

“Words Gone with the Sea”, Exploring Lehmann’s  
Post-Dramatic Theatre in Jon Fosse’s *I Am the Wind* (2011)

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د/ غادة السيد زغلول على  
قسم اللغة الانجليزية - كلية الألسن - جامعة المنيا

There is always some sort of correlation between theatre and drama where the text is of paramount importance. However, lately, such relation has become less strong due to many factors among which is that; the notion of drama symbolized by text has changed considerably. Many theories have stressed the importance of elements other than text in the dramatic productions performed nowadays. In this context, the concept of post-dramatic theory by the German theorist Hans Thies Lehmann is making its way rapidly among critics’ societies. Hence, the major purpose of the present paper is to apply Lehmann’s theory on Jon Fosse’s play *I Am the Wind*.

Jon Fosse, the 2023 Nobel-Prize winner, is accredited for his talented diverse writings including, drama, fiction, and poetry. His plays or productions have been performed throughout Europe, receiving either acclaim or repudiation. He has presented masterpieces in drama that are mostly

successful, stimulating critics either positively or negatively. However, Fosse's winning a notable prize recently-Nobel Prize- can be considered a turning point in his canon. His particular flair is in dramatizing the "unsaid" or the "unsayable" according to Nobel Prize News.

*I Am the Wind* (2011) is one of Fosse's post-dramatic masterpieces. Being produced in different European countries, it has been translated into English and other various languages. Herein, I endeavour to prove that *I Am the Wind* is affiliated to post-dramatic theatre, whose origin can be traced in the post-dramatic theory laid down by the German philosopher Hans-Thies Lehmann. Using the analytical approach, the paper attempts to answer the following questions: What is meant by post-dramatic theatre? What are the characteristics of post-dramatic theatre? How can one determine that a certain play belong to post-dramatic theatre? Can the post-dramatic theory be applied to Fosse's play *I Am the Wind*? What are the distinguishing characteristics of this play?

### **LEHMANN'S POST-DRAMATIC THEATRE**

Lehmann's book notable book *Post-dramatic Theatre* attempts to advance a graceful logic of the new theatre. He means by the new theatre the experimental or the avant-garde theatre, which finds its own way in particular

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fragments different from the stereotype moulds of the known theatre. The term “post” does not mean according to Lehmann, discarding previous old theories including structuralism and semiology. Lehmann rather uses the term “post” in a non-contradictory way in reference to the state of coexisting. In other word, Lehmann asserts that post-dramatic theatre existed since the very outset and, he continues to affirm that it defines a definite moment of theatre whether after or beyond performance. Both the two notions do not dismiss each other but rather coincide. As for the term “dramatic”, Lehmann uses it negatively, in the sense that, no other category—the epic, the lyrical, the philosophical, etc- could replace it, even in a variable way. The term “theatre” when used in non-European cultural events is better replaced by “cultural performance” accordingly.

Lehmann’s study wraps performances of all kind and “media society” which extends to “video, film, electronic sound effects, microphones and computer programs” used to “...fragment the dramatic text” and even the “bodies of characters”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 10). As such, they include not only various types of culture including the popular as well as the media, but also the visual arts do exist. Lehmann

is for the association of the “de-dramatized forms of the theatre” with the radical performances to impart a psychological interpretation of the “fright” that “the experience of presence cannot suffice”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 143). In this context, the motif of the so called “shock” is “necessary for cognition” as Brecht assumes.

Lehmann argues that the main opponent to post-dramatic theatre is the representation of the dramatic theatre either of a text, or of an imagined action, or of the conflict between two characters. As such; the resentment of representation extends to a place and time “that are distinct from those of the stage event in its singularity” (Pavis & Brown, 2016, p. 189). That is to say, instead of comprehending what is the text about, post-dramatic theatre, invests language with its mechanism in order to approach text as an auditory object mainly without paying a lot of attention to the value of the words. In other words; such theatre frees itself from the dramatic text for the interest of the absence of a “hierarchy between the stage systems and the materials used, and between stage and text”(Pavis & Brown, 2016, pp. 189–190). The text works against the stage or “even (can) be written in opposition to it”. Fosse is among the playwrights who are against the stage or despite it. The

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stage is profoundly present not to clarify the text, rather it creates new scopes for the text.

The idea of deconstruction or fragmentation of a dramatic element is present in Lehmann. He seldom handles the *mise-en-scene* because of its close relation to the dramatic text. As an alternative, it can be considered an illustration of the written performance. Such idea of the *mise-en-scene*’s deconstruction has been developed and then broken before us to create fragments. The audience is to collect such fragments in order to comprehend the meaning beyond the represented fragment (Pavis & Brown, 2016, p. 192).

Herein, actors and performers work towards our understanding of the dramatic and post-dramatic differences. Performers do not represent or imitate characters; rather they are at the centre of choral arrangement, a point of intersection of forces. They escape the simulated emotions, in order to represent their own. As such, they resemble the sportsmen, musical performers, choral singers, or technicians who do not imitate humans or a theatrical illusion but work collectively for the sake of collective expression.

Within that context, Lehmann depends on using improvisation and extensive manners borrowed from French

philosophers such as Derrida, Lyotard, and Baudrillard. Lehmann's post-dramatic theatre usually deploys binary concepts: "event/situation, parataxis/hierarchy, space/surface, representation/presence...". Such opposing notions are used by Lehmann to unite observations and consequently to confirm the great split between the dramatic and the post-dramatic. Relative to this dualism, is the overcoming of the realistic style as that used in Fosse's *Am the Wind* by the director Chereau who "alternated between psychological moments and theatricalized, stylized, and intensified moments" (Pavis & Brown, 2016, p. 193).

Indeed, the elements of the post-dramatic theatre such as: incidents of the play, dramaturgy, plotting and philosophy are appropriate even if they are observed just for their absence or renovation. The formal aspects tackled by Lehmann, such as, text, space, time body and media are all based on fragments. His definition of postmodern theatre overlaps major elements such as self-reflexivity, disruption of the presence, and all kinds of fragmentations as well as the shared space between the performer and the audience. As such, the post-dramatic play appears as "a multifaceted object, in which each surface allows a different vantage point"(Wilcox, 2020, p. 268). Lehmann's concept of the "real" in the "post-dramatic" is deconstructed. He argues that

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“An experience of unmediated presence, from which the fictive has been eliminated – never really comes to pass”(Wilcox, 2020, p. 268). Such blurring which, takes place when one deals with reality or fiction, is an essential part in the post-dramatic performance.

According to Lehmann, “In post-dramatic theatre, breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body’s visceral presence take precedence over the logos” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 145). That type of theatre is not for the illumination of the characters and the narrative lines of a text, rather, it illustrates a particular type of language that fits the reality on stage. Such reality comes out of the text’s idiosyncrasies. “Theatre is turned into chora-graphy: the deconstruction of a discourse oriented towards meaning and the invention of a space that eludes the laws of telos and unity”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 146).Lehmann continues to refer to “the principle of exposition” when applied to “body, gesture, and voice”. That is, instead of presenting facts linguistically, elements such as: tones, words, sentences and sounds are hardly controlled by a meaning, rather they are subjected to the scene or to the visual. The notion of a “text-oriented dramaturgy” in this regard does not exist. The presentation of certain element is conceived as having a meaning though it is unrecognizable.

In sum, as stated before “the exposition of language seems paradoxical”(Lehmann, 2006, pp. 146–147).

Collage and montage together with the principle of “polyglossia” are inherent in post-dramatic theatre as stated by Lehmann. The multi-lingual theatre texts breach the notion of a perfect unity of national languages. When many languages are used within the frame of one performance, they are subjected to the conditions of the production. This encourages the co-productions state. The gaps in languages are of a paramount importance in the production. Herein, the voice plays an important role specially when being in contrast to the content displayed(Lehmann, 2006, pp. 147–148).

Lehmann refers to the term “textscape” since it combines the notion of post-dramatic theatre language with that of the visual and with reference to the landscape play. “Text, voice and noise merge in the idea of a *soundscape*-but of course in a different sense than in classical stage realism”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 148). Lehmann calls it “auditive stage” “The space of the stage and the more comprehensive sound space together create a third space that comprises the scene and the theatron”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 148). Consequently, post-dramatic theatre does not have a sole objective of listening to the voice of one subject rather, it



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leads directly to the realization of fragmented voices, which are released electronically. Herein, the barriers between language as live expression and language as “prefabricated” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 148) material are blurred or ambiguous. The voices rhythm, is presented through repetition and electronic modification. It can be called *misplaced voices*. The role of the audience or the theatre goer is to connect such voices with the image, and reorganize the fragmented incomplete parts just to lose them every now and then.

As for theatre space, Lehmann tackles the reduction of the distance between the performers and the spectators, when a certain sort of tense *centripetal* dynamic space is created. As such, the experience of the theatre has a moment of sharing at which all energies participate rather than transmit a sign. The vastness of space is unpreferable due to its centrifugal effect. The ambiguous or blurring borderline between the real and the fictive leads to *metonymic* symbolic space according to him. Another form of post-dramatic space is created when “bodies, gesture, voices, and movements” are pulled from their “spatio-temporal continuum”, then newly arranged either connected or isolated, to be finally put together like “a tableau-like montage”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 151). Here the actors on stage become rather spectators

observing what other performers are doing. Lehmann refers to the *heterogeneous space* that has a new meaning when marked, isolated, and newly defined or delineated but not according to traditional rules of drama.

As far as the notion of time is concerned, Lehmann emphasizes the erosion of the differences between the well-known types of time: the ‘historical’ time and the ‘real’ time. He emphasizes the time of the performance in which an “amalgamation develops that merges the heterogeneous levels of time into *one and only one* time of theatre experience”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 153). “The *prolongation of time* is a prominent trait of post-dramatic theatre”(Lehmann, 2006, p. 156). The repetition is another characteristic of the aesthetic of time in post-dramatic theatre. The simultaneity of time is of paramount importance as well. Hence, there is some sort of simultaneity between various speech acts and video which creates the involvement of the various time rhythms with one another. The concept of time fluctuates through the doubt as whether the theatrical image, sound or video is being alive or reproduced after time-delay.

As for the body, it is no longer the “signifier” according to Lehmann. It has a new vigour in modern theatre generally and post-dramatic theatre in particular by “overcoming the semantic body” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 162).

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While “the dramatic process occurred between the bodies; the post-dramatic process occurs with/on/to the body”. While “the dramatic body was the carrier of the agon, the post-dramatic body offers the image of its *agony* (Lehmann, 2006, p. 163). *This prevents all representation, illustration and interpretation with the help of the body as a mere medium.* The body is not solely the medium of representation in the post-dramatic performance. “The post-dramatic body is a body of gesture” “Dance, for example, is gesture, according to Giorgio Agamben, “because it consists entirely in supporting and exhibiting the media character of physical movement’ (Lehmann, 2006, p. 164). For instance, “The act of striding along is decomposed becoming the lifting of a foot, advancing of a leg, sliding shift of weight” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 164).

Lehmann defines gesture “as that which remains unsublated in any purposive action: an excess of potentiality, the phenomenality of visibility that is blinding” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 164). It can be said that the gesture becomes vital in the act arousing vitality in it rather than exhausting in it (Lehmann, 2006, p. 164). Lehmann traces the development of the element of body through various works just to come to the conclusion that body can overlap dancing and movement

and symbolize the meaning through gestures and physical action.

As far as the idea of media is concerned, according to Lehmann different modes of media do occur in the theatre realm. Some directors use media “on a case-by-case basis” “whereas other theatre forms are primary characterized not by the employment of media technology but by an inspiration through media aesthetic that is recognizable in the aesthetic of the staging”.(Lehmann, 2006, p. 168). “What is post-dramatic about these attempts is that the quoted motifs, gags or names are not placed inside the frame of a coherent narrative dramaturgy but rather serve as musical phrases, in a rhythm, as elements of a scenic image collage” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 168). Lehmann draws an examples of the performers’ self-presentations in which the difficulty is to determine “the real biographical elements” in the performance. He refers to the virtual realm compared to the post-dramatic. Herin, theatre is a domain of virtuality. The audience recognizes the body on stage as an “image” not as a virtual one but in another sense of the word. The image is a kind of representation of a certain sort of reality to which something visible refers.

### **FOSSE’S ELLIPTICAL STYLE**

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Usually compared to Ibsen, Jon Fosse is a great contemporary playwright. His plays have been translated excessively and have been performed worldwide. “He is distinguished for his “elliptical style” and for “the idiosyncratic poetry of his dialogue” (Sidiropoulou, 2018, p. 186). He writes human and universal themes as the plays are “remarkably allegorical; they are tales of an individual’s quest of fulfilment and self-definition, containing in their imagery universal meaning about the human existence”. (Sidiropoulou, 2018, p. 186). His plays are post-dramatic in the sense that they include post-dramatic features such as: the transition of the European culture modernism into “lingering, idleness, speech fragmentation, linguistic minimalism”, (Ioan, 2010, p. 46) in variable forms and proportions to create a “current dramatic” realm. Fosse shares Lehmann’s concept of post-dramatic theatre that extends far beyond text to include all other production elements that have effects on the audience. As such, *I Am the Wind* (2011) is a notable play by Fosse illustrating the theory of Lehmann’s post-dramatic theatre while handling the theme of “human relationships” through different types of monologues (Song, 2017, p. 3).

Perhaps the critics' assessment of Fosse's plays when admitting that, Fosse deserts all the conventional rules of drama, is obviously substantial in the figures of the play. They have no proper names, and without detectable background or message. Here I am going to tackle Patrice Chereau's production, which represents glimpses of life as well as decay or death, typically like its actors. Patrice Chereau, the French director leads the actors masterfully in a production which has its own peculiarity. It is a collaborative art work and as such it complies with Lehmann's theory.

Presented at London's Young Vic, in 2011, *I Am the Wind* actually corresponds to Lehmann's post-dramatic theory. The play has been described as related to choreography since it studies human psyche. *I Am the Wind* is a superb performance, since it is described as an intellectual play with skilful wordplay, amazing, minimal and sparse structure. The character of The One represented by Tom Brooke with his pale eyes, adds attractive peculiarity to the atmosphere. He speaks in rhymes using constant contradictions-typical of Lehmann. Meanwhile, The Other, represented by Jack Laskey, represents everyman roughly. He uses a direct language in a soothing way. Their dialogue seems to be out of time (Taylor, 2011). Fosse's dialogue is agonizing in *I Am the Wind*. That is Fosse's way of

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dramatizing the unutterable, or the unsayable. Part of Fosse’s technicality is to put unlikely dictions together, every now and then, just to explore new meaning in the world.

Jon Fosse’s themes in the play overlap absurdity, futility, and the human condition. Common conclusions and obstacles in communicating through conversation are touched upon by Fosse. However, generally, it is hard to discern a prominent theme or message in the play in question. This gives it its peculiarity and distinguished flavour. The situation in which the two figures of the play are presented, is simultaneously odd and ambiguous though can be found in everyday life. It is a fragment of reality. They are two men on a sailing vessel. Perhaps, they are “one man divided” (Taylor, 2011). Overwhelmed by water, they have gone far into the ocean. Accordingly, the director must have collaborated with a water consultant to help create the wet cast on the stage as part of the atmosphere of the play.

The character of the One represented by Tom Brooke is described as being “hollowed out like a super-sensitive Halloween turnip”(Taylor, 2011). Jack Laskey, The Other, is shown to be “acutely moving”. He seems to know beforehand, “the impulses of his ...alter ego(Taylor, 2011)”. He seems furthermore to be toiled from the “agonising

responsibility of talking him out of what is a deadly foregone conclusion”(Taylor, 2011). The One’s existential pursuit is echoed by the sea journey. The Other questions him about it, never quite able to grasp what is occupying his friend’s mind. Their communication is null, or perhaps paradoxically their excessive communication takes place. The paradox that takes place within such characters, is that they try hard to communicate with each other, however, their existence in a vast space does isolate them. As such, the plight is left to the reader’s as well as the theatre goer’s understanding.

The audience knows hardly about their identities, their relationship, the time, and the order of incidents in the play. However, their dialogue is splendid. The two figures of the play generate “visual poetry” more powerful than that of the text or script itself. Though Fosse’s characters are flawed, they try hard to overcome life’s difficulties or rather to overcome the sea’s dangers and hardships. “They are in crisis, struggling with what it means to be alive, but unable to articulate their innermost feelings”(Sunde, 2007, p. 58). The conflict between the figures is absent. Before a word is spoken about the action, all likelihoods of what could happen next do exist. The justification of the lack of action in *I Am the Wind* or for the play’s being static as mentioned beforehand is relative to the idea of space.



## **SPACE**

Lehmann’s concept of space is present strongly in the play and is closely related to death. Fosse is one of the notable European playwrights who “explore form by crafting texts full of space for theatrical collaboration”(Sunde, 2007, p. 58). Space either the one that isolates characters from each other or the vast space they are involved in “winds its way through every layer of Fosse’s work”(Sunde, 2007, p. 58). Here, Fosse employs the empty spaces between the characters on the stage in reference to the space in life too. Fosse uses different types of space “space between words, space between people, and space that surrounds the audience as we watch the play”(Sunde, 2007, p. 59). While the audience is engaged with space, “Fosse’s spaces allow for deep cathartic moments”(Sunde, 2007, p. 59).

Space is of paramount importance in the production handled here in the sense that: “The theatre spaces...had most of their audience looking downward onto the pool of water, which at the beginning of the play seemed to be drying up, caking mud onto its banks looking more like the aftermath of a flooded cellar than the treacherous imaginary sea that it would become”(Muller, 2012, p. 106).

Fosse is a master of space especially when being used between words. The deep energy between the characters can be traced “in the silence, in the pauses, in the stillness, in-between words and even syllables”(Sunde, 2007, p. 59).

THE ONE

I didn't want to

I just did it

THE OTHER

You just did it

THE ONE

I just did it

Short pause

(Fosse & Stephens, 2011)

Fosse here presents mainly theatre “in its dialogue space quality” (Ioan, 2010, p. 49). He raises a fundamental question about the space between people. The technique used can be seen in the manipulation of space by means of “a set design”. The spaces are “markers of the unsaid” as (Delgado et al., 2020, p. 101).

### **THE UNSAYABLE**

Though Fosse is usually compared to the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, *I Am the Wind* rarely has philosophical utterances. Rather, the play depends on the

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unspoken. That is to say; “those unarticulated feelings, desires and emotions that lie beneath the surface...create tension and drama”(Hoogland, 2023, p. 2). Fosse once noted that: “What is not said, which is what I’m saying something about”(“Jon Fosse: All the World Loves His Plays. Why Don’t We?”, 2011). Fosse summons the reader’s faculties to think about the unspoken much more than the articulated words. That is typical of Lehmann’s theory of the post dramatic theatre where neither the text of the play is important, nor the action presented on the stage. Herein, the audience is attracted by the language and the pauses or the silence between the characters. Fosse invites the audience to approach the play in question with an ear for the language used without taking into consideration the worthiness of the words themselves. Space is part of the mise-en-scene of the play.

**THE MISE -En-SCENE**

Fosse uses the mise-en-scene skilfully. As “in a potential staging, building on a mise-en-scene around the plays’ enigmatic mood could be a way of integrating the different textures of threat that so obviously pervade them both”(Sidiropoulou, 2018, p. 188).The visual image of “the superb spare set” seen in the vessel’s “lifts and tilts” while

“water gushes and swarms underneath it” is done meticulously (Taylor, 2011). The visual image of water on the stage where all the actors are drenched should have required water experts or consultants to help create the real atmosphere in the play. It is a powerful image which allows for the vitality in the play. Actually, a choreographer must have been behind the actors’ movements or steps on the stage. That is typical of Chereau’s direction for the performance in France and is identical with Lehmann’s definition of the gestures of the actors demonstrated in his post-dramatic theory.

The play presents Fosse’s philosophy within Lehmann’s theory. Perhaps “life exists beyond the hustle-and-bustle of...New York Life style”(Sunde, 2007, p. 57). Life does exist at moments of interaction between the two characters in the play or with nature symbolized by the sea. The landscape is part of the play’s structure. Nowadays, it is viewed in a different way as it assumes variable roles in the theatre realm. For instance, it does not simply support human action, rather it plays different roles such as: mentor, obstacle maker or even ironist. Fosse’s idea is revealed when the audience or the actor, meditates on the nature of life on stage. Fosse is not a preacher but rather a philosopher-

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though without philosophical utterances- contemplating the paradoxes of life.

*I Am the Wind* is typical of the ambiguity of Lehmann’s post-dramatic theory, that is to say; the play is unintelligible. It hardly communicates a meaning except through pauses’ intervals. As such, the meaning of those intervals is difficult to grasp, though the poetic use of language is salient in Fosse’s *I Am the Wind*. Despite its diversity and hybridity, the play has a basic characteristic that the dramatic text is no longer dominant though it is subordinate to other production’s elements and as such Lehmann is present with the post dramatic theatre.

**CHARACTERS’ COMMUNICATION**

The characters in Fosse as well as the action “rise to the level of archetypes, becoming imbued with timeless import”(Sidiropoulou, 2018, p. 187)significance for me. Herein, the characters though universally interpreted and appreciated are somewhat described as “national stereotypes”(Ioan, 2010, p. 45). They are weary, disabled spirits characterized by the typical inactivity associated with being soulless.

The general labelling of the characters as the “One” and the “Other” attracts the audience’s attention. The Other

wants wholeheartedly to help the One, however, his efforts have gone futilely. The two central characters contemplate their emotional solitude and deplore it. One cannot decide whether they are two characters or perhaps “it was just one man conversing with his own Other” (Muller, 2012, p. 105) on the idea of suicide.

Though according to Sunde, communication has become easier due to technology progress, yet Fosse asks us to reevaluate our communication with the here and now presenters or individuals. Relationships are quite complicated in the play as Fosse goes far beyond the human emotions to explore the inner tug of war that defines our existence.

His characters are engaged in reflective existential discourse which mirrors the human condition and which in turn has a “psychotherapeutic” effect. Fosse’s handling of the “depressive ego” is “poignant and truthful” (Muller, 2012, p. 106). However, they lead the readers and spectators to react positively against and beyond life’s hardships. The characters are scared of disclosing their inner feelings and as such they regress in their speech. Typically, this is Fosse’s way of delineating characters who live in a poetic abstract world surrounded by blunt internal as well as external reality where the sea is the chief motif presenting a silent force.

### **POETIC LANGUAGE:**

Fosse’s aesthetics lies chiefly in the poetic language that form significantly outstanding elements in the representation. Fosse’s *I Am the Wind* is distinguished for its rhythm and pauses in dialogues as well as in monologues. Musicality of the language, is represented through rhythm repetition and pauses as well as word variations. This adds to the sparseness or minimalism of the dramatic style, since the musicality of the language is always noted whereas the meaning becomes difficult to grasp or conceive. Fosse’s plays are described as “minimalistic”(Singh, 2023, p. 20) and the description of external environment is spare and superb as well. This has led to the rejection or the criticism of the play initially. However, on a deeper level, the audience and the critic really appreciate the quality of the dialogue and become immersed in the overall atmosphere of the play in question. The language is deconstructed like a fragment. The communication between characters is effective through language as well as through intervals, spaces or pauses. “He uses, common, simple everyday words...to craft the poetry” of his play(Sunde, 2007, p. 60).The audience gradually comprehends this particular style. According to Lehmann, the text or language does not

occupy its potential position in traditional drama and becomes rather one element of the production's multiple elements in the post-dramatic theatre.

For instance, the following dialogue reveals the use of pauses and silence as well as the use of fragmented sentences and repetitions to convey the case of lost identity in the shortness of life. Fosse makes use of the poetic language metaphorically.

The ONE

I am the wind

listening to the silence

in the silence

the silence

you were there

but you are gone

and yet

you are here

I am the wind

I am the wind

I am the wind

The OTHER:

The sea is so vast

Endless

Can you hear it?



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Can you see it?  
It calls to us  
In whispers and echoes  
We are but specks  
Drifting on its surface  
I am the wind  
I am the wind (Fosse & Stephens, 2011)

The line “I Am the Wind” is a metaphor revealing the assimilation of the character into nature just to become part of it. Alliteration is present in “sea”, “so”, “Whispers”, “We” and “specks” “surface”. The “sea” is a symbol of wideness of life and simultaneously is part of nature. The lyrical quality of the dialogue is illustrated through the words or the language used and the techniques presented before the reader and the audience as well. Fosse’s use of words is peculiar. He uses them “sparingly, with no punctuation except for line breaks”(Sunde, 2007, p. 60).

**AMBEGUITIES AND DIVERSE THEMES**

On the surface the quoted lines are ambiguous. However, gradually, significant meanings relative to human interaction, identity, life and death will be grasped, if the audience and the reader examine the quote thoroughly.

Fosse's themes refer to the irrationality, the futility as well as the chaos and struggle in attempting to form genuine human communication. It "circle(s) around the perplexities of meaning" (Dickson, 2014). The play is "a meditation on depression, suicide, identity and loss that probes the interior reaches of our depressive society" (Muller, 2012, p. 105). Diverse themes such as: individual isolation and the quest for meaning in a cruel universe are present. Thus "our own version"(Sunde, 2007, p. 59)of the play emerges gradually and answers many apparent unanswerable questions. Accordingly, the meaning becomes obvious and diverse.

### **TECHNICAITIES**

Foss excels in using the technique of swaying between the past and the present. That is to say; "shifting seamlessly from aftermath to action and back again" Such technique serves to deconstruct the emotional state of the One just "before presenting the flashback voyage of a relationship (or identity) adrift" (Muller, 2012, p. 105).

I didn't want to

I just did it

You just did it

I just did it

(Fosse & Stephens, 2011)

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The One does not struggle with the Other, he is in a state of failure. That is to say; the One is “failing to articulate his distress, failing to express, failing to imagine”(Muller, 2012, p. 106). The actors Brooke and Laskey succeed in capturing the passivity associated with such failure perfectly. Chereau’s direction of the production as shown in acting and scenography highlights both contradicting states of intimacy as well as uneasiness towards suicide

The scenography or the setting of the play stresses the equilibrium between the audience’s desire or the empathy with the characters and the theatrical awareness or the distance from such an act. The peculiarity of the setting appears in the “large expanse of murky brownish water...backed by an unobtrusive though framed, bluish-gray cyclorama”(Muller, 2012, p. 106). Fosse’s stage directions together with the design of the play where “the boat and the actions that surround it should be evoked or suggested rather than represented mimetically” are outstanding(Muller, 2012, p. 106). The actors struggle with natural forces invoked by Fosse’s text.

The audience is confronted with a magnificent tableau even before a word is uttered. Two men are presented, the One is without shirt, barefooted, pale, and apparently weaker

than the other. They emerge on a deserted shore, during embarkation and in the aftermath of a desperate voyage. The Other is in support of the One warmly and the two sustain “a breathless pietà”, before the cruel hard elements of nature. Such theatrical image is designed to let “the audience...riveted by the striking intimacy of the image and discomfited by its physical exertion”. (Muller, 2012, p. 106)

When the space is flooded with what appears to be a “deluge of even more water” a humble rectangular structure comes out of the centre of the stage just to summon the idea of the boat in the play. Such visual image is used to invoke a rhythm hovering and spinning on the water and moving in “various configurations”. As such, it creates a “raked articulations” of space for the actors. The movements of that “theatrical machine” stresses the “oceanic soundscape” that reveals the influence of the winds on the sea as well as the vessel. Finally, that vessel withdraw briskly beneath the stage, and the water runs to its “original environment” in a striking way (Muller, 2012).

The use of real substance of foam to reveal crucial moments in the play is amazing. At the beginning, the boat or the vessel is moored in the bay, and a moment of quietness occurs just to let a “swirl of white foam” appear slowly from the bottom and dissolves over the water. This

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evokes a sense of tranquil “beautiful aleatoric pattern”(Muller, 2012, p. 106).

**DUALITY OF STRUCTURE**

As stated, beforehand, in Lehmann’s post-dramatic theatre dual concepts are usually used. *I Am the Wind* by Jon Fosse presents such dualism clearly in handling “youth and age, boldness and apprehension, land and sea, floating and sinking” (Korshak, 2014). As such, the play is liable to several extensive readings and interpretations. For instance, the following lines can be regarded as internal monologue of the One character, or of Fosse, the playwright, himself. They reflect the inability of the characters to express their feelings

The One:

Everything’s so visible

Everything can be seen

The things that people hide with what they say

The things maybe they don’t even know about themselves

I see all of that

(Fosse & Stephens, 2011)

“Their conversation throbs what Fosse calls ‘the basic music of life’”(“Jon Fosse: All the World Loves His Plays. Why Don’t We?” 2011). On the other hand, Lighting and darkness

are employed effectively to create weird reflections of the “rippling water on the walls and ceiling of the entire theatre space” just to let the audience be immersed in “luminous darkness”(Muller, 2012, p. 106).

### **CONTRAST & PARADOX**

Chereau’s direction of such lyrical production as shown in acting and scenography highlights the contradicting inner conditions of the characters. The production is full of contrasts. For instance, “The One, in his striped sailor’s shirt, is youthful, handsome, brawny with athletic ease. The Other, in his soft cardigan is older, bespectacled, bony, awkward”(Korshak, 2014). The One “knows his way around the water”. The Other...when he’s ordered to tie the boat to land”, “it is clear he never tied a sailor’s knot, let alone jumped off or on a boat before”(Korshak, 2014).They speak in rhymes using “constant contradiction” the typical one of Lehmann who asserts that, the voice is a major key in a production especially when it is contradicting the content it displays. The paradox that takes place within such characters’ presentation, is that they try hard to communicate with each other however, their existence in a vast space does isolate them from each other and as such they are alienated.

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According to Lehmann, the language of post-dramatic theatre is paradoxical, and hence it is used by Fosse to describe the paradoxes of life. The paradox of the riddle appears in the central action of the play, culminated in the One’s suicide. When asked why he did it the One replies:

I am too heavy  
And the sea too light  
(Fosse & Stephens, 2011)

## **CONCLUSION**

Fosse rejects all traditional rules of drama and complies with Lehmann’s theory of post-dramatic theatre. Though the play is generally praised for its charming effect, critics are perplexed by or lost through the play’s performance. There is an element of ambiguity or mysteriousness in the play’s themes and in its overall structure. The play’s themes or messages are hard to discern. In *I Am the Wind*, Fosse’s characters are without names or background. The plot has hardly developed since the beginning till the very end of the play. It is simply static as described before. “You don’t read my books for the plots” as Fosse once declared (Khatib & Jordan, 2023). The action is roughly static as well, and the characters’ conflict disappears. As such, the elements of the play are all replaced

by the characters' poetic dialogues or internal monologues, which all summon the readers' meditation and reflection. The characters begin incomplete fragmented sentences and their dialogue rises and settles like the tide of a sea wave. The use of text fragments is part of the post-dramatic theory by Lahmann and is used effectively throughout Fosse's *I Am the Wind*. The dialogue plays a major role in the psychological interpretation of the figures in particular, and in the play generally. It is lyrical, psychotherapeutic, internally revealing and connotative. Furthermore, Fosse's play is rich with pauses and silences. Such intervals contribute to the rhythm and cadence of the play.

Fosse's main endeavour is to reveal human suffering. Life and death are not absolute or definite in Fosse's world. He impresses the audience through the overall effect of poetic words by dynamic characters. The characters are "constantly reaching out for something transcendent but just as constantly confronting realities of aging, death, poverty and deprivation that cannot be and are not wished away" (Killeen, 2024).

According to Lehmann, the representation of a text, or of an action, or of a conflict between two characters, are all against the aesthetic of post-dramatic theatre. This particular theatre invests language considerably not for the sake of the



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uttered words but for summoning audience’s attention to interpret or approach the text in a different way. The repetition of words, alliteration and rhythm reinforce the musicality of the play. The musicality-like the fragmentation- of the text in Fosse’s *I Am the Wind* opens new possibilities of interpretations. To create such effect, Fosse depends on Lehmann’s idea of the deconstruction of the mise en scene to create incomplete sentences.

Fosse’s *I Am the Wind* uses Lehmann’s concept of a collaborative work of art in which the performers do not imitate the characters’ feelings but rather are present at the centre of choral entity to present a collective expression to the hardly grasped message or meaning of the play.

To achieve his goal, Fosse makes use of Lehmann’s structural duality to stress the split between the dramatic and the post-dramatic. Such dualism of structure and ideas pave the way for further readings of the play. Chereau’s production of *I Am the Winds* tresses that duality by presenting on the one hand, the internal psychological case of the characters, and on the other hand, the theatricality and sophisticated mode of representation in the play. Somehow, the figures of the play can be regarded as two parts of the same person; “the suicidal life-denier and the sociable

survivor”, the “nautical novice and pragmatic protector” (Billington, 2011, p. 2). It is said that the play is “a marine *Waiting for Godot* with two inter-dependent figures confronting the pointlessness of existence” (Billington, 2011). Whatever interpretation is left to the audience, the situation is pathetic and the audience sympathize if not empathize with the figures of the play. The lyrical voice in the play is so powerfully presented. Here, in Simon Stephens’ version, *I Am the Wind* appears as a meditation on life, death, identity, and communication in poetic language. Fosse lets the audience determine which interpretation is appealing.

Within that context, the sea motif is a major technical element and is used skilfully by the playwright to refer to the characters’ plight in the vast universe ahead. Not only is the text somehow incomplete and fragmented but also space, time, body and media share the same quality. Fosse dexterously makes use of elements other than the text. The position of body in the play is more important than the signs. Thus, the visual and the physical are exploited to reveal a particular type of reality that comes out of the text’s peculiarities. That is typical of Lehmann’s post-dramatic theatre.

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Lehmann’s ideas of assortment or collage and montage into a large tableau are present in Fosse’s current play. The play displays a good picture or image of displaced characters fighting nature severely. In the presence of spaces or gaps in the characters’ conversations, the fragmented sentences of the characters are collected to impart their psychological and desperate attempts to overcome nature. At a particular moment, the One character decides to dissolve in nature by committing suicide. The Other’s attempts to save him are pathetic, add to the beauty of the image before the audience, and correspond to the post-dramatic as well. Such theatrical image is presented tactfully. The half-naked trembling man is wrapped by warm garments provided by his fellow supporting man. The restless Brooke “with his curved, playing-card profile”(Billington, 2011) is contradicting himself through questions and is on the verge of mania. Laskey is static, cautious and reassuringly reliable.

Definitely, there is a talented choreographer behind the character’s movements and gestures that are suggestive of the forthcoming suicide—the central poetic image of the play. Though the design of Chereau’s production is stark, it is effective. The characters’ gestures and motions are quite designed as they “play off each other superbly and cope

heroically with the piece's physical demands" (Billington, 2011). For instance, Richard Peduzzi, the designer of Chereau's production, "has come up with a water-filled set dominated by a raft that rises, falls, tilts and rocks"(Billington, 2011) to simulate the vessel's as well as the actors' activities' in their attempts to gain balance on board. Such design is attractively appealing.

As part of the visual bravura, the image of water, foam, with the interchangeable light and darkness reinforce the effect of the visual on the audience. It enhances the perfectness of the production in which the landscape is integrated in the structure of the design. Despite the multi-faceted nature of the post-dramatic theatre, here it has a common characteristic, that is the subordination of the text to other theatrical elements whether visual, auditory, or relative to activities of the actors. Lehmann calls for the combination of the "de-dramatized forms of the theatre" with the performance to convey a psychological reading of the character and as such Fosse succeeds in applying Lehmann's theory to the play.

Verily, the play's open-endedness, and the lack of specificity-especially that the time of the play sways between past and present- reflect its universal appeal. It is described as a tale of the fortitude of humanity against the undefeatable

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odds. Most critics are for the idea that Fosse’s distinctive repetitive and minimalistic style is part of a renewal wave within the theatre. Perhaps the question that remains for future studies is whether the post-dramatic theatre will hinder the progress of dramaturgy since it has its own new standards together with its inherent evolution or that is a farfetched probability? And finally: What is the expected forthcoming drama trend that the post-dramatic plays may develop into?

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