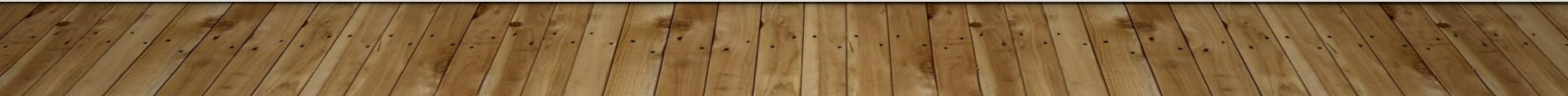


JON FOSSE AND THE AFTERLIFE OF MODERNISM

ARKA CHATTOPADHYAY

HSS, IIT GANDHINGAR





Jon Fosse (1959-)

Image Source: Getty Images



Someone Is Going to Come (1999)

***Image Source: One Little Goat
Theatre Company Website***

Characters

THE MAN

THE WOMAN

Lights up slowly

THE MAN

stands and looks at something in the far distance

Do you see

short pause

but look

look over there

pause

don't you see anything

pause

is there nothing to see

there

over there

don't you see

answer me

THE WOMAN

Yes

THE MAN

There

over there

THE WOMAN

No I don't really see anything

quite short pause

not anything unusual

quite short pause

I see

quite short pause

I only see what's always been there

quite short pause

I see

quite short pause

Over There (2011)

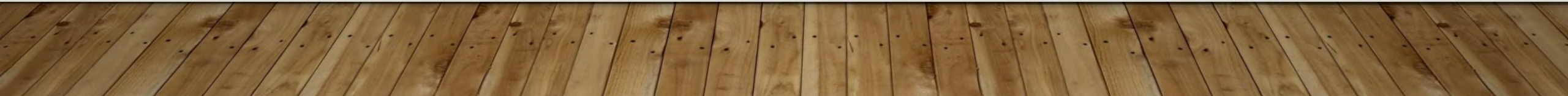
Image Source: EPUB Screenshot

Jon Fosse

In the words of the Nobel committee, he received the prize “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable.”

A Silent Language [NOBEL LECTURE]

“When I was at junior high school, it happened without warning. The teacher asked me to read aloud. And out of nowhere, I was overcome by a sudden fear that overpowered me. It was like I disappeared into the fear and it was all I was. I stood up and ran out of the class room. I noticed the big eyes of the students as well as the teacher following me out of the class room. Afterwards I tried to explain my strange behaviour by saying I had to go to the toilet. I could see on the faces of those listening that they didn’t believe me. And they probably thought I’d gone mad, yes, was on my way to becoming crazy. This fear of reading aloud followed me. As time went by, I found the courage to ask the teachers to be excused from reading out loud, as I was so afraid of it, some believed me and stopped asking me, some thought that in one way or another, I was pulling their leg.”



“Mikhail Bakhtin is right in arguing that the mode of expression, the very act of telling, has two voices in it.

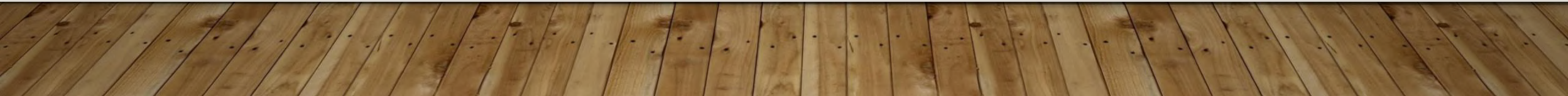
To simplify: the voice of the person who speaks, who writes, and the voice of the person who it is spoken about. These often slide into each other in such a way that it is impossible to tell whose voice it is.

It simply becomes a double written voice – and that is of course also part of the written universe, and the logic within it.”

“I have never written to express myself, as they say, but rather to get away from myself.”

“The most important thing in life cannot be said, only written, to twist a famous saying by Jacques Derrida.”

“Something else, perhaps a bit strange, is when I write, at a certain point I always get a feeling that the text has already been written, is out there somewhere, not inside me, and that I just need to write it down before the text disappears.”



THE OTHER NAME:
SEPTOLOGY
I-II

JON FOSSE



Fitzcarraldo Editions

I IS ANOTHER
SEPTOLOGY III-V

JON FOSSE



Fitzcarraldo Editions

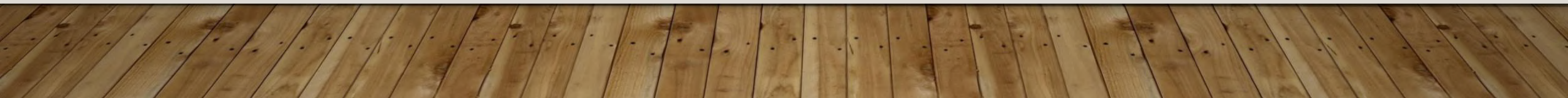
Language, Silence, Voice and Listening

“And then it’s silent. Totally silent. Yes, so quiet that it’s like you can reach out and touch the silence, and I stop. And then I stand there and listen to the silence. And it’s like the silence is speaking to me. But a silence can’t speak, can it. Yes, silence can speak in its way, and the voice you hear when it does, yes, whose voice it is. But it’s just a voice. There’s nothing else you can say about the voice. It’s just there. It’s there, no doubt about it, even though it isn’t saying anything.”

Excerpt From: Jon Fosse: *A Shining*

“the only thing I can hear is, yes, nothing. When I listen to the nothing, I hear if the nothing can be heard, if that’s not just a figure of speech, just something people say, I think, yes, I hear, yes, the nothing, not any thing, not in any case the voice of God, whatever that is. But I’ll leave that for other people to decide, I think.”

Excerpt From: Jon Fosse: *A Shining*



Luminous darkness in *Aliss at the Fire*

“and he looks at the window and he looks at the flames reflected in the window and mixing with the darkness there outside and with the rain that’s now running down over the window, and then he hears the wind even though the darkness is dense and thick around him in a weird way it’s not dark, he thinks, because the fjord is shining black it is as if it’s totally dark and totally light at the same time, she thinks”

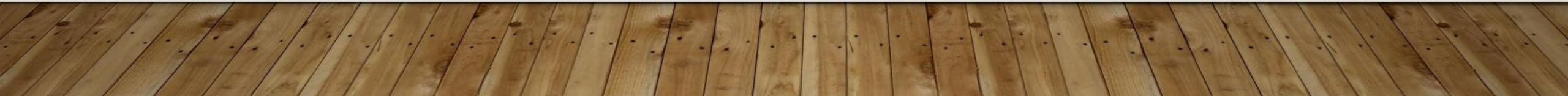
Listening but not hearing anything

“I see the main road. I stop. I have to not be seen now. I stand and listen, I can’t hear anything, no car, no footsteps. I start walking again, up to the main road, I stop, I listen but I don’t hear anything.”

“I walk down the drive normally, with regular footsteps, then I get to the road, stop again and listen, hear nothing. ”

Excerpt From: Jon Fosse. *Scenes from a Childhood*

Silence as Company: “There is only darkness and rain around the pair, we others have disappeared, each into our own mute solitude even though there is a silent companionship surrounding the solitude, yes, a companionship where no one says anything but we are with each other, not that we’re people for each other, but we’re there”

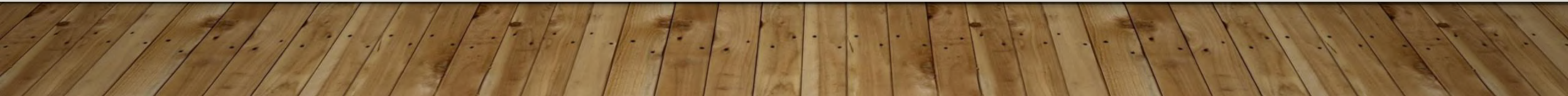


“all I want is to go back into the silence of the others”

Excerpt From: Jon Fosse. ‘How It Started’ in *Scenes from a Childhood*

“he walks into the hall and the old walls there settle into place all around him and say something to him, the same way they always have, he thinks, it’s always like that, whether he notices it and thinks about it or not the walls are there, and it is as if silent voices are speaking from them, as if a big tongue is there in the walls and this tongue is saying something that can never be said with words, he knows it, he thinks, and what it’s saying is something behind the words that are usually said, something in the wall’s tongue, he thinks, and he stands there and looks at the walls, no, what is wrong with him today? why is he being like this? he thinks, and he puts his hand flat on the wall, and it seems like the wall is telling him something, he thinks, something that can’t be said but that is, just is, he thinks, and it’s almost like he is touching a person, he thinks, almost like something is being said the way something is said when you touch someone, he thinks and he strokes the wall and there is almost a caress in his fingers running over the old brown paneling and then he hears footsteps and he pulls his hand back and then he sees the door from the room open and there she is standing in the doorway”

Excerpt From: Jon Fosse. *Aliss at the Fire*



Return to Modernism?

Silence as afterlife of language

Language and the Unsayable

Artwork's visuality as silence

Minimalism

Subject and Other: Doubleness

Repetition as Silence in Prose

Divine Silence

Silence inside and outside language

Memory-Montage

