



Transformations of Male Behavior in Feminist Theatrical Performance: The Play "Taking Over" as a Model

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Abstract

The art of theater is considered one of the important pillars of society, reflecting various aspects of life. With the emergence of "feminist theater," a space was created for transformations in the performative, intellectual, and philosophical fabric of the traditional theatrical system, offering it from a new perspective by deconstructing prevailing patterns and revealing how male characters are represented in "feminist theater" texts, taking into account psychological, social, and political dimensions. Therefore, this research aims to understand the artistic and dramatic methods used in theater to redefine the concept of "masculinity," highlight the resulting social impacts, and discuss the intricate relationship between sex and gender in theater. Through this, we aim to deduce new insights into how theater contributes to reinterpreting masculine behavior in society.

This is clarified in the research chapters: the first chapter (Methodological Framework), the second chapter, which consists of the first section (Psychological and social variables and their impact on the behavior of both sexes) and the second section (Masculine behavior of women in international theater performances), leading to the third chapter (Research Procedures), which included an analysis of the play "Isteela" (Seizure), and the fourth chapter (Results and Conclusions), including:

In "Isteela" (Seizure), the woman embodied the authority of the absent man through her acting performance, borrowing his behavioral traits such as strictness, dominance, and roughness, thereby representing the symbolic version of the man in his absence.

The performance showed a clear overlap between roles: the female character was not feminine in the traditional social sense, nor was she truly masculine, but rather a hybrid entity reflecting identity disturbance due to the influence of masculine authority.

Keywords: Transformation, masculine behavior, feminist theater

Theoretical Framework

Research Problem

The problem of this research is about how feminist theatrical works are prepared, that is, how the actor can perform male behavior on stage, and what are the effects that result from these transformations in artistic and social discourse, because (feminist theater) presents (women's) issues. Critically, based on the deconstruction of traditional male behavior and how to formulate transformations in female behavior, this calls for raising several questions in this research, including: how to present complex and multiple images of masculinity, how the audience will interact with these new concepts, and what are the dramatic and performance techniques that establish these masculine transformations, whether at the level of (the physical system) or (the vocal system). Or through the relationship between the characters or through building the dramatic plot, and what are the results that these transformations are intended to convey regarding the concepts of (power, strength, weakness, and human relations), and the research will also delve into



the methods that these plays use to deconstruct and redefine male behavior, and this depends on what the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions are. The male characters acquire as a result of their behavioral transformations in the context of feminist theatrical performance, which leads to several challenges, including how the impact of the transformations in male behavior will be on the audience and how to read the relationship between the sexes and gender roles, and also how feminist theater can confront society with these non-stereotypical images of masculinity. Accordingly, the researcher decided to delve into the depths of this topic to search for the nature of (male behavioral transformations in performance). (Feminist theatre) and how to create a balance between them to reach a deep understanding of the psychological, social and cultural dimensions through the performance of the theatre actor, so that the title of her research became (Transformations of male behaviour in feminist theatre performance, the play (Taking over) as a model).

Significance of the research

The research benefits students and researchers in the field of acting, as well as actors working in theater.

Aim of the research

Give a deeper understanding of gender relations, dismantle stereotypes, and empower women's voices in the theatrical space.

Limitations of the research

The research is limited to studying male behavior in (feminist theater). The researcher chose the play (Seizure) as a model that is consistent with the research proposals.

Definition of Terms

Transformation: Aristotle defines it as "the reversal of an action into its opposite" (Aristotle, Thales, 1973, p. 11).

Saleh Saad defines it as "the activation of a single state, i.e., its reversal, or its change from one state to another. It may also be related to an attempt, i.e., a desire to achieve something, as well as to a trick or method of attaining something" (Saleh Saad, 2001, p. 168).

Operational Definition: It refers to the changes that occur to one or more elements of a theatrical performance, whether these changes are visible or invisible, with the aim of creating a specific dramatic or aesthetic effect.

Feminist Theatre: It is "a theatre committed to feminist thought and focused on discussing women's issues and demanding their rights. It presents female characters as positive characters who seize the right to determine their own choices and destiny. It presents submissive female characters, condemning their subservience and dependence" (Ghada Kamal, 2020, p. 48). It is "a cultural and civilizational message aimed at changing the negative, backward, and reactionary views that women have suffered from since the beginning of human awareness of life" (Nabil Ragheb, 2013, p. 116). Operational definition: It is theatre that seeks to challenge stereotypes of women, redefine their status and role in society and art, and empower women's voices to express their experiences and perspectives.

Behavior: "It is that part of an organism's interaction with its environment, through which the movement of the organism or a part of it can be observed in space and time, resulting in a measurable change in at least one aspect of the environment" (Alia Afan, Marwa Juma, 2023, p. 13).



"It is a response to a stimulus, whether internal or external. The complexity of behavior increases with the organism's degree of growth and maturity" (Muhammad Saqib, 2024, p. 48)

Operational definition: It is the determination of behavior measurement or identification in a specific context through an accurate, observable, and measurable description of the processes or actions performed by the organism.

Masculinity: "It is the set of ideas, behaviors, and laws that seek to assert male dominance over females in a given society" (Al-Basheer Issam Al-Marrakshi, 2023, p. 43).

Operational definition (Masculine behavior): It is the psychological and social dimensions of behaviors associated with masculinity that appear in situations that require displaying power, control, or competition.

Theoretical Framework

Social and Psychological Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity

The world witnessed numerous developments and social and cultural transformations in Europe and the Arab world, particularly in the nineteenth century. This was driven by European revolutions and colonial expansion, which destabilized the social and cultural structure and imposed a new and alternative model on colonized societies. This resulted in reform movements and organizations that discussed several issues, including the role of women in this world, which began to expand amidst these changes. Women's role as activists began to contribute to breaking all social and cultural restrictions, expressing their opinions and demanding their rights to work, education, and gender equality. This development was resolved in favor of women, who began to occupy a significant position in all areas of life. Psychologists also found that women search for a safe means or space to express their personal experiences, to enhance their self-confidence, and to break the stereotypical image of women in society. Based on this, many psychological and social theories emerged, explaining and analyzing the masculine behavioral transformations in women, based on causes that emphasized the great suffering they endure. It contributed to forming a different entity for women and reformulating their role within the societal structure. Among these theories are:

1- Freud's Theory of Boasting

Freud's views differed regarding the basic human drive represented by the sexual instinct, linking it to the theory of ostentation, especially in the stages of human psychological and sexual development. This was achieved through a review of the stages of childhood, which Freud limited to the child's interest in his body, showing off, which then transforms into a state of social and cultural ostentation, which, in his view, arises through the conflict between the ego and the superego. This leads us to another state of self-love, which may reach the point of exaggerated ostentation to conceal an internal feeling of deficiency. Therefore, ostentation becomes a positive need that deepens the individual's self-confidence through his social, scientific, and cultural achievements. It may also be pathological ostentation represented by self-love, as I mentioned previously (narcissism), and the constant need for others to admire him to enhance his self-image. There are those who boast about the opposite of what they are, for example, boasting about intelligence when they are stupid, or about wealth when they are not. Poor, and even at the level of relationships, the connection to an ideal person is part of compensating for psychological deficiency because there is "a psychological conflict between desires, conscience and reality, as man with his desires is in a state of constant collision with the limits of reality and the social system" (Myers and Briggs: 2017, p. 5), to confirm (Freud) with his theory (showing off) to an unsatisfied childhood need and a conflict between the ego and the superego and compensation for deficiency, and this is what was projected onto (feminist theater) by feminizing showing off, as (woman) shows off her beauty and sacrifice not as



a dramatic tool, as she compensates for sexual and social repression according to (Freud) opinion, so he sees that (woman) deliberately shows off with (voice) through speech as a tool for releasing unconscious energy, as she transforms the voice into a narration of a political action or to show off her physical experiences, so the theater gave space to the female voice that broke the established rules, so the leading roles were not the exclusive domain of men.

2- Jung's Animus Theory

It is one of the theories divided into (anemia) and (animus). The first aspect deals with the feminine element in the male psyche, while the second aspect, (animus), is the masculine aspect within women. Through Jung's analytical psychology, he concluded that every individual unconsciously carries characteristics of the opposite sex to create a state of psychological balance. Throughout her life, from childhood to maturity, women go through several stages and various experiences with men (father, brother, husband, etc.), which all affect the way they think and make decisions. They are influenced by the masculine pattern characterized by physical strength and dominance. Therefore, the (animus) is a psychological force that women use to empower them or hinder them, depending on their ability to understand and comprehend it. This was evident in the theater, where women took on the roles of strong, decisive, and rational characters, even if it was at the expense of their femininity. Jung believed that "a person must unify his contradictory psychological aspects, so a man must..." "Accepting the feminine side of his personality and the woman must accept the masculine side of her personality" (Myers and Briggs: 2017, p. 5), so that the (animus) becomes a tool for understanding the internal conflicts of women in a male society, but the (researcher) has a point of view in that the woman begins the (animus) stage from childhood under the (patriarchal system) that requires her to be silent and obedient as well as (the husband), especially in Arab societies according to social and religious norms, so we find that there are cases of rejection of this clear domination over the woman's entity that sometimes suppresses her voice and will, and there are those who see that the (animus) robs the woman of her femininity, so it is sometimes immature, making her aggressive and cruel.

3- Alfred Adler's Theory of Psychological Compensation

This theory expresses how people deal with their feelings of physical or psychological inferiority due to a difficult or failed experience that led to a feeling of inadequacy, contributing to the formation of a psychological complex that negatively impacts their personality. Therefore, they found in compensation a safe zone that creates psychological balance by developing their skills or behaviors, which were represented by severe traits such as (dominance and hostility). "Adler found that weakness equals femininity and strength equals masculinity through the idea of (male protest), which is a form of exaggerated compensation used by both sexes in an attempt to curb feelings of inferiority and helplessness" (Muhammad Ibrahim Eid: 2006, p. 80). Here, we must clarify that (compensation) may not always be positive. Sometimes it is negative, escaping psychological problems, leading to drug addiction, isolation from others, or displaying excessive physical strength. This is clearly reflected in (theatre). (Feminist) in which women wanted to appear as strong personalities to compensate for the incomplete image in a society that deliberately suppressed them socially and culturally. Therefore, women decided that the theatre would be a station in which they could challenge social and cultural restrictions, to find compensation for themselves through striving for excellence away from the society's view represented by the (female body) to confront the collective male unconscious.

4- Social Theories in Feminist Theatre

Many social theories have emerged that address feminist theatre, strengthening women's voices in the arts, particularly in theatrical art. These include feminist theory, gender performance theory, queer theory, and deep ecology theory, among others. We will



examine some of these theories to clarify their concepts and how they operate in feminist theatre.

Feminist theory is a theory that highlights discrimination in all areas of life where male discrimination is prevalent. The concepts of this theory focus on dismantling this discrimination, highlighting women's contributions, striving for equal rights, shedding light on unjust laws, and "understanding the gendered nature of all real-life relationships, institutions, and social processes to understand how gender relates to forms of injustice, restrictions, and contradictions" (Ruth Wallaceson Wolf, 2010, p. 72). It also addresses the harm women experience through work, harassment, and domestic violence. This theory criticizes the patriarchal system and highlights the issues of marginalized women. This is what the history of feminist theory is based on, the beginnings of which were the acquisition of a set of rights that strengthened women's rights in society, i.e., the demolition of the stereotypical image of women as "wives and mothers" who are content to care for their families. It was imperative for women to create a movement to defend women's rights and liberate themselves from all forms of oppression. Theater became one of the artistic platforms defending feminist theory, presenting theatrical works from a women's perspective. Thus, it established a theater that works to break traditional stereotypes. To dominate men and make the audience part of the work, participating in discussions after the performances, the topics of which focus on their life experiences. Therefore, we find many classic theatrical works have been reproduced from a woman's point of view to show (Ophelia, Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, etc.) as victims of cases of oppression, male domination, and the patriarchal system.

5- Gender Performance Theory

This theory emphasizes the idea that (social gender) is not a fixed biological identity, but rather a repeated (performance) produced by society through daily practices. (Male and female) are roles performed through clothing, language, and movement. They are not innate, but rather acquired through repeated daily performance, which makes them acquire a natural characteristic. The concept of (gender) is "as a performance and an action that changes according to the situations of interaction. Therefore, it is a descriptive theory rather than an explanatory theory. Therefore, it is embodied in social behaviors that, in turn, contribute to the production and reproduction of the social structure" (Ismat Hosho, 2009, p. 162). Because it defines (the human species) socially and culturally, not biologically, it considers the tone of voice and the movement of walking, not the dress for women and the pants for men, as its fundamentals. The researcher finds that it is a theory that reflects a particular understanding that works to deny all biological differences between the sexes. What concerns us is the implications of this theory for (feminist theater), which it exploits by presenting characters on stage exchanging The roles were proven to be mere masks, using clothes as an effective tool to enhance (gender performance) to challenge the masculine/feminine binary by having women wear men's clothes and vice versa, in addition to the dialogues that used high voice tones for women and vice versa, with imitating physical movements represented by an artificial masculine gait and exaggerated feminine movements. It worked to re-stabilize the (body) in a way that differs from the definition of the feminine/masculine body, giving the (body) a performance space that is capable of demolition, construction and formation.

Male Behavior of Women in World Theater Performances

Theater is considered a platform for expressing many issues in society, including women's issues, which have been discussed throughout history, such as identity, discrimination, violence, and others. This is achieved through the presentation of numerous plays in which women were actors, writers, and directors, highlighting the features of feminist theater in the nineteenth century as an effective means of inciting change in a male-dominated world, "to limit the flow of traditional performance patterns that characterize most forms of male culture and work to destroy them" (Lisbeth Goodman, 1998, p. 45). It is a starting point



for liberation, demanding their rights to play a prominent role in shaping the cultural and artistic landscape of that era. This contributed to the exploration of new styles of writing, directing, and acting, leading to the emergence of new types of comedies and dramas. This encouraged the development of strong and complex female characters in theater, making them central figures in many works, with the aim of changing society's view of women. They faced great social difficulties and challenges in their early stages of theatre, as society rejected the idea of their entering the artistic field, especially theatre. Therefore, many of them were forced to hide their true identities with pseudonyms. On this basis, women's groups were established in some cities, with diverse cultural and social backgrounds, so that (feminist theatre) became a milestone in the history of art "because its works must be directed by a woman, directed by women, and address and speak about women's experiences. This represents the basic foundation for women's collective work" (Lizbeth Goodman, the same source, p. 114). It contributed to the formation of feminist identity and the promotion of social issues for subsequent decades, which increased the emergence of many new forms of artistic expression, as theatre began to challenge traditional forms in its intellectual proposals, and began to present unfamiliar stories from classical and modern literature. These topics worked to change the stereotypical image of the female character in theatre, as women began to appear as heroes in their stories, which helped to enhance the image of strong and independent women. To begin the first steps of the features of (feminist theater) as a reaction to the marginalization established by social norms, so that (theatre) becomes a tool for liberation and a physical practice documenting the types of violence (physical and verbal) that women have been exposed to throughout the ages, as they were under the oppression of traditions and customs that were unable to break their restrictions, so we find in the beginnings of their entry into (theatre) many societal, cultural and social challenges that deprived them of participating in the artistic field, so we find that in (ancient Greek theaters) they were completely absent because women's roles were assigned to men to perform them wearing masks and women's clothing, because (Greek society) finds women's participation on the stage inappropriate, even going to theatrical performances was forbidden to them, except that (Roman theater) made room for them to participate through traveling performances outside the boundaries of the official theater in which the man became the master on its stage, even in theaters in the Middle Ages in the era of the Church, the man remained committed to the dominance of the stage except in exceptional cases in which the woman (the nun) was assigned to participate in the representation Some religious scenes inside monasteries, also in the Renaissance era some women participated in secondary roles so their participation remained poor until the (17) century which opened the doors of the theater wide open for their participation, but in the Arab and Islamic world, their appearance was delayed due to social and religious customs and traditions that considered the profession of acting an inappropriate profession for women, while (European theater) found women an integral part of theatrical arts, whether as actress, director or writer, but their journey to reach the position that suits them is long and full of challenges, but they were able to prove themselves and change the stereotypical image from (ancient Greece) to (modern theater), so that (feminist theater) appeared as a global feminist movement that began to take shape in the sixties and seventies as a movement that rejects the marginalization of women and their embodiment as a victim or as a body of excitement, so that they began to write their feminist history by shedding light on the reformulation of male novels and plays with a feminist vision and their participation in writing and directing plays using topics that discuss (violence against women, excellence in work ...and others) to begin the first roots of (feminist theater) as an artistic revolution against (the male system) to notice that they changed the features of writing, directing and acting, and there became a formulation of a different theater in a feminine style "to combine the text, body language, performance in different languages and dance to create a work in which cultures mix and diversify" (Lizbeth Goodman, the same source, p. 323) to find that (theatrical performance) had new characteristics whether through (the body, voice, relationship with the audience or interpretation of the text), so there were roles for men performed by women and vice versa, and women began to move away from roles that show them weak and fragile to evil



and more complex roles, which affected the female physical form, which became more natural, while the sound system established a role in canceling the conventional function to become incomplete sections, long silences, repetition, noise and overlapping sounds, all this in order to create directness with the audience by demolishing (the fourth wall) and establishing a mutual language of discourse to participate in the discussions presented on the stage. We find in this a clear foundation for a performance different from the classical rules of acting, as it has left the area of integration to a natural performance close to daily life, and this confirms the necessity of the topics presented being from real stories of women who have gone through harsh experiences, and this refers us to the fact that the (physical performance) of women has left the area of (femininity, romance and tenderness) to an area that translates (anger, cruelty and feminine madness), an area of performance different from the male performance skill, as it is an area that works to employ (trembling, hysteria, screaming, stuttering, confusion and silence), all of which are tools known to (women) as a language of resistance to the language of men, which is characterized by (sobriety, steadfastness, strength and a loud voice... and others). It is a language that carries a balance and a systematic form that differs from the chaotic tools of women, which they cannot define or suppress, as they are strategic methods for (defending and confronting) their rights, as well as the emotional states that are sometimes confused and unstable between joy, sadness, pain and other feelings that come to them in various circumstances, which made this dominate her theatrical performance by combining dramatic genres in a state of constant transformation between (comedy) and (drama) according to the requirements of rapid and momentary psychological states, this was evident in many movements, workshops and theatrical groups, including the (Sun Theater) group of (Ariane Ménéouchkine), the French director who contributed to the development of (feminist theater) in (1964), and who encouraged women to exercise their full right in the theater by writing, directing, acting and producing works that address women's issues. She also sought to reformulate Greek myths from a feminist perspective because her theater shed light on the suffering of women in political and social conflicts by "creating a joint theatrical dialogue with the audience because it interacts in a radical way based on dialogue and asking questions as a type of social practices that allow for the presentation of many topics and life problems" (David Williams, 1999, p. 6). She also relied on the method of (collective body and improvisation) to give women more space to express themselves, by establishing a performance system whose techniques are derived from the theater of the East, considering that The body is a deeper means of expression than language, which makes it easier for actresses to break the restrictions of the written text from a male perspective by presenting the oppression of women through male violence, by discussing daily problems and topics that reveal the concerns of marginalized women, by presenting their personal experiences through the technique of (improvisation) and using (the body) as a basic axis of the process of (acting performance), embodied in suggestions, gestures and movement as narrative tools that tell their stories with collective movements that resemble dance, because (Ariane Minouchkine) finds that (the body) has a universal language that carries clear symbols. So we find that she worked on subjecting her actors to daily training in physical expression to create a high level of physical flexibility in them, while she ignored the role of the single hero and moved towards group performances surrounded by the audience, using the techniques of the Eastern theater represented by (exaggeration of performance, the use of masks and stereotypical characters, and the combination of narration and movement), in addition to demolishing the (fourth wall) and getting closer to the audience to involve them as spectators in the oppression that women were subjected to. But here it is worth noting that (woman) for (Ariane Minouchkine) is strong, resisting the injustice of the world, and is not marginalized and weak. She challenges stereotypes through the concept of masculine behavior, which is characterized by a group of actions that are considered an imitation of males, such as (strength, control, aggression, independence). These images are often rooted in the male culture that reinforces male dominance and marginalizes the role of women.



While the theatre of Sarah Kane, the British playwright, has raised a clear controversy, as it differs in terms of its performance language, which relies on the duality of (the body and violence) as a unified language addressing society without a clear statement about (women), her theatre is against the male society, although Kane does not present women as victims or marginalized, but rather as characters who are subjected to violation in an oppressive male world. She criticizes violence through the female body and transforms it into a battlefield to show women as complex, aggressive and destructive. Therefore, we find that the physical performance style contains (silence, madness and physical wounds) as a metaphor for psychological violence. Kane presents women's suffering with depression as a struggle against an oppressive system. She does not present a clear feminist discourse, but rather reveals the oppressive patriarchal system. Her discourse is indirect, but it exposes the social reality through her excessive depiction of "rape and torture" and the absence of hope. Her theatre does not offer solutions or treatments, but rather leaves (women) in a state of collapse. Therefore, her theatre combines Between (shock, body, and linguistic collapse), she presented performances in which she presented (suicide, torture, and mutilation) in a realistic manner (Mary Elias, Hanan Qassab Hassan: 2006, p. 335). Therefore, she trained her actors for harsh moments that exceeded their physical endurance. Sometimes, she asked them to remain naked for a long time or move their bodies like broken dolls. She even dismantled the voice into screams, whispers, and silence. Even the dialogues were repetitive or intermittent, and the audience was a partner in this shock to make them uncomfortable throughout the performance, because she forced the audience to confront violence. This is what (Kane) borrowed from (theatre of cruelty), which is (physical violence), and from (theatre of the absurd), (the deconstruction of language). This is also the case for (Auguste Boal), one of the advocates of liberation from all the restrictions of society that oppress the marginalized and the oppressed. Therefore, he founded (Theatre of the Oppressed), using methods and techniques to express the conflicts and problems of the marginalized class and find collective solutions for them, forcing the (spectator) to play a dual role between being an actor and being a spectator, to participate in changing the events of the play. (Boal) searched for weak people regardless of gender (male or female) and discussed the topics of (oppression, subjugation and deprivation of freedoms), which are topics that women lived through their personal experiences within an authoritarian male society. Therefore, (Theatre of the Oppressed) created the appropriate ground for expression by being "a theatre that possesses the ability to spontaneity, improvisation and the right to self-expression as methodological necessities to find a collective formulation of the show so that the audience engages in a process of exploring their social realities by analyzing their problems that they freely choose and searching for their own options for change" (Atheer Al-Sada, 2000, p. 12), and this was consistent with the proposals and goals of (feminist theatre) because Boal's theatre applied what was worked on in (Sun Theatre) and (Kane Theatre) by demolishing (the fourth wall) and creating a relationship between the actor and the audience to build a participatory and interactive relationship between them to find appropriate solutions to be presented and discussed, because most of the topics in Boal's shows were the same as in (feminist theatre), but the difference here is that he wanted to guide them to ways to overcome them, as his theatre is a tool for political and social awareness by raising awareness of various societal issues, including (women's issues). Although Boal did not focus on (women), (feminist theatre) adopted the same approach as (the theatre of the oppressed), using the same tools to express their concerns, because his theatre worked to transform the oppressed into an active person and a maker of change. For example, Boal presented to the audience a scene represented by a group of working women who were subjected to harassment in their work, and here he called on the audience to intervene, especially the women. The audience and the embodiment of the solution on stage, and here a discussion is born between (the actor and the audience). This relationship is what establishes the goals of the oppressed and marginalized to learn from each other on how to deal with problems and what are the appropriate solutions for treatment by giving voice to the oppressed group through understanding and criticizing the structures of oppression and encouraging liberation and revolution by penetrating the layers of texts and dismantling

intellectual discourses (Atheer Al-Sada, the same source, p. 8). Because (Boal's) theater establishes a collective understanding using (the body, expression, and non-verbal sounds) to represent its ideas and concepts, and this is the same thing that was done in (feminist theater). (Boal's) theater had a clear impact on several laws and legislation that it worked to amend by developing its theatrical approach by calling on legislators and decision-makers to participate as an audience to present proposals to change the laws that were represented in the form of scenes that showed a deficiency or legal defect, while raising controversy in order to create appropriate proposals to correct the laws that were previously approved. Therefore, We find this type of theater, i.e. "Theatre of the Oppressed," represents reality by embodying the problem, avoiding theatrical performance. Rather, the events of the scene develop through "improvisation" to create a state of natural interaction with the variables presented by the audience. Because Boal focuses on the story and collective solutions rather than the stardom of the individual actor, we find that the "acting performance" in Boal's theater is a functional performance that carries a purposeful message. While Pina Bausch raised women's issues without stating this directly, she did not specifically embrace women's problems, but rather focused on the complex and troubled relationships between men and women. In many of her works, elegant female dancers are exposed to humiliating and painful situations at the hands of male dancers, thus revealing fragile human relationships. She highlights the states of transformation between moments of (weakness and strength) in her characters. The (body) was the tool for expressing feelings, conflicts, and social pressures. Bausch sought to demolish the traditional image of the female body in ballet, which depicts women as an aesthetic being. Rather, she intended to present them with different, uncomfortable, crude, and violent bodies, as she combined daily movements (gestures, falling, screaming, and whispering) in her dances to convey the idea that there are repressed emotions in women that are not announced "by training her dancers to ask questions about their memories and daily lives and urging them to move through the use of psychological stimuli" (Irene Samir Hakim, 2022, B.T.). However, Bausch did not seek to provide solutions or discussions for the problems raised, but rather was a mirror to display reality. Humanity forces the audience to think and question that, as she presents her works through group performances to subject her actors to a shared experience. She did not work to present a story (beginning, middle and end), but rather a series of fragmented scenes that are not logically connected. She demolishes the traditional dominant narrative, which is often the story of (the man). She also demolishes the (beautiful body) of the dancer and replaces it with (vibrations, distorted expressions and daily actions such as drinking and eating). Here, she deliberately rejects the ideal image of femininity, taking it out of its conventional contexts to become another (distorted and violent) form, and showing them at the same time as possessing (weakness, strength, flexibility and resilience). This is what was evident in their acting performance. As dancers, they scream, cry and tremble in powerful ways to show their pent-up emotions. This was also reflected in their forms, which combined (appearance and function). There was a clear contradiction between their elegance and their difficult and painful movement due to their wearing of beautiful dresses with high heels as a symbol of restrictions. Community, even the environment was symbolic of the chaos that women live in through the piled furniture and dilapidated walls, which symbolize the places in which women are forced to live. (Bausch) presents a dance show that arises through (collective improvisation), as she mixes (beauty and ugliness), (humor and tragedy), and (kindness and cruelty).

Theoretical Framework Indicators

1. Psychologists' views on women and their bias toward masculine behavior varied, ranging from compensating for personality deficiencies, to boasting about self-love, or the influence of the patriarchal system within societies with social and religious norms.
2. The emergence of various social theories, such as feminist theory, gender performance theory, and others, emphasized the concept of gender, criticized the patriarchal system, and highlighted the issues of marginalized women.



3. Considering feminist theater as a tool for liberation and a physical practice that documents forms of violence (physical and verbal).
4. Reinterpreting the theatrical scene through writing, directing, and acting with a feminist vision as an artistic revolution against the patriarchal system.
5. Moving the female body from the realm of seduction and excitement to a different performance realm characterized by cruelty, anger, and madness, to create a state of intellectual, psychological, and physical balance.
6. Creating a direct relationship with the audience by breaking down the fourth wall. To formulate a mutually supportive language of communication to participate in the discussions presented on stage.
7. Formulating transformations (destruction and construction) in women's emotional states, moments mixed with (joy, sadness, and pain), creating a dramatic diversity that combined (comedy and tragedy).
8. Ariane Mnouchkine, Sarah Kane, Auguste Boal, and Pina Bausch employed several methods that differed from typical performance forms by employing (collective body, dance, improvisation, Eastern theater techniques, physical violence, and the deconstruction of language).

Research Procedures

Research Methodology: The researcher adopted the descriptive approach.

Research Sample: The researcher selected a purposive sample, represented by the play "Astilaa," as a model consistent with the research requirements.

Play Title: "Taking Over"

Written by: Hoshang Al-Waziri

Directed by: Ibrahim Hanoun

Starring: Samar Mohammed, Alaa Najm, Milad Siri, and Luba Arab

Place of Performance: National Theater

Year of Performance: 2014

Sample Analysis

The play addresses the idea of control, whether political, social, or cultural. Here, we find that absent male dominance and alienated female presence are the play's theme, with the director aiming to shed light on women as victims of harsh conditions imposed on them by a male-dominated structure. The director of the play employs a multifaceted philosophical concept: "Taking Over," which is the act of control leading to conflicts, fluctuations, and changes. Based on this, the play reveals the deep-seated pain, obsessions, struggles, disappointments, anxiety, and other emotions. This is shaped through the body as a tool for expressing thoughts and feelings. Here, "Taking Over" leads to wars and conflicts and their impact on Iraqi society. Thus, the characters appear torn apart and hopeless. A distorted woman searching for identity, especially the woman who found herself under the absent male dominance, by presenting the male characters in ways that reflect their weakness and fragility, because the play reshapes the concept of authority through the female characters, and it challenges the male dominance to achieve balance between the sexes, by presenting new images of masculinity in order to bring about a change in social perceptions and encourage the acceptance of greater diversity in gender roles. Therefore, we find that the acting performance was characterized by expressive exaggeration to amplify feelings and ideas, even at the level of physical expression in terms of gestures and movement in standing, walking and sitting, because it enhances deep symbolic connotations of pain, fear, strength and dominance through diverse rhythms. We find that the director formed through two female characters that are contradictory in form and content, but they are victims of male authority, expressing this condition with two different behaviors. We see the character of the wife, embodied by the actress (Alaa Najm), in a masculine form on the physical and vocal levels, and even the outfit was employed in harmony with her masculine behavior, so we find (the beret) and the bastal (military boots) as tools that deepened the Demolishing the traditional feminine context and its departure



from masculine behavior, the actress (Milad Siri)'s behavior suggests the weakness and fragility of her character, whose husband was taken from her. She is under the power of oppression, which has robbed her of her will and ability to resist and demand. We find her deprived of her will and subject to a bitter reality, revealing the self-identifying woman when she borrows male discourse to become a repressive force for femininity itself:

The General's Wife: Listen to me carefully. If you continue talking like this, I'll throw you out of the house... I haven't died yet.

Until you take over this house, because it is my property and my inheritance, I don't want to hear a single word.

We see that the play has adapted the Iraqi environment in its theme, which is compatible with the current situation in Iraq, where the will is being robbed. Therefore, the language of the discourse adopted the local Iraqi dialect to be closer to the lived reality, as it is a symbolically compressed environment in a post-war space, where male authority is physically absent but remains present through deeply rooted behaviors and traditions. We find that the one who adopts and exercises this authority is not (the man), but (the woman), who reproduces masculine behavior, not as a mere external imitation, but as an internal transformation that affects the body, outlook, and behavior. So that (the woman) becomes the center of authority through borrowing symbols of masculinity (strictness, control, threat, and even symbolic violence). The general's wife: This house must remain darker... I cannot see the world without darkness, I cannot... She has been held accountable for three wars in the past twenty years... Her case is Malawi and war, Malawi, war after war after war. However, this masculine behavior does not stem from a biological origin, but rather from a coercive position through which women attempt to defend their survival or assert themselves within a society that rejects their active presence unless they adopt male behavior. We see masculine behavior in theatrical performances embodied through body language, dress, and eye contact. The woman stands with a military stoicism, gives orders, commands the space as if she were an officer, and wears dark or military uniforms, stripping the female body of its flexibility and delicacy. Her gaze is sharp and direct, mimicking the gazes of males in positions of power. Her speech becomes harsh and cold, devoid of emotion when addressing her sisters:

The general's wife: Think carefully, or you'll regret it for the rest of your life... Think... Think carefully... I'm not a rabid dog to eat your rotten body.

The researcher finds that masculine behavior is not a formal performance, but rather an internal transformation affecting the acting character, becoming a tool of oppression rather than a tool of resistance. Because the female character performs a social, rather than biological, masculine identity, attempting to control her surroundings through this new identity, the male in the play appears only as a dominant absence, but also within the woman, who becomes the alternative version of the absent man. The woman not only imitates the male, but is also implicated in a merciless authoritarian logic: she "monitors, controls, and seizes." Younger Sister: Wars have torn my beautiful braids... The candle inside us has gone out.

This overlap between femininity and masculinity leads to a state of confusion that forces the audience to reconsider their position of authority and identity. Throughout the performance, we find the audience experiencing a shift in expectations: the woman, who was supposed to be an object of sympathy, transforms into a repressive authority. Herein lies the director's success in breaking the traditional stereotype of women on stage, and provoking the audience to question their positions on identity, power, and gender. The visual tension (the woman's clothing, her expressions, her movement) also creates a sense of "unfamiliarity," where the female body appears out of its usual symbolic place:



The General's Wife: My body is strong, I'm still strong. Everyone tells me your body is strong... strong.

The Middle Sister: A stupid war like you and your general... What are you saying to the children who are waiting for their father and to the wife who is waiting for her husband... Neither you nor your general can extinguish the volcanoes. What's inside us is, "Give me back my husband... I want my husband. I won't leave you until you take my husband back." Women's representation of authority is a departure from the stereotypical image of the submissive woman. However, on the other hand, they do not exercise this authority from a position of awareness, but rather from a position of imitation and compliance with the discourse of male authority, which makes this transformation a mask, not liberation. The director of the show deliberately used a symbolic environment represented by "homeland," likening the house in which the three sisters live to "homeland" that lost its leader, the "General," the husband of the eldest sister, who was domineering over her sisters until the middle sister deliberately strangled her to death. Another character, played by actress Samar Mohammed, intervenes in the role of the friend who takes over the house after the death of the eldest sister, creating a conflict between her and the two sisters:

Sisters: Why did you come back? We didn't throw you out... Why did you come back?

Friend: I came back so I could tell you that I have an 80% share in this house.
Sisters: Where did I get this 80%?

Friend: With my money. Every time I visit this house, your sister asks me for money, and I ask her to give up a square meter of this house. This is a concession from your sister.
Sisters: We won't give up this house.

Friend: You give up and you're going to ruin your lives. I count to ten, and I don't want to see you here. One, two, three, four...

The researcher wanted to clarify the nature of the behavior of the domineering female friend, who never left her feminine body but kept it to combine dominance and seduction. She never abandoned it, but rather exploited it to her advantage as a weapon with which to seize whatever she wanted.

The director presented us with two domineering female characters, but one with a male body and the other with a female body. Both employ domination to their advantage, because the woman in "Taking Over" doesn't produce a feminist discourse so much as she mimics the discourse of the oppressor. This makes the play a critical text of male domination in its various forms, even those performed by the women themselves.

Results and Conclusions

1. The woman embodied the "seizure" of the absent male's authority through her theatrical performance, borrowing his behavioral traits of strictness, control, and roughness, making her the symbolic version of the man in his absence.
2. The performance demonstrated a clear overlap between roles. The female character was neither female in the traditional social sense nor an actual male, but rather a hybrid entity reflecting a disturbance in identity due to the influence of male authority.
3. The woman did not adopt masculine behavior out of a sense of liberation, but rather as a defensive or coercive mechanism to survive within an authoritarian system. In other words, the performance did not express true empowerment, but rather a reproduction of oppression.
4. The actress's physical performance demonstrated that the theatrical body is capable of conveying a clear political and social discourse without the need for direct dialogue, as the body served as a tool for revealing conflicts of identity and power.



5. The show contributed to deconstructing the stereotypical image of women on stage, as victims or subordinates, and replacing it with a complex image: a strong woman, but one troubled by a borrowed identity that lacks symbolic independence.

Conclusions

1. Feminist theater can address women as objects of influence and also as agents in the consolidation of power, which broadens the horizon of critical readings of feminism in theater.
2. Male representation in feminist performances is not a free choice, but rather a result of the dominance of the patriarchal societal structure, which sometimes pushes women to reenact the oppressor rather than confront him.
3. Through the female body, theater offers a critical tool for deconstructing the dominant masculine discourse, whether from men or from the women who adopt it.
4. When women play the role of male authority, they unconsciously contribute to the continuation of the oppressive pattern, even if they appear to be in a position of leadership or control.
5. There is a need for new performance styles that present women as independent subjects, without having to imitate men, but rather expressing an active feminine force stemming from their own experience and identity.

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