embody the artistic work in its internal and external temporal and spatial dimensions. It also examines the actor's ability to convey the concepts and meanings of the theatrical performance and the artistic outcomes of this performance, as conceived by the director, in his handling of the tools of the creative process—from the text and the actor to the audience— so that the creative process is completed through the analysis and interpretation of this audiovisual discourse, which is embodied through the actor's movements.

This study aims to highlight the aesthetics of directing and their impact on the actor's performance, to identify the elements of theatrical directing related to acting, and to examine their application on stage without neglecting the influence of other scenographic elements on the actor's performance. In addition, the study provides a detailed explanation and analysis of the aesthetics of the performance, including theatrical acting on stage.

Accordingly, this research consists of two chapters : the first chapter contains two sections, and the second chapter comprises an applied study, followed by a conclusion and, finally, a list of sources and references.

**Keywords :** Direction, performance, Audience, Theatrical Adaptation.

**Introduction :**

Theater presents itself as an ever-evolving art form in its relationship with the performing arts. These forms, born of a focus on performance and the interaction it fosters between performers and spectators, have led to the emergence of "energetic theater." As defined by the French philosopher François Lyotard, this means that theater is not a theater of meaning, but rather a theater of the presence of forces and forms of intensity and tension. It is the most influential of the performing arts on the audience because its elements encompass all auditory and visual arts, giving it a unique ability to nourish the audience's mind and sensibilities—aesthetically, morally, and culturally—in a way that no other art form can replicate with the same impact, even if it employs the same techniques. Therefore, researchers and theater professionals are called upon to identify tasks that serve as complementary elements to theatrical performance, and to define their names and functions.

Among these functions is theatrical direction, defined by its use of theatrical means such as the actors' movement on stage; and thus, within the time and space of the performance and its

various scenic elements, it serves as a coordinating activity for any dramatic work. Its essence lies in coordinating and supervising the artistic elements with the auditory and visual components of the theatrical performance, shaping them into a coherent scenic framework that highlights the overall form of the production.

Preparing and training actors in vocal and emotional performance, as well as designing and planning their movements, are among the most important tasks of directing. Added to this is overseeing the design by determining the elements used in the performance and shaping them into a scenic form. This process represents a comprehensive vision of the play that can align with the director's signature vision. Once again, when discussing theatrical direction, we must mention the Stanislavski method regarding the actor and character development. For the director, this constitutes a complete system for theatrical work that focuses on the actor's performance, and for the actors, it is a fundamental aspect of theatrical preparation, serving as a guiding light for acting and improvisation.

All of this leads us to discuss **the art of theatrical direction and the aesthetics of acting (performance)**, which suggests that the aesthetic dimension of theater is limited to "the actor and his performance" and his relationship with the audience.

This study aims to identify new and innovative perspectives in the field of theatrical performance on stage, as well as to explore theatrical direction and its relationship to the director's vision, and to reveal the distinctive features of a theatrical production. It also seeks to demonstrate the necessity of integrating the elements of the theatrical process to present a performance that embodies theatrical creativity, given that theater is a tangible and visual art form driven by the actor's performance. From this perspective, we undertook this research to highlight the importance of acting and its relationship to directing in terms of both vision and execution.

This topic is divided into two chapters : a theoretical chapter with two sections and a chapter containing an applied study on directing and acting performance, illustrated by the Moroccan theatrical production "Autumn" by Asma Houari. Within the framework of the study, a descriptive-analytical approach was used to describe the tragedies that plague our society today. Subsequently, available facts and information were utilized and analyzed to conduct a critical evaluation in preparation for the theatrical adaptation, accompanied by a summary of the events and characters. An applied approach was also used to find experimental solutions on stage and address practical implementation issues, so that this study serves to deepen our understanding of the actor's movement, dance (choreography), gestures, and... the events of the play were expressed through a composition dominated mostly by silence.

A theatrical performance may last only a few hours, but the process of preparing it usually takes months, as the production is composed of various elements—set design, lighting, and music—and involves a grueling and demanding preparation process overseen by the director. All of this is harnessed to serve the actor, allowing them to immerse themselves in their performance alongside their tools (dialogue, movement, gestures, character traits, etc.). This ensures the necessary coordination among these elements to ultimately satisfy the audience.

**Chapter One :**  
**Section One**

**1-Theatrical Direction :**

Theatrical directing is not merely a matter of organizing information according to a specific system ; rather, it is a process brimming with creativity and innovation, evolving alongside the society in which it exists. Perhaps the simplest definition of directing is : the transformation of the written text into a live performance, in which the director acts as the text's second author by relying on techniques and methods that are indispensable to the process. As Alex Popov put it, the director is “the invisible magician who holds the strings of the complex theatrical machine in his hands, and he is also the artist who gives the entire theatrical performance its character, essence, and unique tone”<sup>(1)</sup>.

As for the word “director” from **a historical perspective**, it dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century and refers to someone who takes on certain specific duties. It was first known as “daida scalos,” meaning “the appointed teacher” who conveys information to actors, dancers, and the chorus. The Encyclopædia Britannica defines the role as follows : “He is responsible for interpreting the text and selecting the actors, sets, and costumes. He is assisted in this by the stage manager and may employ other assistants to oversee the technical aspects of the production, such as lighting, signals, props, and sound effects”<sup>(2)</sup> .

Ibrahim Hamada presents the concept of the director as : “the coordinator of the efforts of the playwright, the actor, and the set designer for the other participants in the theatrical performance ; in this, he resembles the conductor of an orchestra”<sup>(3)</sup>.

Based on this, we can say that the director is the one who interprets the theatrical text through set design, stage direction, lighting, music, and other elements, in addition to coordinating these elements collectively—meaning that the director is the play's writer or creator.

The director's role in a theatrical production is second only to that of the actor in terms of importance.

**1.1 The Theater Director's Working Mechanisms :**

He is the person responsible for the overall impact of artistic performances in modern theater ; he has the final say in selecting artistic elements to realize his creative vision, He also wields significant authority in the theater, to the extent that it is said, “The performance belongs to the director.” To better understand this, we must identify the most precise and technically significant points that highlight his role and function in a theatrical production, which are as follows :

- Working in coordination with the playwright.
- Selecting the script and deciding on appropriate changes that will revitalize the production.
- Developing the directorial vision.
- Planning the production of the play in collaboration with the playwright, technical staff, and set, lighting, and costume designers.
- Directing the actors and assigning roles.
- Designing stage movement.
- Leading and supervising rehearsals<sup>(4)</sup>.

**2.1 The Directorial Vision :**

The word “vision” appears in Al-Munjid's Dictionary of Language and Media : “Vision, plural visions : seeing with the eye or the heart”<sup>(5)</sup> , and it also includes another word with a similar meaning, namely “al-riya: vision; al-tariya: the view or its beauty. Al-ra'ā: abundant vision”<sup>(6)</sup>

. In the context of this study, the theater director's vision begins with the selection of actors. As David Purтч observes, there is no "completely finished text, but rather a multitude of meanings within the writing process. Similarly, no matter how complete and detailed the performance may be through the acting process, directing does not complete those processes, nor do those processes complete the directing; rather, the directing process creates a new text suited to a specific time, place, and reception..."<sup>(7)</sup><sup>1</sup>.

Some define it as follows : "Vision is associated with the creative process of creating a work of art, which considers creative thinking to be a flow of ideas through imagination, dreams, inspiration, intuition, and observation—which the artist strives to achieve"<sup>(8)</sup>, and thus stems from creativity brought about by a combination of sources rarely found in a single artist. "Vision does not depend on visual ability but transcends it, for it stems from the capacity for thought, perception, and imagination, since imagination is itself the thought of vision"<sup>(9)</sup>.

Procedurally, it is the visual construction of the apparent and the implicit forms and ideas produced by the imagination when the director reads the text. Thus, vision is the set of ideas and perceptions that the director perceives imprinted on the screen of his mind and wishes to realize on stage, harmonizing them to form his theatrical production into an imagined space within the visual structure, reinforced by elements of scenic language that he employs as signifiers through his cultural, artistic, and social references.

Every theater director possesses a unique vision that distinguishes them from other directors, along with an artistic and aesthetic approach and a cultural heritage or legacy. This heritage varies from one director to another, and they draw upon it to convey their ideas using physical media to create the image, which are the fundamental elements of a theatrical production's structure, such as character, color, lighting, costumes, props, dialogue, sound effects, and silence. The director seeks to build dynamic relationships among these elements, Conversely, cumulative cultural and social references serve as one of the key foundations in shaping the vision and constructing mental images of a transformative nature that vary from one region to another, depending on the differing system of relationships that make up the director's mind. Thus, retrieving images stored in memory—which contain a vast quantity of images and scenes that are evoked and given new expressive or symbolic forms through the power of imagination, "for it is the artist who rearranges situations in the world of imagination and reconstructs relationships in his real world to arrive at a psychological and spiritual reality produced by visual clues"<sup>(10)</sup>.

The director's vision for a theatrical production is a fundamental element through which the director assumes the responsibility of transforming the written text into a vivid and impactful artistic experience, as evidenced by the direction of the actors and the selection of visual and auditory elements that reflect the director's artistic vision. The director carefully reads the script to analyze the characters and main themes, relying on their creative expertise. Additionally, the director plays a pivotal role in determining key production elements such as lighting, sound and visual effects, set design, costumes, and music, all of which contribute to

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<sup>1</sup>- Perтч, David, *The Language of Drama*, trans. Rabih Muftah, Cairo: National Translation Project, 1st ed., 2005, p. 24.

creating the overall atmosphere. The director also organizes the actors' movements on stage and determines their placement within the theatrical space, thereby enhancing the clarity of the story and effectively capturing the audience's attention in accordance with his directorial vision. The directorial vision expresses the director's perspective on the staging of scenes and their interpretation in terms of ideas and values, It may differ from the author's opinion, involving changes to the text's language through the language of the performance <sup>(11)</sup> .

The directorial vision is the framework that brings together the various artistic elements to achieve a cohesive theatrical production. The director's success depends largely on their personality, professional competence, artistic abilities, and practical experience, which clearly define their creative signature through the actors' performances, the rhythm of the play, the colors of the set design, lighting, costumes, and the balance and harmony of all artistic elements combined, which give the impression of the performance's success or failure. The director works to integrate the scenery, costumes, lighting, music, sound effects, dance, and singing as supporting elements to embody his directorial vision in the production of the show, taking into account their dramatic necessity <sup>(12)</sup> . Directing has evolved into a specialized profession by making it a complex creative process. André Antoine views directing as a profession requiring skill and intelligence. In his opinion, the director has two fundamental tasks : a formative profession, ...which consists of creating the physical framework for the elements of the performance—sets, costumes, props, and lighting. He summarizes this as a “ ” (a living space) that embodies the ordinary aspects of life with attention to the finest details, allowing the characters to live in a familiar environment, and the interpretive task, through which the director highlights the psychological and philosophical implications inherent in the text, reveals the relationships between the parts of the work itself, and makes use of direct gestures, movement, and appropriate timing"<sup>(13)</sup> .

## **2-Theatrical Adaptation :**

The linguistic definition of "ma'alajah" is mentioned in the book \*Lisan al-Arab al-Muhit\*: "Ma'alajah is a noun. It is derived from the verb \*'alaaj\* (to treat), and the plural is \*ma'alijah\* . It refers to the treatment of materials in the sense of analyzing and processing them "<sup>(14)</sup> It also means "practice, application, and perseverance "<sup>(15)</sup> As a technical term, it refers to “the creation of creative relationships between primary and secondary artistic means on the one hand, and elements of literary structure on the other”<sup>(16)</sup> .

Theatrical adaptation involves analyzing the play, training the actors, and shaping the theatrical space to bring a specific creative vision to life. Its goal is to transform a static text into a vibrant performance and convey the text's hidden symbols and message to the audience. There are three types of theatrical adaptation :

### **1.2 Directorial Adaptation :**

This represents the director's artistic and aesthetic interpretation, which brings the text to life through visual and auditory elements. Magdi Wahba and Kamal Al-Muhandis define it as : "It is an advanced stage of dramatic construction in which the director or screenwriter undertakes the task of artistically preparing the short story, novel, or play to be adapted, relying on the visual sequence as an interpretive tool in terms of the succession of scenes and situations, the clarification of events, and the characterization " <sup>(17)</sup> .

Procedurally : We can define the directorial approach related to the research topic of theatrical directing as the director's theoretical and experimental practices in interpretation, analysis, and exegesis, utilizing the elements of the theatrical performance. It operates within the director's vision, stemming from their engagement with and treatment of every detail of the directorial function, and the integration of the directorial vision that seeks to engage with the author's text artistically and theatrically.

### **2.2 Dramatic (Textual) Adaptation :**

By this we mean the integration of writing and directing, beginning with a reinterpretation of the text to align with the directorial vision, transforming the text—the “dramatic material”—into a harmonious system of visual and auditory elements, which constitute the primary and strategic objective of every theatrical performance, as these elements evoke a range of emotions and interests in the audience.

The dramatic life flows through the veins of a theatrical text only through the director's intervention, which transforms the text from its static state into a living entity teeming with meaning and significance—a result that reflects the director's mastery of interpretive techniques, including exploratory and substitutionary approaches. Through exploratory reading, the director can extract all the elements of dramatic structure, led by the idea, dialogue, characters, conflict, plot, and time and place, based on the dialogue, ...the characters and their environment, and the conflict between them <sup>(18)</sup>. The second type of reading (substitutive) expresses the director's own ideas and opinions regarding the theatrical text. This type of reading conveys to the director the intellectual and aesthetic values of the author's text, regardless of the approach the director adopts in translating it into a visual image or adding new values to it. Meyerhold states, “The theater cannot tolerate stagnation or immobility ; it recognizes only the contemporary, even when addressing themes of the past” <sup>(19)</sup>. This compels the director to bring the events closer to how they actually occurred, forcing him to alter what he deems necessary in order to adapt the theatrical text. Through his own style, he transforms it into a harmonious whole (the theatrical performance) to delight the audience, convince them, and meet the audience's needs.

### **3.2 Psychodrama <sup>(\*)</sup> (Therapeutic Theater) :**

It is a psychotherapeutic approach that uses theater (acting and movement) to treat individuals by enacting their problems in a psychodrama. It is "an improvisational theatrical method that seeks to present a series of dramatic scenes and tableaux with preventive and therapeutic functions, It is a group psychotherapy method that seeks to extract and elicit emotions latent within the psyche through spontaneous theatrical roles. The primary goal of psychodrama is two fold: through the acquisition of new behavioral patterns and catharsis, and through psychological catharsis. It is, therefore, a form of psychodrama with a therapeutic goal that assists the patient—who is both the protagonist and a character in the play—in healing <sup>(20)</sup>.

This is considered a form of group psychotherapy based on the principle of spontaneity in performance, where the protagonist (the patient) acts out certain past or future life situations within the group setting, thereby expressing themselves, by acting on stage with complete spontaneity and freedom, which allows them to release emotional tension, improve their interactions and emotional flows, and gain insight into their problems, through the use of auxiliary tools and various techniques.

"Psychodrama" is a group therapy based on the protagonist's—that is, the patient's—activity ; it is sometimes referred to as psychodrama therapy, and the fundamental characteristic of this approach is freedom of action. This acting-based therapy aims to reveal abnormal responses and emotional release, achieve social interaction and harmony, and foster awareness of reality. This is accomplished by assigning each patient a role in the play that mirrors their behavior in everyday life, followed by assigning them a contrasting role—such as that of a peaceful person if they are aggressive. It also represents a type of group psychotherapy and is one of the most important methods of group psychotherapy based on patient activity ; it is sometimes called psychodrama therapy, which consists of free verbal expression and theatrical visualization"<sup>(21)</sup>

### **3-The Aesthetics of Acting :**

#### **1.3 Aesthetics, aesthetic (singular) :**

a. A feminine noun derived from "beauty" | Aesthetics : concerns the value and elements that give a work artistic beauty.

B. A derived term from beauty : pertaining to aesthetic aspects.

c-(Philos.) A tendency aimed at regulating behavior according to the dictates of beauty, regardless of moral considerations, and its famous motto: art for art's sake<sup>(22)°</sup> .

#### **1.1.3 The procedural definition of aesthetics :**

Aesthetics is based on creativity ; its hallmark is taste, and its practice is sensory perception in the contemplation of objects, whether in art or nature. Its function is to evoke an emotional response toward something so that it may be called beautiful, and to examine the theoretical stance on the phenomenon of beauty in various artistic productions.

Beauty is characterized by :

a. A quality observed in objects that evokes pleasure in the soul.

b. In particular, one of the three values that constitute the study of higher values ; for idealists, it is a quality inherent in the nature of the object, and thus it is fixed and unchanging, making the object beautiful and valuable in and of itself, regardless of the circumstances of the judge ; for naturalists, beauty is a convention recognized by a group of people.

#### **2.3 Performativity :**

Performativity and the aesthetics of performance art consist of transforming a text or idea into live action and physical and vocal movement within a theatrical space, thereby creating a direct interaction between the performer and the audience. The aesthetics of performance art are based on the integration of scenography (lighting, set design, costumes) with the actor's skills, which lends "sweetness," freshness, and absurdity—or artistic connotations—that transform familiar elements into unfamiliar worlds that spark the imagination.

#### **12..3 Performance :**

This refers to what is performed by the actors and realized through all participants in the show. It is derived from the Old French word "Performer," which originally meant "to complete an achievement" ; in modern French, the term retains only the meaning of achievement as it pertains to athletic competitions<sup>(23)</sup>.

As for the term "performance," there is no exact equivalent in French ; instead, the term "Représentation" is used to denote it, reflecting two distinct conceptions of the theatrical performance. Furthermore, the term *mise en scène* does not correspond to the concept of

“performance” but rather refers to the process of transferring the text from the script to the stage, that is, its practical embodiment before the audience.

### **3.3 Theatrical Performance :**

The term "performance" is defined in \*Lisan al-Arab\* as follows : "To perform something is to convey it" <sup>(24)</sup>, a term defined by **Jordan** as “the ability to respond to a conceptual stimulus” <sup>(25)</sup>, whereas Alexander Dean defines the performance of a stage actor as “recreating a character from life and bringing it to the stage” <sup>(26)</sup>. As for the procedural definition of **theatrical performance** as seen by **the researcher**: the actor delivers his performance on stage by effectively utilizing his vocal and physical capabilities, alongside his ability to skillfully employ facial expressions and gestures, which contributes to achieving a strong presence and a noticeable impact on the audience. While accepting the idea of the absence of any element of scenography in a performance, the situation is different when considering the creation of a performance without an actor. In this artistic process, the actor is considered the essence of the theatrical performance—the human element that establishes communication between the writer’s ideas, the director’s vision, and the audience. Appreciating it is harder than understanding it, yet some proponents of contemporary trends have managed to examine and analyze certain skills, including “Antoni Artaud,” associated with what is known as “Theater of Cruelty,” who stated that acting requires more development than the use of words.

Acting and creativity are considered fundamental pillars of the performing arts, as they require the actor to possess the ability to embody characters spontaneously and convincingly. The success of a performance depends on the actor’s ability to utilize their creative skills and engage deeply with the text, enabling them to deliver exceptional experiences to the audience. Hence, it is crucial for actors to continuously develop their artistic tools, alongside their capacity for sincere expression of feelings and emotions. Conversely, the director plays a pivotal role in guiding the performance and achieving harmony among the various artistic elements, through the formulation of a precise directorial vision and meticulous planning for its execution, thereby enabling the presentation of integrated and impactful performances that remain etched in the minds of the audience.

#### **1.3.3 Performative and the Body:**

Physical performance skills are among the fundamental pillars of the art of acting and hold particular importance in the theatrical realm. Theatrical forms that rely heavily on physical expression—such as dance theater, opera, and pantomime—have emerged, where expressive movements have become a defining element of the performances. This requires the actor to possess advanced physical abilities, including muscular strength, agility, balance, and concentration, as well as speed, flexibility, and the ability to control movement. This can only be achieved through a high level of physical fitness, which enables them to master the later stages of their role and contribute effectively to the construction of the theatrical performance. Given the unique importance of these performances within the various forms of theater presented worldwide, it has become essential in the art of acting for the actor to acquire advanced physical skills and work to develop and adapt them by cultivating their talents and enhancing their physical abilities. It has also become essential for directors to require these skills when presenting theatrical works based on precise physical expression that tolerates no slackness. This trend is an extension of ongoing training and development programs, which



begin during the practical study phases at fine arts institutes specializing in theater. These skills encompass multiple elements, including vocal delivery, mime, and dance, as well as the development of emotional memory.

### **2.3.3 Acting in the Directing Process :**

Acting in the directing process, serving as a bridge between the playwright and the audience, seeks to convey the message intended by the production as a whole,

“Before the director assumed his primary role in theatrical work, the actor would work independently to develop his character; however, with the advent of modern directing, the task of re-creation was entrusted to the director”<sup>(27)</sup> , that is, assisting the actor in that creative process, as he is largely responsible for the play’s success, and herein lies the gravity and sensitivity of the actor’s role: the actor’s ability to understand and perceive the characters they portray and to immerse themselves in their roles constitutes a set of competencies and abilities that the actor must possess, relying on study, research, discipline, and creativity to translate the playwright’s ideas into movement and action, as it is the actor who breathes life into the character.

On stage, the director determines how the actor stands in relation to the audience, as represented by various postures, based on his own perspective and what he wishes to highlight through his vision. The impact of these postures varies in strength or weakness depending on the area of the stage the director utilizes. In addition, the director works with the actor on three levels : visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. <sup>(28)</sup> The visual aspect (the actor’s appearance, their physical suitability for the character, and their placement within the set) encompasses everything related to the character the actor will portray. The auditory aspect (performance and diction) encompasses everything related to the manner of performance, while the kinesthetic aspect (theatrical action) refers to every movement the actor makes that is choreographed by the director, as it conveys the play’s content, the understanding of the character, and illustrates their relationships with the other characters; here, the kinesthetic rhythm is achieved, "The director’s ability to understand the character as a living, breathing entity—even beyond the play’s boundaries—is the fundamental trait of creative directorial thinking that fosters artistic unity in the theatrical performance, The same applies to the actor, for the continuity of his life within the role, and his remaining within the theatrical atmosphere and the dramatic action—whether during moments of silence or dialogue—is always evidence of his vital performance.”<sup>(29)</sup> The visual and kinesthetic level ensures the precise embodiment of the character as the director envisions it.

In other words, the actor’s physical presence on stage serves as a major semiotic sign, embodying a set of symbols and signals shaped by the theatrical performance and delivery of the actor’s body and the other elements of the theatrical spectacle. As for the theatrical performance as a whole, it consists of a dense network of semiotic signs that require interpretation and analysis of their semantic and symbolic levels through a semiotic approach, which deals with all forms of signs, symbols, and images in the audiovisual and linguistic/linguistics.

The actor’s goal in achieving these levels is to form a complete scenographic image that aligns with the text and the director’s vision, and unequivocally confirms that the director has successfully adapted the actor’s body and gestures to the demands of the character. Thanks to

the dynamics of the theatrical body, movements and expressions are evoked and embodied, creating the performance, which becomes a complex network of signs, symbols, and meanings; not to mention the aesthetic composition expressed physically by the actor alongside the other aesthetic and scenographic components of the theatrical performance<sup>(30)</sup>It remains to be noted that this acting method is not a model but rather a method shaped by the director's approach and working style; For the relationship between the actor and the director in a theatrical production is a complementary one, through which artistic integration is born in the theatrical form. This connection stems, on the one hand, from the intellectual maturity involved in the crystallization of the theatrical idea, and on the other hand, from the extent of the director's conviction in the actor, upon whom rests the duty of successfully bringing to life the director's vision and that of the entire artistic troupe.

## **Chapter Two :**

### **Analysis of the Sample : "Autumn"**

#### **1 - Asma Hourī's Directing Experience in the Play "Autumn."**

##### **Introduction :**

The play "Autumn," written by Fatima Hourī and directed by Asma Hourī, was performed at the "Abdelkader Alloula" Theater in Oran as part of the competition for the Arab Theater Festival Award, whose events were hosted by the cities of Oran and Mostaganem in 2017. At the Studio des Arts Vivants theater in Casablanca, the play "Autumn" by the Anfas Theater troupe was presented as part of the 33rd edition of the International University Theater Festival, which continues through October 30. The play tells the story of a woman suffering from cancer. She brings to the stage a state of introspection, a woman's confession that reveals her feverish, fragile, and sparse daily life in an epic ode that glorifies life and mocks death. It is an artistic creation, as stated in the introduction to this work, that transcends the body to spread an endless explosion of the senses and suggests rethinking life in order to celebrate it better.

For fifty minutes, the festival audience was captivated by an exceptional theatrical performance brimming with profound human emotions and expressed through refined, creative language, which contributed to the work's genuinely entertaining quality. The phenomenon of "silence"—or what is left unsaid—and the resulting moral decline of society : in July 2014, cancer ended the life of Moroccan journalist, writer, and poet Fatima Houari. The news summarized her physical suffering and psychological turmoil in three words : "A struggle with illness," while her family found more than just those three words among her papers : a play manuscript she had written about her years of illness, titled "Autumn." and nearly four years after her passing, her play was staged at the Luxor Cultural Palace during the closing events marking Luxor's selection as the Capital of Arab Theater Culture, before it was officially premiered.

Fatima Hourī wrote the play in Arabic, based on a real-life experience of illness, but she incorporated this experience into the written play as a work blending fiction and reality; the first draft was written in Classical Arabic and titled "Thanaya wa Rum," but her sister, the director, made changes to the staging, starting with changing the title to "Autumn," followed by largely disregarding the formal language used in the dialogue, and ultimately adopting a language that blends classical and colloquial Arabic.

The theatrical adaptation reflects the writer's skill in crafting the psychological inner workings expressed on stage—fear and tension navigating worlds of doubt and disarray. Integrated with elements of dramatic direction and visual treatment, the production emerged as a cohesive artistic whole through the synergy of its artistic elements.

### **1.1 Semiotics of the Title “Autumn” :**

The title is the first thing the audience sees ; it shapes their perceptions of the performance and sets the horizon of their expectations. Naturally, the title was derived from an idea rooted in a painful reality ; it carries a symbolism that led the director to use it as a foundation for shaping her vision, with the help of the scenographer, bringing it to life on stage and creating the duality of “Fatima Houris” existence. For in the end, she is merely a number being traded, and at best means nothing to us other than a malignant disease afflicting its host, and that this woman is merely a passing figure, a number the counter never pauses on across all regions, and all that remains for her is to hear her own moans and see the one she thought would support her fall, his leaves scattering like tears.

The play's title, “Autumn,” carries connotations that reveal many facets, all of them open to interpretation. Through its imagery—the falling of tree leaves and the scattering of fallen leaves—it allows us to draw parallels with the stages of life a person goes through. Some have had all their vitality stolen by the onset of autumn, falling dry and almost devoid of color and spirit, while others appear to be in middle age or at a midpoint in their color, their dark hue fading slightly, hinting at a life that was once vibrant. Still others fall at the beginning of their life cycle, appearing like children, full of life and color, yet unable to withstand the harsh autumn winds.

### **2.1 Synopsis and theme of the Play :**

In July 2014, cancer ended the life of Moroccan journalist, writer, and poet Fatima Houris. The news summarized her physical suffering and emotional turmoil in three words : “A struggle with illness.” Yet her family found more than just those three words among her papers : a play manuscript Fatima had written about her years of illness, titled “Autumn.” and nearly four years after her passing, her play was staged at the Luxor Cultural Palace during the closing events marking Luxor's designation as the Capital of Arab Theater Culture. Before its premiere, the play was based on a script written by the director's sister, Asma Houari, who passed away after a long battle with cancer. She worked throughout her life as a journalist and director of a regional Moroccan radio station. At its core, the play celebrates life through a female body that suffers and fades away in silence, yet confronts the cruelty of death and resists all forms of psychological and physical pain by clinging to hope, bravely facing her fate until her last breath.

Fatima Houris wrote the play in Arabic, based on a real-life experience with illness, but she incorporated this experience into the written play as a work blending fiction and reality. The first draft was written in Classical Arabic and titled “Thaniya Warum,” but her sister, the director, made changes to the staging, starting with changing the title to “Autumn,” followed by largely disregarding the formal language used in the dialogue and adopting a mixture of classical and colloquial Arabic.

The play's presentation was a compelling dramatic portrayal of a woman in her thirties or forties who discovers she has malignant breast cancer. At first, she finds it extremely difficult

to accept the situation, but eventually succumbs to despair and, through this surreal performance, confides in us about her daily suffering. In which her body has lost all traces of femininity—her eyebrows, her hair, and her breasts—only to find that her surroundings have changed as well, particularly her husband, who has renounced the love that brought them together, even refusing to say the words “I love you” to her. From this idea, the performance took off into an atmosphere that evoked surprise and created delight and beauty in the actresses’ theatrical performance. In this experimental play, which relied more on movement than dialogue, dance and performance served as the primary means of expressing the unbearable pain caused by this malignant disease. Conversely, it was the strong spirit resisting the disease that guided the body toward a beautiful theatrical performance, following the trajectories and human suffering stemming from the act of confronting cancer.

### **3.1 The Director’s Vision and Analysis of the Production :**

Director Asma Hourri managed to venture into a field considered taboo to present it to theater lovers. She maintained a powerful presence and achieved high levels of emotional impact, stirring the audience’s feelings throughout the performance. The duration of the performance was sufficient to convey the emotions of cancer patients on stage, blending moans and despair with the most excruciating moments of pain and suffering—a burden even the strongest bodies cannot bear. Collectively, this reflected a reality that, until recently, had gone largely unheard, Through her directorial vision—which went beyond the allusions, symbols, and metaphorical language that most theatrical productions rely on to convey messages or critique lived reality—she was compelled to convey, analyze, and ultimately evaluate this reality, placing it within the audience’s own experience.

The performance "Autumn" was packed with paradoxes that reached the point of conflict between mind and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, the tangible and the intangible, and other such dualities, embodied by two actresses who represented a single woman, in a portrayal of turmoil and instability. The first represented the exhausted body, while the second served as an interpreter with a resonant voice that revealed the character’s inner thoughts, taking the form of a monologue presented as a complete text. <sup>PhotoNo.:2,1</sup> .



Image No. 2.

Image No. 1



In terms of performance, the play depicted the patient’s reaction as she sought to expose and condemn a husband who had disowned her and turned his back on her, appearing to her as a monster. This approach highlighted the cruelty of the treatment and the extent of societal suffering within an unequal relationship, in which the woman bears all the burdens and consequences.

The direction, alongside the actresses’ outstanding performances, helped the audience grasp the depth of the themes and the specificity of the subject matter. Every element of the production was crafted with a technical artistry that was both dazzling and captivating. At times, it was difficult to maintain a distance between one’s own personal perspective and the powerful, aesthetically compelling performance unfolding on stage.

In this play, the director sought to depict the suffering of families with a member battling cancer, employing a high degree of creativity in the choreography and diligence in the scenography... yet the play’s script did not measure up to the rest of the elements and was less impactful than they were... Perhaps you expected to feel a chill run down your spine as a woman recounts her story of battling cancer, or to empathize deeply with a tale mourning the death of beauty—from her body to her soul—after her husband’s betrayal, or for the issue to stir a revolution of emotions and feelings within your thoughts, in your feelings, in your very being... But the text of “Autumn” was somewhat dull and cold; its impact and effect lacked the intensity one would expect from the scene of a woman taking the stage to speak to people about her

pains and heartbreaks, making you feel her disappointments, anxieties, and fears in the epic of her struggle with cancer.

Every day, the patient receives a dose of chemotherapy, each accompanied by a specific sacrifice, as if facing a public auction where you must part with a vital organ that has been your companion for a lifetime—and in an instant, it is forcibly taken from you, the pain gripping you, never leaving you, The true aim of this play is to give voice to and shed light on this group, who were not so much devastated by their illness as they were broken by the abandonment of their loved one at the height of their ordeal.

In one scene of the performance, this is manifested through a symbolic act : all the women's clothes and their remnants are gathered, while the man's coat is left outside the wardrobe, which is shut tightly, signifying that women have become capable of rejecting this type of man—including those in suits and ties. It is a shift whose power may lead to the reformation of a set of concepts and perceptions regarding the relationship between women and men to correct the resulting imbalances, so that life may flourish through the bonds of affection and mutual support in enhancing the conditions for a dignified life and lasting loyalty.

## **2-The Directing Approach in the Play "Autumn" :**

The director adopted the psychological realism and epic approaches. She embodied realism through the actress's performance and the physical movements she employed, as well as how she embodied the role of a cancer patient on multiple levels. "The goal of Stanislavski's acting method is an emotional catharsis" (31). Therefore, we see that she worked on the character's internal and external structure, allowing those psychological emotions to escalate and those motivations and feelings to emerge through the movements she employed and her manner of speaking and delivery, thereby conveying the play's central theme to us. Additionally, through suggestive, accentual, and colored lighting, which delineated the boundaries of that virtual space and made it seem real; the use of live, evocative music, which further clarified and imbued the scene with emotion while expressing the patient's psychological state; and the sound effects, which served as a complementary element to the atmosphere of the performance and contributed to the illusion.

As for the epic dimension, it was embodied through symbolic, evocative set design, represented by the "chair" and the "cupboard," which carry their meanings through their use ; the objects used on stage have connotations and symbols, as they "contribute to the production of meaning and its conveyance through the performance itself" (32). The cabinet presented us with an image of the scenographic text and became a visual language that translates the scene's purpose and idea for us every time it is used by the actress and then the actresses. We note here that the nature of the space itself dictated this empty space ; thus, there will be no specific set design, but rather the swivel chair or that wardrobe—which conveyed the text and translated it into a symbolic language—will be used, in the complete absence of any kind of props, with the exception of the tie or jacket, which are difficult to associate with the costumes since they were not brought for this purpose, but were thrown in as an addition to this set design. Thus, I relied on dynamic scenography, represented by the cabinet being presented in open and closed positions, so that the audience could pass through while comprehending what they were seeing.

The space appeared as a comprehensive whole, encompassing contradictions that challenged the viewer's understanding and comprehension. Formally, it was a purely Westernized space, far removed from reality ; yet the content stemmed from a genuine diagnosis of a reality that evoked empathy for such issues and tragedies, especially when the character was a woman.

The epic trend was embodied in the performance through choreographic movements that served as a parallel text expressing the terrifying feeling of a woman whose time as a woman and wife had expired, having lost all the essentials of life, Such "gestural movements, as advocated by Brecht, are based on the correct technique of movement and performance, achieved by adapting to the writer's conception of how words should be portrayed" (33). Indeed, these dances helped reveal the reality of what this character was suffering, thereby reflecting her psychological conflict, which had caused her anguish that she believed was caused by illness.

This performance incorporated a number of theatrical elements, such as the placement of the wardrobe at the bottom of the stage with a wooden door and a glass door inside ; it served as the backdrop through which it became apparent that there were other women on the other side still on the waiting list, in addition to representing the final passage she will take as her end and that of the performance, without overlooking the role of the chair in the center of the stage. It was a performance distinguished by a characteristic that achieved for us the dramatization described by Roland Barthes as "a momentum of signs" (34), a product of the fusion between the actors' realistic performance and the symbolic set design, creating an illusion that is simultaneously revealed. It "makes the stage oscillate between the effect of reality and the theatrical effect, which alternately causes convergence and divergence, and in this dialectic lies one of the pleasures that accompanies the spectator during the theatrical performance" (35). The appearance of the mute character with a covered head, then throwing the "broom," along with her performing expressive movements conveying a vast array of emotions in an absurd image that adopts the principle of transformation, which enhances the theatricality.

### **3-The Space of Kinetic Composition in the Play "Autumn" :**

In the play "Autumn," the director relied on gestures and body language, varying movement and directionality to achieve a physical and psychological balance that reflects the character's nature and function within the performance. This variation enriches her directorial vision and achieves artistic balance, Every theater director builds their work on the actors' performances according to movement formations that represent the visual language of the script's concept, leading to the presentation of their final artistic vision. Simple movements were used in the performance, as the nature of the Italian box theater is "a semicircular theater whose purpose is to achieve spectacle and the greatest possible illusion for the audience" (36) ; thus, the viewing angle is defined by imaginary angles and points that the director perceives through their use, taking into account the perspective dimensions of the set. The director defined and limited the performance area, and the nature of the chosen venue imposed certain movement patterns on her, which were repeated in many scenes to emphasize this woman's situations. Perhaps she defined these areas to make the audience focus more on her cause, and the background used in the scenographic space also confined the setting.

Had the actress's exit from the interior to the exterior taken place in a more expansive space, it would have been more hopeful, for at the end of the performance, her exit—her entering the closet and closing the door behind her—serves as an affirmation that this is a world open to multiple interpretations, shrouded in mystery, known only through death, and thus the events in the performance spring from the struggle between life and death, generating a degree of tension that intensifies with the increasing restrictions on movement within the space. This leads to emotional arousal and a thrilling sense of anticipation rather than free movement, and the restricted movement plays an important role in the play; as the actress dances like a wounded bird trying to escape its inevitable confinement, which has caused her suffering in two forms: captivity and the irony of abandonment (the husband's desertion). To embody the husband's betrayal of her in numerous scenes, the director evokes the male character by having the two actresses take turns putting on his black jacket, then taking it off, throwing it on the ground, and stomping on it while laughing hysterically. Then one of them picks it up and puts it on again, wrestling with herself as she wears it through the tugging motions that took place between the two actresses—who are, in fact, a single character—in a clear reference to the internal psychological conflict of the suffering character. At times she refuses, at times she yearns, and at other times she wants to leave, repeating the phrase “**We have to go...**” until she finally departs.

The meanings of physical movement and changes in its rhythm varied, much like the shifting psychological state of a cancer patient ; sometimes standing, sometimes bending, sometimes falling, sometimes running, and at other times falling silent. Movement is the result of a process of conveying and communicating ideas and emotions to the audience through performance ; it is the visual expression of thought and free embodiment...As the two actresses enter with quick movements, it is as if they are surprised to find themselves in a place other than where they were, and rapid movement is considered a powerful gesture. And upon entering, they perform circular movements that express tension, foreshadowing the situations that will befall this character. Such movements are used “to express surging emotions and developing feelings, and they are often more powerful than slow movements”<sup>(37)</sup> Thus, we see that the rhythm the director begins with is a fast, continuous one that occasionally slows down, but quickly returns to its original speed.

For the movement to be more convincing to the viewer, it is necessary to achieve harmony between physical and dance movements and psychological and emotional movements, in an attempt to grasp the rules governing the organization of the body and mind and to coordinate them flawlessly, because the actress's deliberate disruption of her physical balance signifies a psychological imbalance, highlighting the disease's impact on the patient's body and psyche. This is evident in her facial expressions and in the disruption of her speech rhythm and delivery. so when the actress expressed the height of her suffering and shock at her husband's abandonment of her, this was accompanied by physical spasms, a breakdown in speech, and sorrowful gestures.

In another scene, women with cancer enter the stage in synchronized movements and exaggerated gestures; We sense their display of solidarity with and support for the patient, for she is the one whose life has been filled with loneliness and who was abandoned by her husband for no other reason than that her life was marked by loneliness after the deep scars of the disease



(mastectomy and loss of hair and eyebrows) became visible on her body, making it appear devoid of symbols of her femininity, and thus filled with endless torment. These are the signifiers that create meaning, shaping the features of a theatrical performance whose language is physical expression. The women's movements carried a message of solidarity and support; the patient's voice was the only one authorized to convey their voices to the audience, telling them about her suffering. She said : "Fatima, whose husband abandoned her bedroom, did not hesitate to remain bareheaded so she could see the shock in his eyes. And Suad used to mock the disease, always saying that they had amputated her breasts, then removed her uterus, and she wouldn't be surprised if one day they cut off her head ; her husband refuses to hear these words, yet she takes pleasure in repeating them in front of him ; and Hanan was abandoned by her fiancé as soon as he learned of her illness).

#### **4-Acting Performance in the play "Autumn" :**

The director employed an epic approach, so the acting serves as a presentation of the event, and a witness to the cruelty of what the patient feels by making her voice and moans heard—expressing the horror that has befallen her and engulfed her world. She translates the immediacy of the event during the narrative process, thereby leaving room for the audience to take a stance on the human condition conveyed by the performance, rather than becoming immersed in the character. The actress will present that situation as if it were detached from her, merely performing what she did to serve as a witness to the event or a commentator on it. The technique of alienation thus begins with the actor as well, for he will distance that character from himself, since they are two and not one ; and even if he resorts to realistic acting, he will always remain, in the eyes of the audience, merely a presenter of the event.

The actress played the role of "Fatima" with great skill, reflecting to us all the deep psychological and intellectual conflict that character experiences through her emotions and reactions, conveyed via her performance, movements, gestures, and the way she walks. Her role, alongside her co-star, required her to remain on stage from the moment the curtain rose until it fell. The actress explains : "My role in the play did not require me to get to know or live with cancer patients ; on the contrary, we conveyed the required emotion through specific techniques, and there was no such identification between the character and the actor."<sup>(38)</sup> She also notes that performing the play in one go was not easy, as it required extensive rehearsals, tremendous effort, and a specific rhythm. She collaborated with the director, who guided the cast in a way that allowed them moments to catch their breath during the performance, and then return to the rhythm again, without the audience sensing that the actor was tired or weak.

With its harmonious physical scenes, the play "Autumn" is a play of the single, multifaceted body torn apart by illness and pain, resisting them through its eloquence and symbolic presence—from the single sick actress to the two actresses who mimic the impact of the tragedy through spoken language and gestures, to the actresses who join the stage to express a single cry and a single hope. It is a portrayal of a true tragedy that embodies on stage the death of beauty, beginning with the body and extending to the soul, in a dual language of expression, where one actress conveys through voice and spoken dialogue, and the second conveys through the body in its philosophical and human sense, Her wounds are revealed through expressive, funeral-like dance befitting the horror of accepting a terminal illness like

cancer, along with gestures and choreographic sequences uncommon in Arab and Moroccan theater—as if they were one and the same: the character of the woman afflicted by the malignant disease. It was the strong spirit resisting the disease that guided the body toward a creative and magnificent performance, harmonizing with the rhythm of the music, the lighting, the colors, and the minimalist set design to present a cohesive visual image. Asma Hourri succeeded in conveying the suffering of cancer patients through body language and expressive dance—the body in its philosophical and human sense—so that its wounds are revealed through a funeral-like expressive dance befitting the horror of accepting a terminal illness like cancer. Here, the body cries out through dances that trace the contours of its torment, using body language to convey a moment of drama within an aesthetic framework through visual language rather than spoken words on stage—a body that has lost its femininity, inhabited by constant torment, yet determined to confront death. It is the symbolic signs that create meaning.

It seems that spoken language in the theatrical performance has become secondary, replaced by the body, which carries intense signs used to express a social group suffering in silence, In this sense, the director's approach creates new aesthetic worlds—an aesthetic grounded in the observer and the spectator, particularly the actor's body, which has become a tool for expression and the creation of intended meaning, in accordance with the development of the play's dramatic structure within the aesthetics of pain or suffering.

The expressive power of the actresses' bodies in the space served as an inexhaustible reservoir that drove the theatrical process of the performance. By eliminating spatial elements such as set pieces and scenery, the production gave primacy to the actors' performances in shaping the movement, sound, and spatial cues : (space, time, sound). Movement was used more than long, tedious dialogues, and the actress's presence and her embodiment of suffering were completed through physical expression through dance that did not correspond to the dialogue. It was not arbitrary, that is, without theatrical meaning... Dance was present from the beginning of the performance to its end ; the choreography took its place within the dramatic event as a central theme, not merely as physical movements, not merely as one of the features of the acting performance, but also as a spatial feature—whether through the actress's physical flexibility or her harmony with the space, lighting, and music. The movements were carefully considered, and the artistic dimension of the choreography was embodied in the meaning and emotional weight it sought to convey to the audience—through a language that words alone cannot convey. The director employed a style that combined speech with dance movements and gestures, which the two actresses embodied with masterful performances. Their portrayal of the same character through a state of fragmentation presented, in diverse and varied ways, conflict, resistance, defiance, denial, fear, rebellion, consolation, and protest...All of this was embodied in the dialogue and body language that dominated the theatrical performance by creating a philosophical, intellectual, and spiritual dilemma within the play, such that the actress's presence and suffering were only fully realized through physical expression—dance, music, lighting, and the simple set design represented by a wardrobe—which the cornerstone of the directorial vision, through which the theatrical action unfolds, thereby creating a vision via the dual expression of the actor's body and the audience's reception. Together, they formed an abstract unity to sow hope, aiming to build the spirit through transcendence of the self via

the other, and the transcendence of this other is only completed through the kinetic system, creating exciting moments in body language through the trembling of the body.

**5-An Approach to Visual Media In Theatrical Direction of "Autumn."**

**1.5 Set Design :** The theatrical set design contributes to embodying the overall objective of the performance's content ; its primary mission is to create the appropriate environment for the theatrical theme established by the playwright. With the director's vision, the initial contours of the environment within which the actor will move are brought to life. The set design carries numerous connotations, some of which suggest the location from a geographical, social, and historical perspective, as "the set design, together with the lighting, acting, and the actors' costumes, constitutes the visible part of the theater"<sup>(39)</sup>, and it should be attractive with vibrant colors without being overly dazzling, so that the audience is not distracted from following the events of the play <sup>(40)</sup> .

The first image the audience sees is a stage that is almost empty, save for a wardrobe, under a circular spotlight in a darkened space; This wardrobe is placed at the back of the stage as a fixed set piece designed to organize the spatial layout of the performance; the director employs it as a spatial element for the actress's entrances and exits, to embody the idea of the conflict between death and life, The setting in which the events unfold—a virtual reality—is aesthetically created on stage in interaction and dynamic harmony with the overall vision of the performance, transforming into an active and influential character in the escalation of the dramatic action. Added to this is the character's use of her body to gather her belongings as she expressed her desire to leave, with all the deep meanings and connotations that departure carries—death, life, and departure. Thus, this wardrobe, which furnishes the stage space, became a concentrated symbol. A closed wardrobe, situated at the top center of the stage—that is, in the depth—serves as the foundation for the directorial vision, from which the theatrical action unfolds. In front of this decorative wardrobe stands a single chair without a backrest, placed at a slight horizontal angle in an area close to the very center. **Image:No.4,3** .

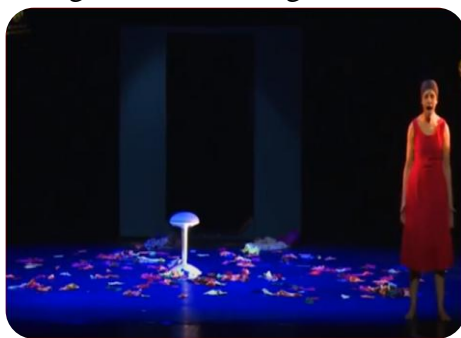


Image No. 4



Image No. 3

Images illustrating the chair's various uses, including the rhythms of the dancing body on their wounds in "Autumn Play."

Its door is always open, except in the final scene, symbolizing lost hope in moments of intense pain ; a door concealing torn clothing behind it, alluding to the fractured, ailing character and expressing the magnitude of her suffering. In anticipation of a glimmer of hope, the set design is kept simple to allow ample space for expressive dance and the rhythms of the dancing body as it grapples with its wounds : **Photos:7 and 8.**

The set design appeared in a form that imbued the space with the necessary atmosphere through emptiness, isolation, silence, and profound solitude. Here, the female body is transformed by endless torment—a body that has nothing but a wardrobe to turn to from time to time, to recall its past and history. In this sense, the wardrobe is that balcony from which the body looks out upon itself. All of this has become meaningless—the past, the present, and the future hold no meaning, for there is nothing in the wardrobe but torn clothes. Perhaps they represent the self shattering upon itself, or perhaps the beautiful memories of the past that suddenly vanished, transforming into pieces of torn dresses.

The stage set embodies a complex presence at its center, as mentioned earlier, with colorful pieces of fabric scattered around it. there “Fatima” spins alone around herself in a suggestive manner on stage; it is a scene representing the vortex she lives within and her isolation, as if we were facing the character’s subconscious and what she thinks openly, Then she returns once more to her room and the reality she must face, and her resuming the cutting of the fabric into new pieces is nothing but evidence that the states of psychological turmoil enveloping her are continuous—a spinning in a psychological and intellectual vortex within the wife’s world **Image No.5and6and7 .**



Image No. 7



Image No. 6

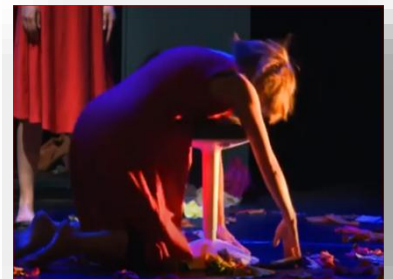


Image No. 5

Renewed act of cutting of the fabric into new pieces confirms a high level of psychological distress.

### **2.5 Lighting and Its Dramatic Role in the Play "Autumn" :**

Lighting serves two functions : a practical, utilitarian function and an aesthetic one. The first function involves illuminating the performance space, the actors, and everything within that space, or the theatrical space. The second function, however, expresses the imaginative or metaphorical, becoming part of the structure of events, highlighting or clarifying the characters, or revealing their inner worlds—whether they involve sadness, joy, fear, desire, anxiety, or transformation" (41). And for lighting to achieve an aesthetic value on stage, we must take into

account the contrast between the amount of light directed at the stage and the area, people, or set and its accessories, so that we give each of these elements a degree of light commensurate with its importance in the theatrical work, so that it appears to the audience as close as possible to its natural appearance" (42).

In the play "Autumn," the lighting focused on a specific section of the stage, which played a role in creating areas of varying levels of brightness and darkness. This resulted in the creation of contrasting spatial dimensions and a sense of movement through the emphasis and focus on spatial elements embodied in the static set pieces—the wardrobe and the chair—as well as the moving elements represented by the actresses' performances and dance sequences. The blue-tinted lighting on the stage floor added a gloomy and melancholic psychological atmosphere through the use of light projection, making the performance a portrayal of cancer on stage. PhotoNo.8.

The lighting is organized from the very first scene, where the actress walks alone suggestively across the stage, under a circular light projection in a darkened space, suggesting she is on her way to somewhere. Here, her gaze falls on a piece of paper she has been carrying since the beginning. She walks aimlessly through the darkness; we assume this paper is a medical report, its blank pages bearing notes confirming her diagnosis of the malignant disease. (Photo No.):9. She will try to avoid reading what is on it in a sarcastic manner, then deliberately drop it, convincing herself of her inability to read it, for it is far from her; it is on the ground...., Then the lighting changes to blue, a color used throughout the choreographed dances. This type of lighting is a cool color that evokes tragedy ; it also symbolizes night and is used to signify mystery and that something strange is about to happen, This color also expresses the psychological states experienced by the character "Fatima" Image No.:10.



Image No. 10



Image No. 9

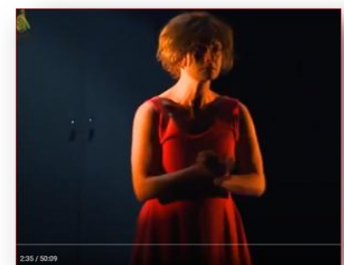


Image No. 8

The director did not rely on colorful lighting to avoid creating that dissonance that would have created an atmosphere oscillating between darkness and light to justify the psychological states experienced by the character "Fatima" from a magical realism open to the transparency of memory and dreams; In doing so, she reveals all the transformations she undergoes through this technique, focusing on justifying them through acting in particular.

Despite the limitations of this space, the director managed to bring her vision to life through this well-designed lighting and the accompanying music, which enabled her to engage the audience and draw them into the performance, creating a sense of anticipation for the events to come. This space presented us with philosophical and intellectual moments of great beauty. The circular blue lighting, combined with the physical performance, also contributed to

expressing the character's state of mind, the impact of which resonated with the audience through their interaction with the visual, tactile, and auditory elements. This lighting revealed the character's inner self and intellectual sensibility, serving as a painted artistic image expressing itself; for light represents the absolute freedom to express the inner workings of phenomena, just as music does. Controlled and directed light is the perfect complement to a musical composition, shaping it, guiding its flow, and focusing its fluctuations. It provides us with the same opportunity to evoke emotional resonance in the performance. The director relied on the character's movement at the beginning, concluding with the movements of the supporting actresses to emphasize the emotional state.

Director Adolphe Abia's practical theories contributed to expanding the scope of lighting's influence on theatrical performance, thus marking a significant milestone in its technical function. This director believes that lighting "is not limited to illuminating the actor and the set, but adds a range of other functions that contribute to influencing the audience's emotions during the performance" (43). This is evident in another scene, where the woman sitting on the chair removes her wig, then stands up so that the speaking version can sit down, then stands up again so that her replacement can sit down, and walks away carrying a roll of bandages, beginning to bandage the seated woman's chest.

This lighting is accompanied by the following dialogue :

- "My breasts have carried a death sentence over my life and over everything that is 'me.' They were a part of me; they were a symbol of my femininity. I don't know how they decided I should be without femininity ; I don't know how they decided to determine the course of my life in all its small and large details, the important and the trivial."

Fatima handed the bandage to her daughter and let her finish bandaging herself while she stepped forward :

- "They found a small tumor in both of them. I was told they were malignant cells. What do I have to do with malignancy ? The waiting period dragged on..."

- "Until the specialist decided to proceed with a more precise diagnosis. Up until that moment, I never imagined things would come to the point of a disease called cancer."

The work continues using the same technique, but this time with a spotlight to highlight certain areas, especially when the other woman, still in shock, aligns with the beam. The light also falls on the medical report, and they begin to dance... In the end, they lean on each other in a sideways embrace.

- "The world collapsed around me ; my life turned upside down. Cancer ? A disease I'd never heard of—it didn't concern me ; it was far from me. But why me ? Why me ? Why, my Lord, why me ?!"

The two women bend down to the floor, then slowly stand up... weighed down, leaning on each other once more.

- "I thought that what brought us together was stronger than all the cancers in the world, but that look in your eyes as you read that paper made me feel the utmost loneliness and pain. I felt like I was crossing over alone into another world ; you abandoned me in the hardest moment a woman like me could ever experience."

The scene is repeated using frame-specific lighting, focusing on the upper half of the character in both versions. In several scenes where the director evokes the male character—such as when

the two actresses take turns wearing his black jacket— then taking it off, throwing it on the ground, and stomping on it while laughing hysterically, then one of them picks it up and puts it on again, and they fight over wearing it many times, with their arguments never ending—an expression of the patient’s inner conflict. The same thing repeats with the second version of the character, who wears a tie and sarcastically tries to imitate a man, but one of Fatima’s versions rejects this imitation, turning the tie into a noose like those used for execution, signaling that her time is running out due to the character’s psychological pressures. <sup>Images 11 and 12</sup>



Images 11 and 12... support the character’s internal psychological conflict

In a final scene, we witness a turning point in Fatima’s life: her husband leaves her simply because she is ill—having had a mastectomy and lost her hair and eyebrows—and women with cancer emerge onto the stage as if rising from the grave, They enter the stage as a group, including the patient, through collective movements and gestures conveying a message of solidarity and support, and the patient addresses the audience on behalf of the women, telling them about the suffering of those with cancer... The scene concludes with blue and red lighting, then a spotlight settles on one of them, its source coming from the right side of the stage, as if the face of one of them represents the whole group; they stand, all moving to a single rhythm and beat punctuated by sighs; the spotlight reveals the individual figure immersed in her inner struggle, We note here that to achieve the intended effect of conveying sadness and despair, it would have been better to use lighting with a reddish-purple hue, which better expresses this character’s anguish, anxiety, and fear. The scene where the actress addresses the audience was an embodiment of Brechtian technique aimed at breaking the fourth wall. <sup>Photos No.:13f14</sup>.

"Fatima" says: "I feel like there are so many people suffering from the same illness. These people were strong; I’ve never seen anyone stronger in my life. They were fighting on two fronts—fighting the disease and fighting the cruelty of God’s servants. I’ve heard all their stories. Brother of Suad—his fiancée—thought he had cancer, but she thought it was just a regular illness. Hanan used to mock the disease and her husband so much that he left the house in despair...She would stay at home with her head uncovered, bareheaded, without a veil, so she could see that look of contempt in his eyes"...

...“Elham never returned to being the ordinary woman she once was. She used to say : ‘Let them take my breast, let them take my womb, and if they want to cut off my head, I have no

problem with that.’ In a society like ours, the equation was like this : ‘The patient is put on the shelf,’ and I’d say to whoever put this equation down... Unfair... Unfair to the extreme.”



Photo No. 14



Photo No. 13

### **3.5. Costumes and Accessories in the Play "Autumn":**

Costumes and accessories serve as the actor’s adornment within a theatrical performance, through which the actor communicates with the audience via various processes involving sensory perception (sight and hearing) and thought—factors that are crucial to the transmission of artistic discourse in the process of sending and receiving.

It appears that the play “Autumn” suffered from the same economy and scarcity that affected the scenography and set design ; the costumes were limited to a single design that remained throughout the entire performance. This is related to the nature of the subject matter on the one hand and the realism of the production on the other. Furthermore, these clothes created a specific performative interaction that enters into the communication process through the “actor” as the bearer of the discourse, since he is the mediator and the one responsible for conveying the play’s message—that is, between the performance and the audience. Subsequently, the audience plays a crucial role in shaping the overall meaning of the performance.

The costume suits the psychological state and sadness ; it also refers to the same sense of belonging and social status, particularly the shared experience of the bitterness of the husband’s cruelty in abandoning his life partner the moment she was diagnosed with cancer. This is expressed through the color black, which symbolizes sorrow, mystery, grief, and solemnity <sup>(44)</sup>. Therefore, the background was black, serving as a clear indication of the critical situation, especially since it highlights the contours of the female body—the subject of the play—in red. The color red signifies “excitement, activity, and anger ; it carries the duality of hatred and love and possesses aggressive qualities” <sup>(45)</sup> It also signifies conflict and confrontation, reflecting the states the character goes through. Generally, the actresses’ costumes did not make a difference to us during the scenes of the performance, as we find them entering every scene in the same dress—both in color and design—signifying the constancy and stillness of time.

Image15





Image No. 15

#### **4.5. Choreography in the play "Autumn" :**

Dance was present from the beginning of the play to its end, as choreography took its place within the dramatic event as a central theme rather than merely as physical movements. Through her performance, which relied on movement for expression, the actress presented it not only as one of the characteristics of acting but also as a spatial element—whether through the flexibility of her body or her harmony with the setting, lighting, and music. The movements were carefully considered, and the artistic dimension of the choreography was embodied in the meaning and emotional weight it sought to convey to the viewer, through a language that words alone cannot convey. The director employed a style that combined speech with dance movements and gestures, such that the two performers portrayed the same character through a state of fragmentation, serving as echoes of one another; it is a performance presented in diverse and varied ways.

In the play "Autumn," the choreographer harnessed the creative energies of the dancers to enrich the visual scene, as they became part of the dramatic narrative, portraying the extent of the suffering cancer patients face in their lives filled with forced compromises, after having once been full of energy and vitality. Here they refuse to have a part of themselves cut out and thrown away; far from the filler and empty directorial moments on stage, they fill the space with choreography and expressive movement. The choreographer relied in this performance on rhythmic, expressive movements that suited the show's theme ; see [choreographic photosNo.16and17](#).

Presenting the show as scenes that are complete in their meanings and powerful in highlighting the magnitude of their impact requires a creative vision that ensures the use of all movements and physical expressions alongside scenographic effects to capture the audience's attention and win their admiration, and this is precisely what the young director Asma Hourri succeeded in achieving, utilizing all the elements of artistic creativity. Her focus on utilizing choreography in the play "Autumn" emerged as an absolute necessity, highlighting the production's need for physical expression and an urgent requirement across various situations—particularly during the phase of self-discovery (a state of fragmentation) —from inside the closet behind the glass wall all the way to the center of the stage. It thus became imperative for the director to use choreography in these scenes, which contributes to the diversity of the meanings conveyed by physical movement and the shifting of its rhythm, much like the changing psychological state

of the patient: at times she stands, at times she bends, at times she falls, she runs many times, and at times she falls silent... Movement is the product of a process of conveying and communicating ideas and emotions to the audience through performance; it is the visual expression of thought and free embodiment...

Body language brought the text's dialogues to life, clarified its meanings, and directly expressed the inner structure of the characters—who were both models and victims of years of oppression. The choreography unfolded in harmonious rhythms resulting from expressive movements that respected the timing and directorial pauses between scenes and between every movement and step performed by the actresses.

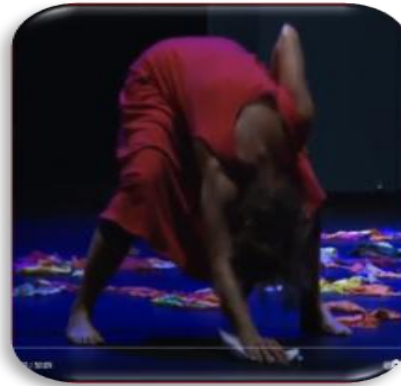


Image No. 17

Photo No. 16



Image No. 18

Once again, the actresses return to the overall rhythm of the play, which was built through transitional scenes; each scene carried its own rhythm, to the point where the pauses in the acting and the choreography merged together <sup>Photos<sup>18</sup></sup>, which allowed the performance to avoid falling into routine and boredom, thereby achieving what is known as “perceived rhythm”<sup>(46)</sup>; you find movements that were nothing but a translation of the characters’ actions and situations, as the actresses’ gestures, movements, and performances in every situation presented us with a microcosm of what a woman might suffer when subjected to her husband’s oppression.

**Conclusion :**

This study concludes that the director plays a major role in the construction of a theatrical production, and that its success depends on the director’s adherence to a precise and comprehensive strategy. The essence of this strategy is to offer a creative interpretation of an

artistic work based on the clear and distinct vision of a talented director, drawing from methodologies and theories to shape the contours of his productions. This projection, rooted in a neutral art form, has found a foothold across the globe. Based on the foregoing, we offer some observations on the performance in question, addressing specific issues related to the system of theatrical direction and its oversight of the details of the performance, let alone the acting performance, which embodies the spirit and secret of the spectacle: Based on the foregoing, we offer some observations regarding the performance under study:

1. Our theatrical performance is based on contradiction from the very first moment the audience deciphers the codes of this discourse. On the one hand, in terms of its linguistic text, the contradiction is evident in the play's title, which raises more than one question about the concept of the artistic message; As for the performance, the language of its visual discourse relies on movements, their formal transformations, and their artistic structures, while the characters' reactions lead to a lack of harmony within a specific linguistic system; it brings together many forms of non-realistic theater, ultimately falling within the framework of experimental theater.

2. The movement transitions in the theatrical performance relied on the actor's ability and skill in their physical performance and their mastery of their artistic tools, which were observed, as well as internal transformations within a single performance rather than an external shift—that is, from one artistic-philosophical school to another. And considering the other elements of the theatrical performance, they served as a contributing factor in highlighting this meaning, which is distant from emotional outbursts.

3. The rapid physical performance, the multitude of transitions, and the swift physical shifts led to the theatrical performance entering a state of ambiguity and a lack of clear articulation of its content. This ambiguity may be understandable to some viewers, while remaining unclear to others—a result the director sought through deliberate obscurity and the absence of direct clarification. Nevertheless, the audience may ultimately agree on one conclusion : that the performance is characterized by high artistic aesthetics in terms of its formations, movements, and visual imagery, to which the actors' striking physical performance contributed.

4. The actor played a fundamental role in the process of communicating with the audience by stimulating their artistic and cultural reserves throughout the performance, keeping the audience in a state of mental engagement as they interpreted the images, visual compositions, and movement transitions within this theatrical space, noting that most of these actors possess the experience that supports the hypothesis of relying on them in their acting performance to create a creative achievement.

5. The director has established an artistic style in her use of directorial tools, from the script to the audience, even though she relies primarily on the actor and his transitional movements—which may at times seem disjointed and incongruous, yet are intentional— Her aim is to stimulate the viewer's mind, raise questions, and ultimately provide enjoyment through the visual scenes and their artistic compositions, thereby demonstrating the complete success of her work.

6. The performance confirms the hypothesis that movement is the driving force of the audience's imagination ; it is movement that stimulates their imagination and causes them to interact with the theatrical performance's elements and visual compositions, which at times

take the form of flashes serving as keys to important themes related to the audience's lives. These flashes thus remain imprinted in their minds, allowing them to recall them more than once, taking root in their mind and consciousness after the theatrical performance ends.

7. Through performance and reception, the new theatrical production has become artistically and dramatically intertwined, with intertwined artistic signs whose meanings are not immediately clear; the reason for this is that the visual and auditory relationships established through the new dramatic text are capable of creating a theatrical space that suggests symbolic meanings based on movement and gesture, in addition to the temporal dimension within the theatrical performance space.

8. Meaning in theater is only complete in the moment of live performance and interaction with the audience, as the actor's body represents the focal point of dramatic action and the producer of live signs ; conversely, the audience member is considered an essential partner in constructing meaning by filling in the gaps and interpreting the complex network of signs, transforming from a passive spectator into a creative co-producer of meaning for the performance.

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