

## RECEPTION AND SEMIOTICS IN THE PLAY "THE STATION DOES NOT LEAVE" BY FAHD AL HARITHI.

**Nadia Lotfy Hamdain Mohamed Nasser<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Literature and Criticism, King Faisal University, Arabic Language, Literature

redmilotus30@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract:**

This study aims to analyze the mechanisms of reception and semiotic systems in the play "The Station Does Not Depart" through two primary frameworks; reception theory, which focuses on text-reader interaction in meaning production via the implied reader, and semiotics as a methodology to uncover symbolic and sign layers within the text. The play highlights existential themes tied to waiting and isolation, positioning the "station" as a central semiotic space reflecting human crisis and struggles with time and place.

Through semiotic analysis, the connotations of symbols (e.g., the suitcase, train, repetitive dialogues) and their relationship to narrative structure are revealed. Simultaneously, the receptive approach underscores the implied reader's role in decoding the theatrical discourse based on their cultural and social context. The study demonstrates how the play employs semantic shifts and paradoxes to decode symbols, enabling pluralistic interpretations through the lens of the implied reader and semiotic analysis.

The findings conclude that Al-Harithi merges aesthetic form with philosophical depth, leveraging the semiotic potential of theater (e.g., scenography, lighting) to enhance the dialogue between the text's symbols/signs and the recipient—embodied by the implied reader, who aligns with and interacts with semiotic layers.

**Keywords:** Reception Theory- Implicit reader-Semiology- Symbols-Scenography- Meaning Production.

### **Introduction:**

The research topic is reception and semiotics in Fahad Al-Harithi's play "The Station Doesn't Leave."

#### **Methodology:**

This research uses the reception approach, which studies how the recipient receives literary and theatrical texts and the impact of this reception on the process of constructing meaning. This is done through the implied reader, or the typical reader who decodes the implied writer. The research also addresses the semiotic approach, which focuses on studying symbols and signs within theatrical texts and how these signs shape meaning.

The research relies on an analysis of theatrical texts from the perspective of three interpretations. Through this methodology, the research seeks to highlight the interaction between the text and the audience, and how this interaction contributes to shaping multiple connotations and meanings based on the viewer's cultural and social contexts.

#### **Significance of the Research:**

The importance of this research lies in its opening a new horizon for understanding the relationship between theatrical text and the recipient through the lens of semiotics and reception. This research enhances understanding of the role of symbols and signs in constructing meanings within the play and contributes to shedding light on the way in which the recipient can form multiple interpretations of the text. This research also contributes to enriching literary and theatrical studies, linking semiotic theory with theatrical reception in the Arab context, and reinforcing the importance of studying theater as an effective tool for conveying social and psychological messages to audiences. Furthermore, the research contributes to enhancing critical understanding of modern Arab theater and offers new insights into how playwrights engage with texts and their use of symbolism and semiotic signals in constructing sophisticated drama.

#### Research Problem:

The research problem is represented by how reception and semiotics influence the construction of meanings and interpretation of the theatrical text in "The Station Doesn't Leave" by Fahad Al-Harthi.

The research questions how the recipient interacts with the symbols and signs in the theatrical text and how this interaction contributes to shaping the meaning and understanding of the text. It also raises the question of whether the semiotic symbols in the play are capable of forming multiple and complex connotations, and how the audience interacts with them in diverse cultural and social contexts.

Thus, the research aims to explore the relationship between the text and the recipient, and semiotic interpretation in the context of the play "The Station Doesn't Leave."

Research Structure: The research is divided as follows:

#### 1- Introduction:

##### 1-1 Reception Theory

##### 1-2 Semiotics

#### 2- Reception in the play "The Station Doesn't Leave"

##### 2-1 The Implied Author and His Techniques

##### 2-2 The Implied Reader and Text Thresholds

##### 2-3 The Implied Reader and Scenography

##### 2-4 The Implied Reader and Ideology

#### 3- Semiotics in the play "The Station Doesn't Leave" Departure

##### 3-1 The Direct Interpreter

##### 3-2 The Dynamic Interpreter

##### 3-3 The Final Interpreter

Previous Studies: Among the studies that addressed Al-Harthi's theater is "The Structure of the Sign in the Theatrical Texts of Fahd Radah Al-Harthi: A Master's Thesis at Taif University by researcher Turkiya Awad Al-Thabeti." This study discusses the sign in Al-Harthi's theater and argues that everything on stage is a sign.

Another study, titled "In the Theater of Fahd Radah Al-Harthi: An Artistic Study," a Master's Thesis at King Khalid University by researcher Mutab bin Ali Al-Thawab, focused on the social and political issues raised by the play through the title and the artistry of its formulation. A joint study titled "The Structure of Dialogue in Saudi Prose Plays" by Dr. Abdul Qawi Saleh Al-Afiri and Dr. Ibrahim Abu Talib, published in the National University Journal, addressed the formations of dialogue, its relationship to other structural elements, and dialogue techniques.

A study by researcher Nawal Al-Suwailem titled "Alienation in the Experimental Theater of Fahd Al-Harthi" was published in the Al-Taf University Journal for Humanities. In it, she discussed Al-Harthi's influence on the experimental approach and the resulting alienation of his characters.

A doctoral dissertation by researcher Khaled Ahmed Mahmoud at the Faculty of Arts, Helwan University, titled "Dramatic Structure in the Plays of the Saudi Writer Fahd Radah Al-Harthi", examined the dramatic structure of Al-Harthi's theater, delving into the human self and its contradictions, and studied its theatrical language and themes from an artistic perspective.

#### 1- Introduction:

##### 1-1 Reception:

By reception here, we mean the reception of literature, i.e., the process corresponding to its creation, composition, or writing. Reception is linked to the reader (Holb & Ezzedine, 1994, p. 7). The cultural roots of reception theory were Aristotle's "Poetics," which focused on the oral and written impact on the listener and reader. This theory also had its roots in the Arabic

rhetoical heritage of Al-Jahiz, Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, and Hazim al-Qartajani. Among the intellectual sources that influenced the emergence of reception theory were Russian Formalism, Prague Structuralism, Roman Ingarden's Phenomenology, and the sociology of literature. These sources had a direct influence on reception theorists at the Constance School in Germany (Holb & Ezzedine, 1994, pp. 10-11).

Among the most prominent pioneers of reception theory are Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. Jauss introduced the concept of the "horizon of expectations," which refers to the set of expectations a reader holds when reading a particular text. Iser, meanwhile, focused on the reader's role in filling in textual gaps, making the reading process interactive. Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, Calheinz Steierle, and others (Holb and Ezz El-Din, 1994).

Among the procedures of reception theory are the following:

The Actual Author:

He is "the primary responsible for creating all textual voices, such as the narrator, the characters, the implied author, the narrated to, and the implied reader. As a sender, the actual author—that is, the true creator of the literary work—directs a literary message to the actual reader, who acts as addressee/receiver/viewer. The actual author and the actual reader are two real people, and as such, they do not belong to the literary work, but to the already existing world, where they live independently of the text. In reality, there is no direct contact between the actual author and the actual reader. The moment a reader picks up the book, the actual author is no longer there, but his name is written on the cover. When the reading process begins, the reader goes beyond the title of the novel and the name of the author to the text with all its voices, and as soon as When the realistic author finishes writing his novel and signs it, his role as the creator of the text's world ends. (Afifi, 1999, pp. 20-21)

Fahd bin Radah Al-Harthi: (Realistic Author)

A Saudi writer and theater director, born in Mecca in 1962 CE - 1382 AH. He is considered one of the pioneers of theater in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His complete theatrical works were published by the Taif Literary Club in 2021. Among his works is the play "The Station Does Not Leave" (Mudawwat Al-Darasa).

Critics have classified him as a follower of the postmodernist trend, which, according to researchers, has placed him in a state of anxiety. He has created his characters with a psychological structure that has no name, and no dimension of character exists other than the psychological dimension. His language also appears on several levels, including repetition, intonation, distortion, and delving into details. (Bani Amer, 2014, pp. 1-36)

The Realistic Reader: Some of the readings of realistic readers, such as Critic Abdul Qawi Al-Afari and Dr. Ibrahim Abu Talib find that "reading Al-Harthi's plays from the perspective of dialogue structure is because he enriched his text with diverse readings and visions, making his text distinct not only in terms of the project of short texts, but also because he focused on movement driven by short dialogues. His text also combines contradictions, as dialogue is not only evident in the apparent structure of the text, but may also be found outside the text, or in the actor's movements, and may sometimes be absent, especially when he borrows the narrative style of the folk tale." (Al-Afari and Ibrahim, 2018)

Among the readings of "Fahd Al-Harthi" by the realistic reader is that his characters live in a state of helplessness and loss of control over the course of their lives. Despair, frustration, and disappointment pervade their conversations and behavior... through the character's surrender to the dominance of external forces, unable to repel harm or defend their rights. The duality of the executioner and the victim embodies alienation and confronting dominance with surrender and helplessness. (Al-Suwailem, 2020, p. 225)

And she sees The researcher finds that Fahd Al-Harthi's characters are characterized by isolation, evident in their dialogues, which express their separation from those around them

and their struggles in building social relationships and communicating with others. (Al-Suwailem, 2020, p. 237)

Perhaps the reason his characters are characterized by alienation, which reflects the crisis of contemporary man, is his influence by experimental theater. Therefore, he devotes great attention to alienation, transcending the familiar, and touching on the human side at its weakest, presenting a picture of unfulfilled human ambitions and deferred motivations. Alienation creates a theme brimming with black comedy that makes the viewer smile in defeat at the emptiness of the characters, the strangeness of their behavior, and the illogicality of the events. The text and the performance combine to present a theatrical vision based on strangeness and astonishment. (Al-Suwailem, 2020, p. 524)

#### Implied Author

The effects of the implicit author are found in the text, implicit but not explicit, unlike the narrator, meaning that the reader reconstructs it from The text is not the narrator, but rather the narrator's creative principle, and the creator of everything else in the text. It is he who arranges the pages in a certain way and makes these things happen to these characters with these words and images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author cannot tell us anything; he is voiceless, or rather, the voiceless, and has no direct means of communication. He directs us and is silent, through his design of all voices and through all the means he chooses to use to teach us.

The ideology of the text is the ideology of the implied poet. Mikhail Bakhtin says that the speaker in a novel is always, to varying degrees, the product of an ideology, and his words are always an ideological specimen. The language of a novel always presents a particular view of the world that tends toward social significance. Since discourse is an ideological text, it becomes the subject of characterization in the novel, and it also prevents the novel from becoming a verbal game. (Bakhtin and Muhammad, 1985, p. 105)

#### Theatrical Narrator

The narrative narrator may identify the narratee in terms of gender (My dear Madam... or class... or...) (Selden, pp. 203-204).

The narrator may present the reader with misinterpretations and misunderstandings under the pretext of deceiving the reader. These interpretations offered by the narrator are insufficient and push the reader down the wrong path... They may contain conflicting hypotheses and lead to contradictory conclusions. Thus, they add difficulties to the reader in his attempt to process the textual information (Prince and Ali, 2004, p. 13).

The theatrical narrator speaks for the implied author and for the implied author's ideology. Narratee:

Gerald Prince says: "The narratee is someone to whom the narrator addresses his speech" (Prince, Gerald; ed., Afifi, Ali, 1993, p. 76). The narratee is the narrator's audience within the text. It is a fictional character, like the narrator, the implied author, and the implied reader. It does not exist outside the text and does not coincide with the real reader or the implied reader except in exceptional cases.

#### Theatrical Reception:

Reception theory plays a vital role in understanding how audiences respond to plays. Theater relies heavily on direct interaction between actors and audiences, making the viewing experience unique. According to researchers, audience interaction with a theatrical performance can influence how they receive the messages and ideas presented in the work. Furthermore, audience responses can vary based on their cultural and social background, making studying theater reception from the perspective of reception theory essential to

understanding the impact of theater on society. Reception theory demonstrates how the audience is not merely a passive recipient, Rather, it is an active element in the process of meaning production. By understanding the concept of this theory and its pioneers, we can see how it affects the reception and interpretation of theater. Studying the interaction between text and audience opens new horizons for understanding literary and theatrical arts.

(Dospinescu, 2005, p. P43)

This is what we will find in reading or watching the play under study and how the implied reader interacts with it, its signs, symbols, and deciphers them.

Reception in theater is not of the same nature as reading a work; rather, symbols are more numerous in theater and operate in a more complex manner in addition to symbols. (Dospinescu, 2005, p. P46)

The field of theatrical reception is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been extensively studied through various methodological perspectives. Reception began to be explored in the 1960s as part of literary studies, focusing on the act of reading, before expanding into theater studies in the 1980s. Although a wide range of perspectives and approaches have been presented in reception studies, a definitive theory equivalent to the theories of the production message is still being developed.

As we delve deeper into the phenomena of theatrical reception, it becomes necessary to recognize On the complex relationship between production and reception processes.

The reception experience is closely linked to the production experience, as both performers and spectators play key roles in shaping the meaning and impact of a theatrical performance.

Theatre reception research also highlights the importance of understanding how individuals from diverse backgrounds interact with a performance.

Audiences go beyond passive observation to actively evaluate and interpret a performance. This interactive exchange between performers and audiences shapes the entire reception encounter and influences the way meanings are formulated and conveyed in a theatrical setting.

The essence of theatrical reception also includes critical analysis and scholarly interpretation. Reviews act as intermediaries between the performance and the audience, offering nuanced perspectives on the potential meanings embedded in a performance. Drawing on established interpretive frameworks, critics aim to offer interpretations that resonate universally or collectively with a wide range of audience members. (Dospinescu, 2005, pp. 43-45)

## 1-2 Semiotics:

The interest in signs and significations in Arab culture has its roots in the sciences of rhetoric and interpretation, as seen in al-Jahiz's *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* and *Al-Hayawan*, and al-Jurjani's "Evidence of the Miracle"; they established the concept of the sign, the signifier, and the signified. It is close to semiotics, such as referring to the relationship between word and meaning.

Semiotics, "the science of signs," constitutes one of the modern critical approaches that has influenced the analysis of literary texts, focusing on the study of signs, signifiers, and communication systems. In the Arab context, semiotics emerged as an analytical tool that contributes to uncovering the hidden layers of meaning in texts. In the modern era, the adoption of the semiotic approach began with Arab critics' contact with Western approaches, such as the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes. Semiotics is defined as a science dedicated to studying the production of meaning in society. It also deals with the processes of signification and communication, the means by which meanings are generated and exchanged. Its topics include the various sign systems and codes that operate in society, the actual messages, and the texts through which they are produced. (Kerr, 1992, p. 5)



Semiotics is a science with multiple and varied branches of study. Its precise methodological characteristics vary from branch to branch, but they are united in a common, overarching concern: a better understanding of the meaning-bearing of our own behavior.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, semiotics was proposed almost simultaneously as a comprehensive science of signs by two major thinkers: the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Kerr, 1992, p. 6).

An icon, although merely an image of a thing, "produces an interpretive idea." Peirce considered "the logic of icons, the logic of signs, as well as the logic of symbols." (Eco, pp. 198-194).

### Semiotics in Theater

The earliest works discussing theater in semiotic terms can be traced back to Czechoslovakia in the 1930s (1931). During that period, literary critics such as Otomar Zich, Jan Mukarowski, Jiří Veltrouš, Jindřich Hoenzel, and Peter Bogatyrev attempted to analyze the components of theater in terms of structures and sign systems. When Zich's *Aesthetics of the Art of Drama* and Mukařovský's "An Attempted Structural Analysis for the Phenomena of the Actor," aimed to transform the analysis of theater and drama. These two pioneering works laid the foundations for a rich body of theatrical and dramatic theory produced by semioticians of the Prague School in the 1930s.

In his book *Aesthetics of the Art of Drama*, Zich claimed that theater consists of heterogeneous but interconnected systems, none of which has any special significance. He was the first to deny the written text any automatic dominance over the other systems; he saw it as merely one of the systems that contribute to the formation of theater as a complete dramatic spectacle. Zich's emphasis was on the interrelationship between the heterogeneous and interconnected systems in theater. (Nikolarea, 2005)

Thus, each element in the theater had its role to play in the process of meaning.

Cosin also proposes a model for defining the constituent parts of theater by establishing thirteen sign systems as the basic components of theater. These sign systems establish two main categories of Signs, both auditory and visual, are located either within or outside the actor, and are present in time and space. These signs fall into five categories:

1. Auditory signs, which, as part of the spoken text, emanate from the actor and are present in time. These signs are speech (System 1) and tone (System 2).
2. Visual signs, classified as "body expression," are located within the actor and are present in both time and space. These signs are mime (System 3), gestures (System 4), and movement (System 5).
3. Visual signs, codified as "the actor's external appearance," are also located within the actor but are present in space.
4. Visual signs, called "stage appearance," are placed outside the actor and are present in both time and space. These signs are props (System 9), scenery (System 10), and lighting (System 11).
5. Auditory signs, classified as "inarticulate sounds" (or Non-artificial effects (such as music (System 12) and sound effects (System 13)).

The implications of this systematic analysis and the encoding of the sign system are of great importance for the language in which the theatrical text is written, as they indicate that language as such is only one sign in a network of auditory and visual signs that unfolds in time and space. Furthermore, Cousin's analysis demonstrates that any written theatrical text

contains within it a set of extralinguistic systems (i.e., tone, intonation, dialect, etc.) in addition to a subtext (or gestural text), which is determined by the movements made by the actor while speaking this text (Nikolarea, 2005).

The semiotics of phenomena in the theater relates them to the categories they signify, not directly to the dramatic world. This is especially true since this allows non-literal signifiers or sign-carriers to create the semiotic subordinate created by the literal signifiers themselves. A dramatic reference, or imaginary table, can be represented by a painted sign or Linguistics or an actor crawling on all fours (Kerr, 1992, p. 16)

The essential and indispensable condition for a theatrical sign-bearer is that it is prepared to successfully replace its intended signified. As Karl Brisak noted, a real object can be replaced by a symbol when the symbol can be transferred to the signs of the object itself (Kerr, 1992, p. 16).

Semiotics has a special significance in the theater, relating to the actor and his physical attributes. As Weltrosky puts it, the actor's body is the dynamic unity of a complete set of signs in a traditional dramatic performance. The actor's body acquires its semiotic and representational powers in its transformation into something.

(Kerr, 1992, p. 16)

Impact on the Audience:

The impact of semiotics in theater on the audience is profound, engaging them in interactions with symbols, signs, and interpretations. Audience participation is vital to the formation of meaning. This perspective emphasizes the role of the audience in influencing interpretations and highlights how performances are not isolated signs, but rather complex networks of semiotic units working together. The interweaving of semiotics in theater goes beyond mere observation; it encourages active audience participation by allowing them to interact with symbols and signs at various levels, from recognizing the symbols in a play to analyzing how viewers interact with these elements. (Nikolarea, 2005)

Semiotics offers a dynamic framework for understanding theatrical reception. Direct interaction with symbols and signs allows the audience to discover deeper meanings embedded in performances, leading to a more rewarding viewing experience. Furthermore, semiotics in theater acts as a bridge between performers and spectators by creating shared spaces where meanings are collaboratively constructed. By recognizing the role of the audience as an active partner in understanding a performance, semiotics enhances the overall theatrical experience and fosters deeper connections between performers and audiences.

The complex weave of symbols and signs in theater sparks stimulating dialogues between performers and audiences, ultimately influencing how individuals perceive and interact with artistic expressions. (Nikolarea, 2005)

Semiotics in theater not only influences how audiences interpret performances but also fosters meaningful interactions between performers and audiences. By providing a framework for analyzing symbols and signs in theatrical contexts, semiotics deepens our understanding of theatrical reception and emphasizes the important role audiences play in co-creating meaning in performances. (Nikolarea, 2005)

## 2- Implicit Author Techniques

The implicit author in this play proceeded implicitly, as is the custom of implicit authors. His plan is not explicitly revealed, but rather hidden between the lines, leaving the implicit reader to decipher the codes that crowd the text. He left the text with a vast amount of codes and symbols. Every character was a symbol requiring interpretation, and every event or sentence was a symbol of a philosophical idea waiting for the implicit reader to uncover it.

## 2-1 The Implied Reader and Textual Thresholds in "The Station Never Leaves"

### - The Implied Reader and the Title

The implied reader sees the train departing the station, but the station remains waiting for him, never leaving. It is the place/city, which never disappears or leaves, the constant, and the train is the moving time. It is the train of life and death. Everyone departs to it, some are born in it and then depart. It is life. This is the idea presented by the implied author, and it is codes that the implied reader can decipher. It is the dialectic of the constant and the moving, and man's challenge to it in order to change and alter his reality.

It is life and its story of birth and death, the implied author's connection to the station that remains, and the history that preserves these stories and narrates them to those searching for them.

Even history moves from time to time, writing the stories of the same place and the same station. The text is open to multiple readings, and this is a possibility for each reader to read.

- The Implied Reader and Names: Characters in the play are limited; Only two: the guard and the actor. The guard is an icon and a code intended by the implied author and deciphered by the implied reader. The guard is perhaps history, the witness to the events and the movement of the train, symbolizing the duality of birth and death, the upward, changing movement of time. The station, on the other hand, is the fixed location, the scene of events. He may also be the actor himself.

The actor, on the other hand, is the anonymous character representing the seeker of truth in general and the seeker of happiness. He is anxious, sad, and miserable, dissatisfied with himself, and therefore seeks happiness and truth. "The actor is the entire stage. Everything in a theatrical performance can be dispensed with except him. He is the core of the performance and the spectator's pleasure. He is the undeniable presence itself, yet observing him in relation to the signs he produces is not easy. It is paradoxical that the actor is both a producer of signs and a producer of them. He is the painter of his canvas and its canvas; he is the sculptor and his model and statue. He is the site of all paradoxes. He is present while conjuring an absent character; he is the master of the word/lie while we demand "truth" from him. He is at the crossroads of visual and auditory codes, with the gestural, vocal, and linguistic codes branching from them. He expresses unconscious, ideological, and cultural codes, and all visual signs are linked to him, to his body (clothing, makeup, mask), to his movements (props, decor), and upon him the spotlight is focused. The signs he produces are never pure signs, so to speak. Like other elements of theatricality—but in a more radical way—the actor creates signs that are at the same time "erotic," especially erotic. This is where the process of isolating the theatrical sign is concentrated (Obersfeld et al., 1996, p. 171).

It seems that the entire semiotics of the theater is created through the actor, who transmits a significant series of non-linguistic signs that can—or cannot—be translated linguistically by the spectator. However, everything that is communicated semiotically is through language. (Obersfeld et al., 1996, p. 172)

## 2-2 The Implied Reader and the Elements of Scenography

The first scene: This is the symbolically laden stage of events. All the characters in the play appear, as does the setting in which the events take place. The character's appearance and costumes, which depict the character's features, also appear. The guard wears shabby clothes, and the place is cleaned by a contradictory character who cleans while looking shabby. The main sound effects in the play are the sound of the train, which is also contradictory, distant



yet close. The actor, who as soon as he sits down, changes his seat. He is hesitant and anxious, indecisive, tense and anxious. This is the state of someone waiting for what he is looking for. The antithetical duality in "The sound of the train approaches, the sound of the train recedes, and the sound of the train recedes. He waits for the train but does not catch it."

The second scene: sound effects of the sound of a train receding, and human voices that do not depart. The antithesis remains in the actor's decision not to catch it, but rather to remain in his usual rhythm, sitting on a seat, then changing seats with the dim lighting, i.e., a transparent, mysterious darkness, like the mystery of that actor who does the opposite of what he wants, like the guard who works to create a different appearance, cleaning himself while he is in shambles. The guard and the actor are identical in this antithesis, as one searches for the other, with the sound of a quiet song playing, unlike the state of someone who has missed the train.

The third scene: "A torn blanket that does not warm, and a cold that the actor shudders from. The actor shudders from the cold with the torn blanket, and sings the same songs as the guard. The actor resembles the guard in his antithesis. He sings his songs, then tosses and turns due to the cold, and his states are contradictory, from calm and harmony of meaning to discontent, toss and torment from the cold." (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. p. 302)

Both the guard and the actor are in a contrasting and opposite position, and are identical in that.

Scene Four:

"The actor returns to his seat as the guard withdraws. The actor stretches out on the seat. A poetic song plays as the lights dim. The lights return with a morning voice. The actor moves lazily." (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 303)

He feels pain from any movement. His bones stiffen from sleeping on the seat as the guard enters after a dialogue in which he answers about a woman. In my opinion, the guard is something mysterious and sacred. Therefore, the dim lighting symbolizes its mystery, sanctity, and romanticism through sound effects, with an emotional song. The actor stretches out, filling the space in a moment of contemplation. Morning has not yet arrived with its light and voice. He awakens from his beautiful imagination, awakens from his materialistic knowledge, and is pained and stiff from his crude materialism.

Scene Five:

The actor sings, the guard dances, the guard sings. The lighting gradually dims, then returns to the actor. And the guard, around a fire between them" (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 302).

The implied reader reads these symbols and decodes them through the elements of scenography, namely kinetic, sound, and light effects, and their alternation. Kinetic, sound, and light effects blend in a dreamy atmosphere, with the pillar of light sought by the actor, whose name he does not reveal.

The dimming of the lighting symbolizes the mystery that surrounds this mysterious, lost object sought by everyone. Then the lighting returns, and the light increases, and he sees this mysterious object the two of them are searching for, as it stands between them like a blazing fire.

The implied reader has multiple readings; the guard, who forms the actor's antithetical duality, may be the actor himself, but after a time and after a vision. It is a duality of past and future: the actor is the past, the guard is the future, and the actor's destiny is the fate.

Scene Six

"The guard takes out a piece of bread and shares it with the actor, then pushes a piece of wood into the fire while the actor coughs and the guard laughs" (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 304). This mysterious thing they share provides them both with a sense of pleasure and spirituality. It is

symbolized by the bread as well as the fire. The guard feeds it with a piece of wood, as if he has reached its core. As for the actor, he coughs, unable to bear its light and smell, so he doesn't move on. The guard understands this and laughs.

The scene features sound and light effects that represent the codes intended by the implicit author, highlighting the antithetical duality of past and future, guard and actor. Scene Seven

"The actor carries himself, leaves the stage, stretches out on the bench, feeling sleepy, and begins counting the stars—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9—while the guard leaves the station. The lights dim until darkness falls." After the guard tells the mysterious stories and riddles that the actor doesn't understand, the actor carries himself, distracted and shocked, and also leaves the stories. The guard withdraws to the bench, feeling withdrawn and bored, so he counts the stars. The narrator-guard departs, leaving the actor in a state of confusion and bewilderment. The lights dim until darkness falls before the actor's eyes, where he can no longer see the truth. (Al-Harhi, 2020, p. 305)

#### Scene Eight

"The guard leaves the stage. While the actor is pacing nervously, the guard returns carrying his dirty clothes, placing them on a bench, and addressing the actor." (Al-Harhi, 2020, p. 304)

The kinetic effects in this scene are prominent, conveying shock and bewilderment after what... He was shocked by the guard.

The phenomena that were symbols of hidden things he immediately learned, and of what would become of him like the guard, and the guard leaving him with his dirty clothes, evidence of his forced stay at the station, without preparation or desire, and his mind's loss in comprehending the terrifying truth, and his constant boredom from waiting for the pillar of light and the longed-for fire.

#### Scene Nine and Final

The sound of a train approaches as the actor holds the station bell and chants, "Whoever sleeps in the stations misses the trains," with the lighting strips and the escalating effect announcing the end of the show (Al-Harhi, 2020, p. 307).

Through the sound effects, the text's meanings become clear to the implied reader. All the scenographic elements present in the text announce and study the text's codes, which the implied reader deciphers. The sound of trains is constant at the station, and the circle revolves around the actor, who becomes the guard and the other, waiting for another actor searching for the desired light pole or fire. He repeats his statement, indicating his mistake, which caused him this. He stayed in the stations, slept in them, heard the news and stories, and will retell them to whoever comes after him, continuing to search for the desired light pole or fire.

#### 2-3 The Implied Reader and Ideology

The play defined its characters as symbolic icons of a different meaning. The actor Mahmoud and the guard are the characters of the play, searching for something unknown, and they represent the archetypal human being, especially the actor Mahmoud, who His name is mentioned once, then the name is ignored, and only the actor is mentioned, representing a typical human being.

The unknown object symbolized by the pillar of light and the desired fire is decoded by the implied reader. Perhaps he sees it as the happiness sought by man in the past, present, and future, and the typical human being represented by the actor and the guard in search of happiness. Perhaps this is the idea and ideology hidden in the theatrical text. I do not see absurdity without meaning or purpose, but rather an ideology hidden within the text. The author explicitly stated this at the end of the work: "He who sleeps in stations misses the trains."

The actor learned pain and struggle to reach his goal by staying at the station, enduring its cold and misery. The station is a symbolic icon of life. At this station, the actor, the new seeker of happiness, suffered, while the guard is the old seeker, the actor of the past. The more the actor suffers at the station, the more he feels happiness, the desired goal. Just as the train is a symbolic icon of age or time, in it people depart from this world or the station and people are born.

The actor, searching for happiness, awaits it anxiously and sadly, dissatisfied with himself, feeling it while waiting for it. And his pains, on his way to search for it.

As for the guard, that old researcher/actor in the past, who resided at the station (the world) searching for it, it was time for him to return, depart, and leave the station for the new researcher. He saw the duality of happiness—that is, misery—in those who kill their beloved at the station. He saw that waiting at the station kills happiness, and that happiness lies in returning, departing from it, or striving, not in waiting and sleeping.

They were tired and sad on their journey in search of happiness in the world (the station), and neither of them realized that happiness was the path and the search. So, the new researcher remained on his way, feeling it, while the old researcher departed to reach it.

The actor concluded the play by saying that he was a monk of happiness, observing it and searching for it. He who did not strive in this world would inevitably not see it and would not catch the train of happiness. This is represented in the author's saying, "He who sleeps at stations misses the trains" (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 307).

It is the struggle between stability (the station) and movement (the trains), through the metaphor of the space of the station as a central symbol.

The horizon of expectations and interaction Audience: The play's title, "The Station Never Leaves," creates an expectation among the audience of a paradox between stillness and movement, prompting the viewer to search for an explanation for the social or psychological "stagnation."

This represents a departure from what the viewer expects. A station is usually a temporary place to wait, but transforming it into a permanent space around which all the play's events revolve shocks the viewer, raising questions about the reasons for the frozen time.

Hence, the viewer's interpretation of the textual gaps. The absence of a direct reason for the station's failure to depart leaves Al-Harthi's explanation of the stop ambiguous, allowing the audience to fill in the gaps based on their own experiences and cultural and social contexts. Similarly, the anonymous characters: character names such as "the guard" or "the actor" transform them into open symbols, which the audience can embody and apply to their own personal experiences or contexts. This allows for multiple readings.

3- Semiotics in the play "The Station Never Leaves"

3-1 Levels of semiological analysis according to Anne Obersfeld: The deductive level.

The textual presentation can be analyzed as a map or maps of symbols, essentially synchronistic. Here, we are highlighting complex units, and thus we will consider the text a complex reality. Thus, the photographic images in the presentation allow us to define an analyzable deductive level. (Obersfeld et al., 1996, p. 37)

In the play, there are single and complex symbols and signs from which we infer multiple meanings, governed by the cultural and social contexts of the reader or viewer.

The narrative level: Symbols have a chronological development that determines a trajectory that we can consider. Symbols are organized into narrative patterns. This symbol has a history on the stage, and perhaps at this level, we can uncover the existence of myths, or, in other words, narrative patterns.

Semantic level: Each symbol is contrasted by a set of meaningful elements (signifiers) or smaller units of meaning. A cardboard crown, for example, assumes a sense of royalty as well as a sense of irony. Therefore, even if the performance is great on the formal level, it appears ambiguous.

(Obersfeld et al., 1996, pp. 38-39) The symbols in "The Station Doesn't Leave" are arranged in a secret pattern as an antithetical binary. Each symbol expresses an intended meaning, and they are presented in an ambiguous structure.

Al-Harhi tends to condense the theatrical text and make the actors symbols and markers for the principles and challenges announced by the author in his saying, "He who sleeps in stations misses the trains."

In the field of theatrical semiotics, it is essential to explore the complex interaction between symbols and signs and their direct interaction with the audience. Thus, the play serves as a captivating platform where symbols and signs come to life, immersing viewers in a vibrant semiotic adventure.

The symbols woven throughout the room are carefully designed to convey deep meanings and evoke and reflect emotions in the audience. From subtle movements to expressive gestures, each element contributes to the creation of striking characters that resonate deeply with viewers. These symbols go beyond mere decoration; they play an essential role in building the plot and defining character roles.

In turn, the signs in the play serve as communication tools that bridge the gap between the performers and the audience members. Through their actions, expressions, and dialogue, the dynamic interplay between symbols and signs creates a multidimensional theatrical experience that encourages interpretation and analysis on the part of the audience.

As audience members immerse themselves in the world of "The Station Never Leaves," they become active participants in decoding the symbols and interpreting the signs that unfold before them. Through their participation in the theatrical performance, the audience collectively constructs meaning alongside the actors, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, sometimes breaking the fourth wall, and bridging the gaps in the theatrical work. Direct interaction with symbols and signs provokes introspection, emotional resonance, and intellectual stimulation among viewers, enhancing the profound relationship between artistic expression and individual perception. Hence, the integration of two approaches: reception—especially the implied reader who reads symbols—and semiotics with its symbols and connotations.

3-2 The Immediate Interpretant: Fahad Radah Alharhi's play "The Station Never Leaves," according to Charles Sanders Peirce's direct interpreter, requires an understanding of the text's structure and its semantic and symbolic layers, with a focus on the interaction of signs or symbols with the recipient.

The initial understanding of signs is the meaning perceived directly from the signs without the need for in-depth interpretation—that is, the "surface meaning" of the text. The direct interpreter can be identified through:

- The title: "The Station Never Leaves" refers to a fixed place (station) that refuses movement, suggesting stagnation and stability. The "characters" are characters stuck and isolated in a closed space (the station), expressing states of waiting or despair, such as the guard and the actor. The "dialogues and actions" may reveal direct conflicts between the characters about why they are staying or why they want to leave, and this is the character of the guard and the actor in their dialogues. The "theatrical space" is an abandoned or stopped station, with dim lighting or decor that reflects dilapidation (broken seats, a stopped clock, etc.). Through the characters' dialogue in the play, the direct interpreter is the literal question about the reason for the station's stoppage, without delving into symbolism. The direct interpreter addresses the

apparent signs present in the text as they are, as the play reflects the concept of waiting and the search for meaning in life. The direct interpreter refers to the apparent meanings that the recipient can extract from the text. We find the characters talking about their daily experiences, reflecting the reality of contemporary life. The dialogue between the characters reveals feelings of frustration and anxiety, which prompts the recipient to engage with these feelings directly.

#### Scene 6

"The guard takes out a piece of bread and shares it with the actor, then pushes a piece of wood into the fire while the actor coughs. The guard laughs." This mysterious thing they share feeds them both a sense of pleasure and spirituality. It is symbolized by the bread, just as it is symbolized by the fire. The guard feeds it with a piece of wood, as if he has reached its core. Meanwhile, the actor coughs, unable to bear its light and smell. He is no longer strong. The guard understands this and laughs. (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 304)

3-3 The Dynamic Interpretant: This is the emotional and intellectual interaction with signs or symbols. It is the effect that signs have on the recipient during interaction with the text. It "varies" according to the cultural context or the personal experience of the viewer in theatrical text. For example, we find: "emotional tension": feelings of frustration or anxiety resulting from the confinement of characters, such as the actor and the guard, in a place from which they cannot leave. This may reflect social issues (such as unemployment or loss). Likewise, "existential questions." If waiting at the station is a metaphor for awaiting death or salvation, the dynamic interpreter may raise questions about the meaning of life.

Another intellectual interaction within the dynamic interpreter is "social criticism." If the "station" symbolizes stagnation and the suspension of time, the dynamic interpreter may evoke anger or sympathy for the victims.

The dynamic interpreter addresses the interactions between symbols and meanings that develop throughout the play. In the play, we find that the station represents a turning point in the characters' lives. Each character interacts with the station differently, reflecting the diversity of human experiences. This dynamic contributes to creating dramatic depth, as personal stories intertwine with general symbols of the search for hope and happiness. The dynamic interpreter also addresses the interactions between characters and how these interactions affect the development of events. In the play, we find that the characters interact with each other in ways that reflect complex social relationships. These interactions reveal psychological and social conflicts. "Actor: Yes... yes... I want those stories. The station has the sound of departure, the immigrant platforms, and the remains of souls, my friend." (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 304)

3-4 Final Interpretant: The overall, stable meaning is the final interpretation reached by the audience after examining the signs. It is the philosophical or ideological message that the text aims to convey in the play. The interpretations and readings may be those read by the implied author and may be governed by the social and cultural contexts of the viewers. They may be as follows:

- "Existential Symbolism": The final interpreter may be that "life is an endless waiting station."
- "Social Criticism": If the station symbolizes an authoritarian social norm that traps individuals in a tragic reality, then the final interpreter is a call to rebel against stagnation.
- "Spiritual Dimension": The "station" may be a testing phase for the individual before moving on to another world (death or salvation), linking the final interpreter to faith or destiny. Dim lighting may suggest an uncertain fate, while mechanical sounds (train whistles) symbolize repeated, aborted hopes.



Another binary opposition is time/timelessness: the stoppage of the clocks in the station creates a conflict between physical time and psychological time. Inside/outside: the closed doors of the station reflect psychological isolation despite the openness of the world. The open, ambiguous ending prompts the audience to reflect on their fate and decisions.

The ultimate interpretation relates to the deeper meanings and messages conveyed by the text, which the audience can derive after the performance. In "The Station Doesn't Leave," it can be understood that the station is not just a place, but rather a symbol of waiting and anticipation, or a symbol of life. Thus, the play reflects the idea that life is full of challenges, and that hope for change and happiness is always present, even in the darkest moments. The final message may be an invitation for the audience to reflect on their own lives and how they can overcome obstacles and move on to new stations.

Through a semiotic analysis of "The Station Doesn't Leave," it becomes clear that Fahad Alharthi has succeeded in presenting a literary work that profoundly reflects human conflicts. The symbols and connotations he uses enhance the recipient's understanding of complex themes such as identity and belonging. The play is not merely a dramatic performance; it is an invitation to reflect and contemplate life's experiences, confront life's challenges, not lose hope, and engage the recipient in filling in the text's gaps and applying it to their cultural and personal context.

The ultimate interpretation may be the dominance of the Theater of the Absurd—as some studies suggest—as it tells the tragedy of modern man who aspires to a better future and triumph over his defeats, but falls into the trap of waiting for a moment that never comes to pass. As a result of this sense of futility and illogicality, his soul is torn between its desire to leave the station in anticipation of a life to live, and its inability to do so... and the losses he suffers if he surrenders to his fantasies and delusions and does not take action to change his reality and confront difficulties. (Al-Sufyani, 2018, pp. 21-22) This is a reading by a realistic critic of Fahd Al-Harthi: The Guard: It's a new day... The trains of the day passed by, and I followed you. You were steadfast and strong. They all crossed without paying attention to this night approaching again, and loneliness returns to the station, and the cold breeze makes your face shrink repeatedly, while you suffer as things pass you by without you paying attention.

Actor: The fatigue of waiting, the bitterness of loneliness, and a long longing await me. I search for her but cannot find her. She meets me suddenly. I shrink, afraid. I grow colder. I sing to distance myself from my image. My hideous images multiply, filling the station walls. I wake up from my astonishment. There is no one here but me, and a guard pale the color of train oil (Al-Harthi, 2020, p. 305).

A focused analysis of Peirce's concepts in the play:

Element	Direct interpreter	dynamic interpreter	The final interpreter
The station	fixed physical location	feeling trapped or afraid of the unknown	A symbol of social reality, human destiny, or a - symbol of life illustrating the contradictions of life between the stationary station and the moving .trains

Suspended characters	People waiting for a train that never comes	Empathize with their suffering or project it onto oneself	Man is a victim of circumstances beyond his control The Seeker of - Happiness
Recurring dialogues	Questions about the reason for stopping	existential confusion or search for meaning	Life is a series of questions with no .final answers

### The Relationship Between Semiotics and Reception:

Exploring semiotics in theater reveals the complex relationship between symbols and signs and their interpretation in theatrical expression. By analyzing and examining the symbols and signs embedded in a play, it becomes clear that semiotics plays an important role in how audiences interpret a production. Direct interaction with these symbols and signs leads to a deeper understanding of their intended meanings, while dynamic interpretation sheds light on how viewers interact with them and derive personal meanings from them.

The relationship between semiotics and reception is undeniable, as it shapes the way audiences perceive symbols through decoding the symbols and signs present in the theater. It also enables viewers to appreciate the complexities of theatrical production on a deeper level.

One of the signs of the complementarity between the two approaches is that semiotics feeds into reception: signs such as "trains" or "lighting" provide visual codes that interact with the audience's mental experience. A viewer who has experienced existential waiting will see the station and the contrasting dualities in the play as symbols of their suffering. Gaps also reinforce semiotics, and the absence of a direct reason for the train's failure to depart transforms the station into an open sign, capable of being filled with connotations of political oppression or social alienation, depending on the recipient's context.

### Conclusion:

The study reached several conclusions, namely:

1- Integration between the two approaches: The research approaches the play through a reception approach and represents an open dialogue with the audience. The recipient becomes a partner in diagnosing the causes of "freezing time," whether social or psychological. Through the semiotic approach, which carries signs and symbols, and through Peirce's three interpretations, these symbols are interpreted, transforming the theatrical space into a mirror reflecting the complexities of reality through visual and auditory signs and predictive shifts. A dynamic interaction between symbols and signs also occurs, creating a multidimensional theatrical experience that encourages interpretation and analysis on the part of the audience. Audience members are immersed in the world of "The Station Never Leaves," becoming active participants in deciphering the symbols and signs that unfold before them. Hence, the integration between the two approaches of reception, particularly the implied reader who reads the symbols, and semiotics with its symbols and connotations.

2- Through the reception and semiotic approaches, we note that Fahad Alharthi's play "The Station Never Leaves" carries profound connotations about the human condition in the contemporary era. Through the audience's interaction with the text, the play reveals an internal struggle between hope and despair, life's challenges, the search for self/happiness,

and adaptation to surrounding circumstances. The symbols and signs in the play open a wide field for interpretations that reflect contemporary psychological and social conditions.

3- The implied/typical reader, assumed by the implied writer in reception, sees the train departing the station, but the station remains waiting for him, never departing. It is the place/city, which never disappears or departs, the fixed one. The train is time in motion, the train of life and death. Everyone departs to it, some of whom are born in it and then depart. It is life. This is the idea presented by the implied author, and these are codes that the implied reader can decipher. It's the dialectic of the constant and the dynamic, and the challenge humans face in order to change and alter their reality, confront the negatives of reality, and not sleep in their tattered clothes and abandon them.

It's life and its story of birth and death, and the author's implicit connection to the place that remains, and history/the past that preserves these stories and narrates them to the researcher/actor.

Even history/the past moves from one era to another, chronicling the stories of the same place and the same station. The text is open to multiple readings, and this is a possibility for a reader. The guard may be the same as the actor, synonymous with the past and the future.

4- The recipient's interpretation of the textual gaps comes from the absence of a direct reason for the station's failure to start, leaving Al-Harthi's reason for the stop ambiguous, allowing the audience to fill in the gaps according to their experiences and cultural and social contexts. Similarly, the anonymous characters: character names such as "the guard" or "the actor" transform them into open symbols, which the audience adopts and applies to their own personal experiences or contexts. Hence, multiple readings arise.

5- By analyzing and examining the semiotic symbols and signs embedded in the play, it becomes clear that semiotics plays an important role in how the audience interprets the production. Direct interaction with these symbols and signs facilitates a deeper understanding of their intended meanings, while a dynamic and definitive interpretation sheds light on how the recipient/spectator interacts with them and draws personal meanings from them.

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