

The Development of the Theatrical Critical Discourse in Jordan

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Abstract: This study examines the development of theatrical criticism in Jordan from the perspective of cultural discourse analysis, focusing on its interactions with social, political, and knowledge transformations. The study begins with the historical context of Jordanian theater since the 1960s, when it shifted from limited university-based performances to an institutionalized cultural activity. This development was accompanied by the emergence of academic criticism in Jordanian universities, which provided more precise analytical and methodological tools and contributed to transforming theatrical reading from an impressionistic approach into a more systematic practice. The study also highlights the role of journalistic and festival criticism as mediators between performance and audience, particularly in light of contemporary shifts associated with digitalization.

The study concludes that Jordanian theatrical criticism has transcended the role as a reflection of performances to be a tool for producing the meaning and reshaping the cultural identity. That is within an ongoing dialogue between the local, the Arabic, and the universal. This necessitates adopting a hybrid method that combines academic rigorism with the flexibility of the digital space to ensure the continuation of its cultural and intellectual role.

Keywords: academic, digitalization, discourse analysis, discourse criticism, Jordanian theater, journalistic

1. Introduction

Theater has never been an aesthetic practice isolated form of entertainment. Throughout its history, it has made a discursive space where modes of expression, representation, and interpretation intersect. Meanings are produced, perceptions on identity, existence, and freedom are reformulated. Theatrical performance is subject to specific historical and cultural conditions. Theater becomes a distinctive discursive practice, interacting with social and political contexts and contributing to the formation of collective consciousness. The formation of theater since the mid-20th century, in the Jordanian context, has been related to complex foundational contexts, where the question of constructing national identity intersects with the changes of the state, society, and culture. Theatrical discourse is developed in parallel with the critical discourse that plays a central role in interpreting and framing the performances and granting them the cultural and intellectual legitimacy. It participates in the production of meaning, not just its consumption. Criticism, as a secondary discourse, reorganizes theatrical discourse, defines its horizon of reception, and contributes to fixing or deconstructing certain

representations of the identity so a dialectical relationship between theater and criticism is established.

The significance of this study lies in approaching the evolution of the discourse of theatrical criticism in Jordan. It strives to deconstruct the patterns of the critical discourse, tracing its shifts from impressionistic journalistic discourse to systematic academic discourse, then, to the contemporary digital discourses. It analyzes the cultural and institutional conditions that contribute to these shifts. The study examines how criticism has contributed in to producing diverse representations of the Jordanian national identity; local, Arabic, and universal. The central problem of the study is: How is the theatrical critical discourse developed in Jordan, and what intellectual, aesthetic and cultural patterns are revealed in its relationship to theater and question of identity?

To answer this question, the present study looks to achieve a set of objectives to trace the different stages of the historical development of the critical theatrical discourse in Jordan and defining its dominant intellectual and aesthetic structures. In addition to that examining it's the critical methods of analyzing the texts and theatrical performances, exploring the relationship between theatrical criticism and the structure of the national and cultural identity and, studying the effects of the contemporary digital and cultural changes in the structure of the discourse of criticism.

1.1 Research questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) How is theatrical criticism developed throughout its different historical stages in Jordan?
- (2) What intellectual and aesthetic frameworks govern this discourse?
- (3) What approaches of criticism used in analyzing theatrical texts and performances are the most prominent?
- (4) How can criticism of theatre contribute to shaping representations of the national identity?
- (5) What is the impact of the digital transformations and globalization on reshaping the contemporary theatrical criticism?

1.2 Method

The study has followed the qualitative approach; it is suitable for the research which based on the analysis of the cultural and the critical discourses within the historical and the intellectual contexts. This can be achieved by employing the descriptive analytical approach for monitoring and analyzing the contents of the critical discourse of criticism, in addition to the historical approach for tracing its development of stages. Adding to that the discourse analysis approach for revealing the inherent intellectual and aesthetic patterns in the texts of criticism and analyzing their relationship with the cultural and social context.

To achieve the objectives of the study, several methodological procedures have been followed. They include collecting a representative sample of theatrical criticism texts from sources such as peer-reviewed journals, newspapers of culture, and specialized books of Jordanian theater. The material has been classified according to the historical stages of the development of critical discourse, and has been analyzed using tools of qualitative analysis, with respect to content and discourse analysis. Comparisons between different critical trends have been made to monitor shifts in the approaches and the visions. These have led to the interpretation of the results with respect to the cultural, the social, and the institutional contexts that influence the criticism of theatre in Jordan.

2. The extended historical framework of the Jordanian theatrical context

Approaching the development of theatrical criticism in Jordan requires viewing the theater as a sociocultural practice that emerges within a network of symbolic relations that link art, society, power, and identity. Theater constitutes a space of negotiation where values and meanings are reformulated, and through which narratives and representations of the collective self are tested. This makes the theatrical criticism a discourse parallel to the performance and contributes to reproducing, fixing, or questioning its denotation within the collective consciousness. Theatrical criticism becomes part of a process of constructing "the interpretive horizon" through which the theatrical performance is received and reintegrated in the general context of culture. Criticism is not a secondary discourse to the text or the performance, but it functions as a mechanism of interpretation that contributes to redirecting the reception and in constructing the meaning. Jauss emphasizes that, the aesthetic experience is not achieved in the text itself, but in the horizon of expectations shaped by the reception and the accompanying discourses (Jauss 1982: 23). The history of Jordanian theater demonstrates the formation of a critical discourse that interacts with social, political, and cultural changes, from the stage of state-building and the construction of national identity to the challenges of globalization and digitalization. The foundational beginnings of the Jordanian theater in the 1960s stand out as a discursive pivotal moment, associated with 'Hani Sanoubar', who is considered the founder of the theatrical movement in Jordan. His project is limited to directing or academic teaching, but it encompasses a cultural vision that longs to involve the Jordanian society in a twofold dialogue: a dialogue with the achievements of global theatrical modernity and a parallel dialogue with local cultural reference. His establishment of the University of Jordan Theater Troupe, and his presentation of performances based on Arabic and international texts, have shifted the theater from the scope of a school or celebratory to a space of the organized institutional cultural act. Discourse analysis is a founding moment for a modernizing theatrical discourse that looks to bring the Western theatrical techniques to the local context. This is without completely severing the ties that concern the national identity accompanied the formation of the modern state. This tension of the local and the global is reflected in the early critical discourse, which

preoccupied itself by questioning the ability of (modern) theater to express the issues of the Jordanian society and the limits of its adaptation to cultural and social particularity. Foucault calls that; the redistribution of discourse within specific historical conditions that impose limits on what can be said and be represented (Foucault 1972: 49). Criticism in this stage is related to the cultural press more than to the academic institution. *Al-Ra'i* and *Al-Dustour* newspapers play an essential role in covering the theatrical productions. Most of what they publish is characterized by impressionism, quick description and lack rigorous methodological frameworks. The importance of this journalistic criticism cannot be underestimated; it contributes to building a Jordanian theatrical memory and makes the directors and writers known. The role the festival publications as an interactive criticism reflects the heat of the theatrical moment, even if it lacks analytical depth. Theatre is an evanescent art by nature, and continues through the discourses about it, the foremost is the criticism and the journalistic documentation (Carlson 2003: 2). The qualitative shift in the discourse of the Jordanian theatrical criticism is crystallized with the introduction of academic criticism into the theatrical field through the universities. The foundation of Arabic and Arts departments in the Jordanian and Yarmouk Universities contribute to the development of a new critical discourse. This discourse analyzes the theatrical text as a scientific subject according to modern criticism methodologies. Academic critics represent this shift, most notably Dr. Naqrash. Criticism moves from the level of the impression and keeps up with events to the level of the systematic analysis of more rigorous theoretical concepts and structures. The academic institutionalization of criticism moves critical practice from the individual taste to a cognitive system governed by conceptual tools and analytical procedures subject to scientific questioning (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 9). This academic discourse remains limited spread in comparison with the journalistic discourse with its broad public presence. This results in a duality of discourse within the Jordanian theatrical domain: a specialized academic discourse, and a public reciprocal journalistic discourse. This is one of the structural features that shapes the specialty of the Jordanian theatrical criticism, and still active in determining its subsequent paths and future shifts.

Theatrical criticism in Jordan is not separate from the structural transformations known by the theatrical movement itself. It is intertwined with them within a network of institutional, cultural, and political relations. The beginning of academic criticism, since the 1970s and 1980s, has been linked to broadening the theatrical horizon and shifts from the university space to the realm of the official institutions. Theater is repositioned within the cultural system policy of the state and has no longer been an experimental artistic practice but a part of a broader symbolic apparatus that participates in the production of meaning and the direction of collective consciousness according to cultural criticism approaches.

After the foundation of the Ministry of Culture, its direct sponsorship of theater festivals has contributed to redefining the social and cultural function of theater as State project to build a cohesive national image. Theater festivals,

including the Jordanian Theater festivals function as platforms for discourse that affirm the presence of the state, show its support to the arts, demonstrate its openness to the Arab theatre and reproduce a local particularity narrative. These festivals are cultural ideological apparatuses contributing to shaping 'The theatrical national identity', where the aesthetic interferes with the political, and the artistic with the performative, in a complex process of producing the Jordanian theatrical consciousness. Bourdieu asserts that the State practices its symbolic power through laws and hard institutions and through the sponsorship of the cultural activity, where classifications and identities are reproduced as collective axioms (Bourdieu 2014: 37). These institutional changes are reflected in theatrical critical discourse. In many of its manifestations it adopts a mobilizing and functional character; critics are preoccupied by questions of the role of theater in the cultural development, defending the national issues, and consolidating the prevailing social values.

The national and social dimensions dominate the critical discourse, while the presence of the aesthetic and the philosophical dimensions remain relatively limited. This uncovers the nature of the foundational stage where the theater serves as a tool for expressing public concerns more than as a space for purely aesthetic experimentation.

The initial features of Jordanian theatrical traditions are crystallized from the interaction of multiple and overlapping elements. The academic contribution in standardizes the tools of analysis. This interaction leads to the emergence of the seeds of theatrical traditions with a local character. These traditions are not closed but remain open to an ongoing dialogue with the wider Arab theatrical space, particularly the Palestinian, the Syrian, and the Egyptian experiences. This is asserted by Landowski, cultural meaning is not formed within a closed system, but through 'interactive dynamics generated by the friction between the selves, discourses, and contexts, where the identity is continuously reformulated considering the relationship with the other (Landowski 2021: 64).

Arab festivals contribute to enriching the Jordanian theatrical scene and broadening the horizons of local critics through the exposure to critical discourses which are more stable and well experienced. This interaction opens new avenues for the comparison and cultural exchange. It contributes to the shift of Jordanian theatrical criticism from passive to a condition of the participation in the Arabic critical dialogue. This strengthens its capacity for the development and renewal and solidifies its presence as an active discourse within the Arabic field, rather than a local echo and become an active discourse on identity. It questions the Jordan's place within the Arab cultural landscape and renegotiates the representation of the theatrical self and the boundaries of its belonging. The writings of the critics are imbued with the questions of identity, belonging, and cultural particularity. The writings are intersected with the aspirations of modernity, experimentation, and openness to the international theatrical achievements of the Arab. This overlap between the artistic and the identity dimensions reveals the nature of the Jordanian theatrical project in its formative stage. The theatrical action is a part of a broader

process of producing meaning and redefining the collective self as a moving structure formed through discourse and is continuously reformulated through the representation, the difference, and the negotiation with the historical and the political contexts (Hall 1990: 18).

Theater criticism does not occupy a subordinate position to the performance, it remains present in the heart of the national cultural project. Since the university pioneering of Snoubar, throughout the stage of the institutional sponsorship is intensified during the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century, until the emergence of academic criticism in the universities and its overlap with cultural journalism. Criticism is formed in a dialectical relationship with the theater itself, interacting with the major questions of identity, modernity and cultural policy, and with the social changes of the national State.

It can be said that the triad of theater/criticism/identity form an ontological structure and an epistemological one. Criticism is only formed in the light of the question of identity because it is an open philosophical and cultural horizon. So that, the development of theatrical critical discourse in Jordan manifests itself as a history of deep philosophical and cultural debate which oscillates between aesthetic, cultural, and existential consciousness.

The following chapters aim to trace the manifestations of this dialectic at its multiple levels by questioning how the academic criticism formulates the theoretical question about identity. Besides, the way how journalistic criticism contributes to reproducing the image of theater in the public consciousness and the role of the festival criticism in redefining the Jordanian theatrical self in the face of the Other; the Arabic and the global.

3. Journalistic and festival criticism

3.1 Press releases

Press releases accompanying theater festivals exemplify this discourse, revealing the dialectical relationship between the media and the cultural institution. These releases provide information about theatrical performances, but they also reproduce them within a linguistic framework that predetermines their reception by shaping textual structure, themes, and modes of evaluation. In doing so, institutional discourse exercises a form of symbolic power (Van Dijk 2008: 9).

These publications can be described as secondary discourses that go in parallel with the theatrical performance as they are the primary discourses. They reveal the formal reception patterns and the implicit cultural politics which govern the mechanisms of selection, presentation, and evaluation. Therefore, the analysis of the language used in these releases, the descriptive patterns, the evaluative formulations, and the emphasized or the marginalized allows uncovering the underlying ideological structure of this discourse. The critical effectiveness of this discourse, however, remains limited because it lacks the systematic analytical tools. Releases rarely include a deconstruction of the dramatic structure, aesthetic readings of the acting performance, or questioning the directorial vision within its

cultural and intellectual contexts. Fairclough describes such a style of writing because of that the critical discourse is being subject to the conditions of media circulation, at the expenses of analytical depth (Fairclough 2003:17).

These releases within the framework of the critical discourse analysis allow the releases to be transformed from informational materials into revealing cultural documents. Analyzing the language, the methods of evaluation, and what is highlighted or marginalized, theater festivals can be deduced, the representations of official artistic taste can be observed, and the institutional framework that produces theatrical meaning can be identified. Amman Theater Festival publication in 2019, presents only the schedules of performances and the biographical information. However, it reveals a specific aesthetic horizon controlled by the cultural institution, through the nature of the selected texts and the participating troupes. The crisis of journalistic critical discourse is manifested because of the absence of a clear evaluative methodology. The language of the Judgments is an impressionistic language and lacks fixed critical standards. Thus, it prevents the knowledge accumulation that is capable of developing an effective critical discourse. This fact reflects the imbalance between the journalistic discourse and academic one. The former remains a subject to Foucault's 'economy of discourse,' which is governed by the mechanisms of circulation and speed than by the analysis and the interpretation. The need to reconstruct the journalistic critical discourse arises within an analytical framework that integrates the media functions with the mechanisms of criticism. This allows transforming the press release from a descriptive discourse to an analytical one capable of questioning the theatrical work, deconstructing its aesthetic structure, and interpreting it within its cultural and institutional context. This shift represents a linguistic development only and a repositioning of the journalistic criticism inside the theatrical field as a productive cognitive practice of meaning, rather than a medium for its reproduction.

3.2 Critical articles and dialogues of newspapers

The rapid press releases produce a media discourse of an immediate coverage and a superficial description. However, some Jordanian newspapers reveal discursive attempts that look to transcend the news function to questioning the reality of the theatrical movement and analyzing its structural crisis. These can be considered as a relative shift from a promotion to a problematization discourse. The theater is represented as a crisis-ridden artistic practice needs discussion and deconstruction.

The article of Al-Ra'i newspaper that is entitled 'The Jordanian Theater... Crossroads Between the Survival and the Extinction' in (2019) is an example for this transformation. It brings together the opinions of a number of theater professionals in a dialogue that reveals a growing awareness of the Jordanian theater crisis. This discourse reveals a clear tension between the recognition for criticism need and the absence of analytical and institutional tools capable of transferring this awareness into a systematic critical practice. In an intervention Alian points out the weakness of theatrical criticism and the absence of the

systematic observation. This can be interpreted as a collective representation of the crisis in the critical structure, rather than an individual stance. This declaration reflects what might be termed as discursive 'awareness of the crisis.'. This situation contributes to the reproduction of the discourse of crisis itself, instead of deconstructing it or the presenting clear methodological alternatives. Some local newspapers try to broaden the scope of the critical discourse through more comprehensive articles and interviews that trace the development of Jordanian theater and its various stages. The article of Al-Ra'i that addresses these stages within a narrative that is based on the duality of the "tide and flow". The playwright and theater director Shamma mentions that the critical practice in the Jordanian theater scene "is ranging between the impressionism and the moodiness, and has not acquired the accurate scientific character" (Shamma 2019 contribution within Al-Ra'i newspaper special feature). It is a description that exposes the limitations and confirms the need for developing tools.

The Critical texts appear to be isolated from one another and lack conceptual coherence. This prevents the formation of a critical discourse capable of examining the theatrical phenomenon as a cultural construct. Despite the valuable insights of these articles in highlighting the Jordanian theater issues, Nevertheless, it constitutes a problematic stage in the formation of the critical discourse. Naqrash emphasizes the" importance of knowing and diagnosing the problem we suffer from, to understand it and so as to move theatrical criticism from the repetition and imitation circle to higher levels. He mentions that the problem lies behind the lack of specialization and the few number of those interested in the field of criticism in comparison to the creative theatrical movement. From here, the impressionistic or the "journalistic" criticism has powerfully imposed itself on discourse of theatre and it leads to the perpetuation of critical approaches that deviate from the intended track. Evidence for this is the arbitrariness in the use of the critical terms and concepts, e.g. the use "modernity" as a synonym for "modern." He also explains that flattery by praising and reliance on the personal impressions can lead to insincere criticism, which is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored in the cultural, artistic and theatrical movement" (Al-Ra'i 2019).

Naqrash's quotation has constituted a critical discourse that looks to redefine the crisis in theatrical criticism as a crisis of structure that transcends the individual level of performance to the production of the critical knowledge. His emphasis on the necessity of understanding the problem and diagnosing it, is to elevate criticism from mere repetition to higher levels, Naqrash, establishes the general framework for a discourse that is based on a central duality between constructive criticism and impressionistic criticism. This duality does not operate only at the descriptive level, but also performs a standard function that reorganizes the criticism field according to a hierarchical conception that make academic criticism a referential model and p This text can be read as a diagnostic and evaluative rhetorical exercise simultaneously. It is not only limited to the description of the critical reality but also reproduces it within a network of causal relationships that link the lack of

specialization, the scarcity of those who are interested in criticism, and the dominance of the criticism of impressionism. The text is transformed into what might be called “the discourse of interpreting the crisis,” in which the crisis is presented as a natural consequence of structural imbalances in the cultural field. In this context, journalistic criticism is in a position of regression and deficiency. This context shows that, Naqrash employs rhetorical mechanisms of critical generalization which is supported by indicative examples, such as pointing to the arbitrariness in the use of terminologies of criticism, for example using ‘modernity’ as a synonym for ‘the modern.’ This case is not to be used as an isolated one, but also as a sign for a broader conceptual disturbance in the practice of criticism. Thus, it gives the discourse a power of persuasion which is based on the symbolic representation of the crisis more than being based on a broader empirical analysis. It is also noticed that the discourse rebuilds the image of impressionistic criticism as a dominant force within the field of theatre. It is noted that it ‘imposes itself by force’ through the symposiums and media coverage, this type of criticism is then transformed into something resembling a non-institutional discursive authority. Here, the text shifts from the level of description to the level of symbolic conflict. Here the impressionistic criticism is presented as a productive force of a misleading and distorting discourse, in contrast to an absent and marginalized specialized.

On the meta- discursive level, the text reveals a reflective awareness of the criticism crisis. The discourse does not only discuss the weakness of theatrical criticism but also produces a discourse on the causes and mechanisms of the weakness. This awareness, however, is governed by a framework of diagnosis rather than a transformative one. It focuses on describing the dysfunction without offering an alternative procedural model to overcome it. This leads to the reproduction of the discourse of crisis instead of its radically deconstructing it. Naqrash’s discourse represents a complex model within the critical landscape of Jordan. On the one hand, it reinforces the necessity of moving from the impressionism to the scientific inquiry, and on the other hand, it reproduces a sharp normative duality between two types of criticism. This makes it a part of the dynamic reshaping of the field of criticism rather than out of the field or an alternative to it.

This fact reveals the fragility of the cognitive structure of theatrical criticism in Jordan, and a clear gap between the journalistic discourse and the academic one. A practice capable of producing a deeper and more methodological theatrical discourse contributes to the interpretation of the theatrical movement within its broader cultural and institutional contexts.

3.3 Associations and events of criticism

Cultural events such as symposiums, workshops, and dialogue sessions by associations of the critics play a significant role in shaping the discourse of theatrical criticism in Jordan. These activities are seen as attempts to institutionalize

the journalistic and festival criticism by moving it from the coverage of the immediate media to the space of the systematic public debate.

Some cultural bodies, among the leading, 'The Association of the Jordanian Critics', have attempted to solidify this institutional dimension by organizing intellectual meetings and public seminars. The seminar on 'Theater and Theatrical Criticism in Jordan,' addresses the formation and development of Jordanian theater and discussed the reality of theatrical criticism challenges. Shamma notes that; the critical practice in the theatrical scene is ranging between the impressionism and the subjectivity, and has not acquired the precise scientific character (Shamma 2019. contribution within Al-Ra'i newspaper special feature). This is an expression of an internal awareness of the crisis in criticism. It also reveals a growing understanding of the absence of methodological references capable of organizing the critical action and transforms it to a stable cognitive practice. These events have contributed to creating spaces for the critical dialogue, they bring together critics, playwrights, and the audiences. These functions provide initial opportunities for the intellectual questioning and the exchange of ideas (Al-Ra'i 2019; Al-Dustour 2021). The analysis of their discursive structure reveals the limitations of their impact because they often remain tied to festivals or cultural events, otherwise, seasonal in nature and incapable of the establishment of a solid critical tradition or a sustained analytical school. At the level of institution, the Association of the Jordanian Critics attempts to broaden the scope of the critical work by publishing periodicals. They organize seminars and public meetings, and conduct critical analyses of theatrical events. However, the absence of continuity and methodological depth remain a limiting factor to the ability of these efforts to make a qualitative impact on the development of Jordanian theatrical criticism (Al-Ghad 2022).

The Rituals Theatre Group and its International Festival provide an important semantic transformation in representing the function of the action of theatre, where the event of theatre is not structured as a space for performance only. It is built as a deliberative platform to produce a participatory discourse of criticism. "The festival "Ritual Evenings" is not limited to presenting theatre performances only, but looks to build a comprehensive space of culture that includes training workshops and symposiums of criticism, including "The International Theatre Workshop and 'The intellectual symposium', in which critics and academics have participated" (Al-Dustour 2026). This text has represented a clear discursive structure that is based on the shift from the specification to the expansion. The sentence opens with a negation meaning (not limited) to disassemble the traditional conception of theater as a performance. Then it is resumed with an affirmation meaning (rather, it seeks) to redefine it as a complex cultural space. This linguistic transformation is not merely formal but it establishes what can be called the reframing of the theatrical action within a broader knowledgeable and critical horizon.

The 'comprehensive cultural space' as concept constitutes a central signifier that belongs to the discourse of totality. The festival is presented as an integrated

structure where the levels of production (performance), formation (workshops), and reflection (symposiums of criticism) intertwine. The Company of Rituals Theatre moves from the position of the artistic producer to the position of the cultural agent that establishes the meaning. That is to say, the entity that does not only produce the work but also supervise the production of its critical discourse. The inclusion of "the symposiums of criticism" within the structure of the festivals reveals a fundamental shift in the position of criticism; it is no longer a subordinate or secondary discourse, but an integral part of the theatrical event. This can be interpreted as institutionalizing criticism within the theatrical act. The interpretive authority is redistributed between the performance and its discourse, instead of being a sole domain of the external critic.

despite its importance, this discourse reveals a potential limitation; it remains at the program description level (presentation/workshops/seminars/critic participation). It does not move to the level of deconstructing the mechanisms of producing the discourse or evaluating its outputs. This means that, even if it still suffers from a gap between producing critical discourse and producing systematic critical knowledge the discourse has contributed to expanding the space for criticism. It presents a model of institutionalized criticism in which the discourse of criticism is produced not only as a text but also as an organized practice within the theatrical act. This places it in an intermediate position between the academic and journalistic criticism and also contributes to reshaping the field of criticism of theatre in Jordan.

The initiatives of criticism launched by the Jordanian cultural associations and newspapers are important entry points to the understanding of the nature of theatrical activity and the mechanisms of its critical reception. These initiatives look to provide platforms for knowledge exchange that bring together theatre practitioners, critics, and audience. These initiatives, have not yet succeeded in transcending their seasonal nature of festival cycles or the cultural events. This has limited their effectiveness in building a stable and cumulative analytical framework. They convey and frame the initial impressions within general, interactive frameworks, but they lack the tools for the consistent, systematic methodological analysis and philosophical approaches capable of deconstructing theatrical texts within their broader cultural and intellectual contexts. In addition, they often lack the ongoing chronological observation necessary for tracing the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon and analyze it as a dynamic historical course. The journalistic and festival criticism in Jordan is characterized by a basic duality of function, on the one hand, it plays an important media role in the theatrical performances and the expansion of the audience circle, on the other hand, it provides an evaluative reading often limited in time and place. It remains confined to the moment and not developed to a methodological and sustainable critical practice. The lack of methodological accumulation and temporal continuity constitute the most significant obstacle in the formation of a firmly stable theatrical discourse of criticism in Jordan. In spite of the mediating role of the journalistic and

festival criticism in connecting the theatrical performances with the audience and preparing for an initial awareness of the theatrical achievement. It does not reach the deep level of the analytical reading capable of questioning the texts and deconstructing their aesthetic and intellectual structures.

4. The influence of the Jordanian higher education institutions on the dramatic text analysis approaches

Theatrical discourse studies in Jordan have moved from the dominance of impressionistic and subjective approaches to a more scientific and methodological frame works. This shift is not only a cognitive evolution, but also a product of the reorganization of the academic field in Jordanian institutions of higher education. These shifts can be viewed as a process of "institutionalizing the discourse of criticism," in which the theatrical text is reproduced within an academic framework which determines its concepts, reading tools, and limits of interpretation. The university curricula teach knowledge, and also contribute in shaping a new critical consciousness among students and scholar. The theoretical study is linked to the analytical application and theatrical text is integrated into a network of critical concepts derived from the modern approaches of discourse analysis, semiotics, and cultural studies.

Jordanian universities have been effective institutions in the production of theatrical critical discourse and reorganizing the conditions of its analysis since the early 1980s. Jordanian and Yarmouk Universities have founded and organized academic spaces where theater has been redefined as a subject of knowledge capable of methodological

The university curricula have played an essential role in the standardization of the theatrical analysis and shifting it into a structured educational practice. The Jordanian University, for example, has included advanced courses such as; the analysis of the dramatic text and theatrical criticism as core requirements for specialization of the performing arts. This shows a gradual shift in the educational process from historical and descriptive knowledge to the possession of the applicable analytical tools. This methodological arrangement indicates the re-emergence of student as a critical self, capable of the deconstruction of the dramatic structure and the analysis of the theatrical discourse according to scientific standards. This orientation aligns with detailed teaching plans for the course of the dramatic text analysis, sets precise learning outcomes that encompass the analysis of dramatic structure, theatrical discourse, and the semiotic components of the text. This is alongside with the practical application of models from the Jordanian and Arabic theater. This regularization reveals the shift of the dramatic analysis from an individual diligence to an institutionalized knowledge-based practice that can be measured and evaluated within a clear academic framework (The Jordanian University Curriculum).

This role is not limited to the capital, the center, but extends to other Jordanian universities like Yarmouk that occupies a leading position in the theater studies. The official documents issued by the College of Fine Arts/Department of Drama ensure this centrality in the department vision and mission of educational research. The updated teaching plans also reveal a clear trend for reinforcing the analytical dimension and broadening the scope of the methodological engagement on the theatrical texts focusing on critical analysis and history of theatrical forms and trends. This approach takes part in building a methodological knowledge that enriches a well-established and sustainable local critical experience capable of the interaction with the aesthetic and intellectual shifts in the contemporary theater (Yarmouk University, College of Fine Arts 2021).

The universities are very important in the production of the theatrical knowledge published in peer-reviewed academic journals, like Yarmouk University Journal of Arts, Yarmouk Research, and the Jordanian Journal of Arts. These journals contribute to stabilization of the academic theatrical on the question the Jordanian theatrical texts. These studies have relied on diverse critical approaches; descriptive, structural, semiotic, and discourse analysis, enabling their deconstruction of the structure of the texts and revealing their semantic and symbolic patterns. The studies have addressed concepts like dramatic approach or the use of heritage in theater. They highlight the ability of the theatrical text to be an open field of knowledge, to approach -it is both an artistic structure and a cultural context- and related to societal shifts and its intellectual and aesthetic questions (Mashaqba 2019). The production of knowledge extends to university theses conducted in a number of Jordanian universities. The approaches of discourse analysis employed in the studies of the theatrical text rely on integrated quantitative and qualitative analytical tools. The tools include monitoring the denotative frequencies, building thematic tables, and analyzing character representations, language patterns, and their mechanisms of operation within the text. This trend shows the shift in the theatrical criticism from the impressionistic and the descriptive to more rigorous and methodological approaches. These approaches put the theatrical text within complex networks of relationships; discursive, cultural and social not as independent aesthetic product isolated from its contexts. This shift contributes to enhancing the objectivity of the critical reading and to broadening the scope of questioning the text as both artistic and knowledgeable discourse (Al-Fayad 2023).

This academic structure is not separate from the practical theatrical domain. By hosting the theatrical performances within the university space, organizing critical seminars, and involving students in theatrical festivals and forums, the universities work to activate the dialectical relationship between the theoretical analysis and the applied practice. 'Evenings of the Theatrical Rituals' and conferences of independent theatre are examples of this interaction, providing shared spaces where academics, practitioners, and audience create an open dialogue. These activities shift the academic knowledge from a closed, theoretical

into a public cultural discourse tested in the space of reception and discussion. It is reproduced and employed in the readings of live performances and questioning it critically, thus strengthening the presence of university as an active cultural place in the broader theatrical space. The study of university structures in Jordan reveals a comprehensive critical-academic project to redefine the study of the theatrical texts as a methodological practice and an integrated system of analysis and criticism. The Universities have moved from teaching the history of theater to the standardization of the tools of analysis and criticism through specialized courses, structured curricula, peer-reviewed publication platforms, and research activities related to the professional field of theatre. The university is transformed into a space for producing the critical theatrical discourse, a sponsor for the methodological modernity, and a fundamental rise for the promoting critical awareness and the developing the theatrical culture in the Jordanian scene. This is linking the theory and the practice, and establishing the sustainability of the analytical expertise at the local level.

5. The contemporary shifts and the current challenges

The Jordanian theatrical criticism it is not a static field, but it has evolved through successive changes in relation to historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. The forms of the Jordanian theatrical criticism have varied as an academic practice that looks for the methodological rigor, concept building, and contemporary journalistic writing which keeps pace with the performance and responds to its temporal rhythm. The technological advancements contribute to the shift of the critical discourse from its limited paper spaces to open digital spaces. These are characterized by the accelerated interaction, multiplicity of voices, and decline of the critic's centrality as a semi-exclusive interpretive authority. The position of the critic within the network of the relationships connecting performance to the audience is changed, the mechanisms of reception are substituted, and the relationship between the theatrical text and the context of its performance is redefined. This is accompanied by a partial break from the condition of 'direct presence' that is historically forms the essence of the theatrical experience. That is in contrast to the emergence of the digital or hybrid performances, which forced the criticism to reconsider its conceptual tools and its ability to approach the theater without a traditional stage and without simultaneous audience in one space. These shifts cannot be isolated from the broader Arabic scene. The Jordanian experience intersects with other Arabic contexts concerning the problems of digitization and the acceleration of monetary circulation. The Jordanian experience is maintaining its particularity by the nature of its cultural and academic institutions. The shift from traditional to digital criticism is one of the most prominent phenomena that reshape the Jordanian and Arabic theatrical criticism over the past two decades. It is not only limited to changing the publishing medium; but it also affects the structure of the relation between theater, criticism and audience, and redistributes the roles within the cultural discourse. Paper criticism operates within a deferred

postponed timeframe, and the critic is granted a cognitive distance that allows him to reconstruct the theatrical experience and analyze its elements coherently. The digital criticism reduces this distance where the performance time overlaps with the critical writing time. The critical texts are produced in the moment of the interaction, whether in electronic articles, short releases, or immediate comments. This overlap leads to redefining of the concept of 'theatrical time' itself. If the theatrical performance is traditionally defined as 'the art of presence' (Carlson 2001: 6-7), then the digital criticism is "the art of synchronization". A discourse parallel to the performance in its time, but in turn it loses some of the conditions of analytical depth and theoretical accumulation that characterizes the criticism of the classical paper (Lehmann 2006: 16-17).

The shift in the time structure of theatrical criticism imposed by digitalization, leads to a parallel shift in its authoritative structure. With the move into the digital sphere, the production of meaning is no longer an exclusive domain of a narrow circle of professional critics or journalists. The centrality of the traditional critical authority has retreated in favor of a horizontal distribution of voices. Every recipient with an account on social media can express his opinion and participate in the discussion on the theatrical performance. This shifts the reception from a silent act to an active discursive practice. Abu Shihab mentions that modern cultural criticism goes with the discourses of the social media as a communicative act that depends on the multiplicity of sites and knowledge and not on the monopolism of an institution or dominant authority (Abu Shihab 2021: 162).

The "critical democracy" is one of the most prominent features of the digital shift. It has broken the monopoly of the critical voice and opened the field to actors from diverse backgrounds to participate in producing discourse on the performance. The criticism has moved from a one-way discourse, from a critic who is in the center of the authority and is directed at passive audience. It is moved to a networked discourse where voices intersect and references overlap, in which the digital space is a public space where meanings are produced through the interaction, the comments and the participation. The shift between academic depth and popular dissemination becomes clear. Paper criticism, theatrical critical discourse remains limited to cultural magazines and specialized pages. This gives it an analytical depth, but in return reinforces its image as an elitist discourse tied to the cultural institution (Al-Ghadhami 2000: 21-27).

With digitalization, criticism gains a broad public presence due to the speed of circulation and the ease of access. This expansion is often accompanied by a decline in the level of analysis because of the digital recipient's tendency towards short, concise texts and quick judgments at the expense of the long methodological readings (Ar-Riymani 2021: 72). The shift from print to digital criticism uncovers a twofold dilemma. It has granted theater criticism an unprecedented reach and integrates it into the public space and exposes it to the risk of simplification and reduction. So, the limited reach of the academic depth and the digital spread constrained by the logic of immediacy contemporary stands theater criticism at a

crossroads. The adherence to the closed academic discourse threatens by deepening the isolation, while the absolute compliance to the logic of speed may empty the criticism from its interpretive and cognitive function. Here, the need for a hybrid critical approach arises; an approach that combines the rigorous philosophical analysis with concise and flexible rhetorical language that responds to the conditions of the digital reception (Hilal 2022: 112-127). The Jordanian context intersects with similar shifts experienced by theatrical criticism in several Arab countries. The shift in critical discourse from paper to newspapers to digital space appear as a structural result of the changing styles of the reception and communication within the Arabic cultural field in general (Al-Hadrawi 2021: 26). The comparison reveals differences in response as some Arab experiences, like the Moroccan and Iraqi, have succeeded in maintaining a degree of institutional depth through specialized journals, digital academic platforms, and research forums accompanying the digital shift. The Jordanian theatrical criticism today operates within a broader Arabic dialogue attracted by the duality of common and particular. The 'common' is challenges of digitalization on the practice of criticism, a local particularity of weakness of the institutional structure of criticism and its continuity. There is a necessity to approach the theatrical criticism as a cognitive knowledge and cultural network, capable of restoring the balance between the authority of the academic knowledge and the potential for collective production of meaning in the digital space.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of theatrical criticism development in Jordan within the framework of qualitative approach that is based on the descriptive analysis and the approach of the discourse analysis reveals that its deeply rooted in the historical theatrical movement itself. It begins as a discourse parallel to the performance, reflecting its shifts and reproducing its meanings within its social and cultural contexts. This discourse operates within an impressionistic, journalistic framework dominated by documentation and the updating. It gradually changes into a methodological, cognitive practice to deconstruct the texts and the performances, interpreting their dramatic and aesthetic structures, and link them to contexts of identity, power, and meaning.

As the Jordanian universities become active institutions in the production of theatrical knowledge, criticism has shifted from the level of spontaneous interaction to the level of the theoretical control and structural knowledge accumulation. It becomes part of a network of relationships that link between text and performance, and artistic practice and cultural awareness. This shift contributes to reshaping the critical reading tools by employing the textual analysis of the theatrical performances, and by analyzing the discourse as a semantic and a cultural structure. In addition to that adopting historical approaches in tracing the development of the theatrical phenomenon and drawing on some concepts from the cultural criticism and semiotics. This has moved the reading from the level of impressionism to the

level of a systematic, knowledge-based analysis. This shift is shaped by integrated tensions between two parallel discourses: an academic that looks to establishing the foundations and constructing the concepts, and a journalistic and public that focuses on the direct interaction with the performance and its context of reception.

In light of the shifts associated with globalization and digitalization, the Jordanian theater criticism is now required to requestion its functions and tools. This is to combine the methodological rigor of the academic analysis with the capability of circulation and interaction offered by the digital space, without modifying the cognitive value of criticism or reducing it to the transient impressions. The discourse of criticism has shifted from impression to knowledge, from documentation to deconstruction, and from local to universal, to be an effective cultural force that contributes to the production of meaning and the reshaping of consciousness and identity.

The Jordanian theatrical criticism is a fundamental in the Jordanian contemporary cultural project. It can question the self, the openness to Arabic and international theatrical experiences, and contribute to the construction of a sustainable critical cultural discourse that transcends the limits of the moment and fosters long-term cognitive accumulation.

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