


## Jon Fosse: The Singer and Signer of Existential Blues

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### Abstract

The year twenty-twenty-three has been a baccate year for Jon Olav Fosse, a Norwegian author, dramaturge, and translator. It is the year in which he has bagged the Nobel prize in literature “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable” ([indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com)). His literary realm provokes the mysticism of mundane life, discerning the essence of life, love, loss, logic, and light with the volition of opening a new horizon for the betterment of the coevals and the coming generations. His literary world offers such a spellbinding phenomenon where there is a prominent colouration of the philosophical inquiries of existentialism—that chiefly deals with human beings' existence and essence—especially of existential blues to which this paper proffers to probe exploring, analyzing, and discussing the available material on e-media. This paper attempts to answer the question of whether Jon Fosse is the singer and signer of Existential Blues, or not. To answer this question, existential themes, thoughts, and theories of the great existentialists will be presented as touchstone as possible, and they will help in exploring, analyzing, and discussing the available contents on Fosse's existential blues on e-media.

**Keywords:** Doppelganger, Existential Blues, Self-Schema, Unheimlich, Minimalism, Fjords, Anathemas, Identitarianism, Wahlverwandschaften.

For the last two years, translation literature has been in vogue. The Booker Prize of the year twenty twenty-two has gone to Indian novelist Geetanjali Shree for her magnum opus novel *The Ret Samadhi* (2018), translated into English by Daisy Rockwell as *The Tomb of Sand* in 2022; the JCB Literary Prize to Perumal Murugan for his transcendental novel *Fire Bird* (2023), translated into English by Janani Kannan in the same year; and the Nobel Prize of year twenty twenty-three to a Norwegian author Jon Olav Fosse chiefly for his Septology, *Aliss at the Fire*, *Melancholy*, and *A Shining* translated by Damion Searls who is called his and others “English gateway” ([news.harvard.edu](http://news.harvard.edu)). The startling fact is that all the major prizes being given in the field of literature have gone for translation literature.

When one peeps into Jon Olav Fosse, one finds that he is the master of about seventy works written in Nynorsk—a literary form of Norwegian language based on certain country dialects—

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Received 05 Dec 2024; Accepted 21 Dec. 2024. Available online: 25 Dec 2023.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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including various genres of writing such as novels, plays, essays, pieces of poetry, and children's or juvenile literature. The translation of his works into more than a dozen languages shows readers, spectators, and scholars craze for them and their outstanding popularity and acceptability all over the map. Out of the translation of his writings into a dozen languages, English is the targeted language of about ten works that Damion Searls did. About his translations of Fosse, the Harvard Gazette writes:

Today Searls, who was a philosophy concentrator during his time at Harvard, has translated 10 of Fosse's works, including his three-volume masterpiece "Septology I-VII". His translation of "A New Name", the third volume, was shortlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize ([news.harvard.edu](https://news.harvard.edu)).

To date, Damion Searls's translation of Jon Fosse comprises a collection of short stories *Scenes from a Childhood* (2018), a novel *Aliss at the Fire* (2010), two sequel novels *Melancholy I-II* (co-translated with Grethe Kvernes pub. 2023), a libretto titled *Morning and Evening* ( ), and his latest novella *A Shining* in 2023. Besides these books, he has translated Fosse's three volumes of novels numbering seven in the sequence called Septology (2022). His literary existence is beyond the circumference of Searls's translations. It is not limited only to English, and not only to Searls's translation. Many other translators have translated his works into English and other languages. His debut novel *Red Black* (1983) and his play *Someone is Going to Come* (1996) based on *Waiting for Godot* (1953) are its best examples. About his literary odyssey and its achievements, an e-magazine writes:

Fosse's oeuvre traverses the realms of both theatre and prose, weaving tales that delve into the complexities of existence, often plumbing the depths of the human soul...The Nobel Prize in Literature is not just an honour for Jon Fosse but also a recognition of the enduring importance of literature itself. In a world filled with noise and distractions, literature remains a refuge where readers can contemplate the human condition, empathize with diverse perspectives, and engage with ideas that transcend the boundaries of time and place. Fosse's work lies not only in the words themselves but in the profound impact they can have on individuals and societies ([www.Inventiva.co.in](http://www.Inventiva.co.in)).

The prominent Norwegian novelist and playwright Jon Olav Fosse has, not in vain, been called "the Beckett of the 21st century" ([www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com)) by the *Le Monde*, a French newspaper, and "one of the most provocative pens in contemporary theatre" ([www.whsmith.co.uk](http://www.whsmith.co.uk)) by the Canadian newspaper named *The Globe and Mail*. Like Beckett's works, his works also have a lot to do with minimalism. His minimalistic works provoke the readers, spectators, and scholars in such a way that they begin to think and do what the writer intends. They unexpectedly begin to argue and react against all the things that directly or indirectly relate to life and beyond. Man's life-especially its existence and essence, and all the things related to it are not beyond its circumference.

Fosse is chiefly renowned for his avant-garde existential novel *Septology* (2023) which is a prose poem in a sequence of seven life-changing novels culminated in three books — The Other Name: *Septology* I-II, *I Is Another: Septology* III-V, and *A New Name: Septology* VI-VII ([fitzcarraldoeditions.com](http://fitzcarraldoeditions.com)). It is about an aging painter Asle and his doppelganger who are contemplating art, existence, and memory. His (Fosse's) outstanding plays namely *Never Shall We Part* (Staged in 1994), *Someone is Going to Come* (1996) and *Nightsongs* (premiered in 1997), successively deal with the theme of love and loss, human relationships, and the internal mayhem that give birth to existential questions plaguing both the major and minor characters of his literary sphere and about which The Hindu writes—

Mr. Fosse's...novels, plays, and collections of poetry feature the sea, fjords, and mountains, mysteries of nature that can both fascinate and strike a sense of awe and fear and the relation between the inner, conflicting mind of humans and the world outside. With the human condition central to his writing, he builds layers, with characters talking or thinking about past and present, their feelings about love, loss, grief, and the eternal quest to find peace, oftentimes unattainable, amid life's vicissitudes ([www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)).

It seems that like Kierkegaard, Fosse has a sound belief in life's paradoxical intrigues. To him, it (life) is only understood towards the rear but must be lived headlong. The theme with which his literary world deals is seven coloured about which, a magazine writes:

Fosse's exploration of themes like identity, loneliness, and the human condition transcends cultural boundaries, making his works universally relevant. His notable novels plays, and poems delve into the complexities of human relationships, shedding light on the raw emotions and inner turmoil that define our existence... His ability to distill the profound and the mundane into evocative prose has earned him a place among the literary giants of our time...His theater works, like his novels, often feature a small cast of characters engaged in profound, existential dialogues. These dialogues serve as a mirror to the human condition, delving into themes of alienation, isolation, and the search for meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe (SCP).

It is to say that Fosse, the master of mystic realism, deals with a variety of genres that include a diversity of themes. His flute-like works spread seven tinted thematic melodies, which very often calm down the tranquil souls of the readers, spectators, and scholars as well. The humanoid existence and essence, ambivalent faith in family and society; never—lasting infantile retention, existential crises, skeptic suicide, a hard—wearing sagacity of duality, optimistically fatalistic hope, the anxiety of the standoff, a fundamental inability for a solution, and negotiation with faith are continually resounding throughout his literary regime. Often, his universality seems to exist because of his works that deal with the existential crux of the mundane life. This is why it is said that "Fosse goes for the existential core of everyday situations" ([www.nobelprize.org](http://www.nobelprize.org)). The focus of his literary torch is ever on human relationships, emotions, and existential themes. This is the very reason why, commenting on

the body of Jon Olav Fosse's oeuvres, the Nobel prize team writes on X: "Jon Fosse presents everyday situations that are instantly recognizable in our own lives. His radical reduction of language and dramatic action expresses the most powerful human emotions of anxiety and powerlessness in the simplest terms" ([widgets.hindustantimes.com](http://widgets.hindustantimes.com)). His works often probe into the depths of the human psyche to explore the themes of solitude, forfeiture, vulnerability, estrangements, and the complexities of human relationships and the human condition. Whatever it is, one thing is clear that the existence and essence of existential themes, thoughts, and theories surpass the rest. In a true sense, life meets literature and philosophy in his works. The concept 'Existential Blues' comprises two words. The first is 'existential', and the next is 'Blues'. The former indicates the philosophical inquiries of existentialism, whereas the latter relates the "feelings of melancholy, sadness, or depression" (Merriam-Webster) that dominate this school of thought called existentialism. Conjointly, they stand for existential crises which encompass inner conflicts characterized by the impression that life lacks meaning or identity and accompanied by all those angst, anxieties, dreads, and despair that man faces in this absurd world, and that affect man's existence and essence even leading to suicide and death. The fact and fiction about God, the conflicts dwelling within, the presence of choices or faith lashing with making or marring power, constantly tottering and struggling life, and the thoughts of fatal suicide which oft cause death also encircle it.

But before analyzing Fosse to ferret out the existential blues, there is a need to have a little glance over Existential philosophy. Its history and mystery show that it (existentialism) is founded on such epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical viewpoints that accentuate the existence (the mere fact of its being) of an individual as a free—unbound, and unrestricted as well—and accountable negotiator who is ever busy in shaping his/her essence (the nature) with persistent progress and development through the agility of willpower which depends only on choices for its existence. The fact that needs clearance is that it is not a school of thought, but a train and trend of philosophical inquiries which has been on this earth chiefly since the days of Lord Buddha. The world has continually felt its ebb and flow. Mostly, the existentialists have no firm faith in God—except Kierkegaard—or destiny, but in choice, which divides man's essence into the categories of good and bad. To them, it's choice that makes and mars the individual's existing essence blah-blah-blah. To attain its goal of making life truly happy and meaningful, it raises questions on the meaning, purpose, and values of human existence and tries to solve all these puzzling questions with the help of its purple-patched concepts, namely existence precedes essence, the absurd, facticity, authenticity, dread and despair, and the Other and the Look. Its realm is dominated by the works and thoughts of such persons who are

primarily writers, not philosophers. Writers like Martin Heidegger overtly reject its label, and Sartre accepts its badge but with a little yes-no. This so-called school of philosophy is mainly dominated by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Camus, Dostoevsky, Jasper, Marcel, Kafka, and Kaufman.

It (existentialism) is often called one of the most misunderstood philosophical inquiries with great acceptance. It is misunderstood because of its ambiguous origin (related to time and place and its representative—who used to accept its badge with hesitation) and the crisscross of the thoughts that its scholars produced with time. Its wide acceptance (whether called its popularity or universality) rests not because of its focus on man's mind and soul, but on his/her will and feelings, which aim to provide the world the formula of living a truly meaningful life in which s/he feels both the bitter and sweet experiences to which s/he chooses to live on and on that goes to death—as others think—the ultimate goal of life. To the existentialists, man is not born only to die, not born to be a burden on this earth. S/he is born with a purpose (but not as the Christian dogmatic say). And that purpose is to prove his/her existence fruitful and his essence meaningful and purposeful.

It is universally acknowledged that man comes to this earth crying, and crying s/he goes from here. Groaning s/he lives, and repenting s/he passes it as a whole. What s/he finds in his/her birth chart is nothing else except a sigh, sob, lament, weep, cry, blubbing, and howling the last. It is the plurality of cries to which existentialism tries to erode after a subterranean observance. Owing to this, for some, it is pessimistic by nature, and for some, its thinkers are often confused, and for some, the whole existentialism is profoundly unsound. They forget that the men who show the ways are never strange in the way they show. They know its ways, pays, and rays. Undoubtedly, it (existentialism) seems to be pessimistic in the contextual hypothesis of God, in the course and discourse of the self or selves, in the shaping process of the essence, in the matter of making choices, in the milieu of life, in the situation of suicide which may or may not cause death, etc., but factually, it is not pessimistic but melioristic, i.e. to unfold the smooth ways to the world, it passes through the thorny and Stoney ways.

When one Comes to Fosse with the thought of having the existential blues in his literary domain, one may need to see how the existentialists deal with God. Most scholars consider existentialism only for declaring "God is dead" (Nietzsche 343 / [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)). They don't care why and in which condition he said so. They only go through the "Preface" to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in which Nietzsche writes: "I adjure you, brethren, remain faithful to this earth and do not believe those who speak to you of the otherworldly hopes. They are prisoners" (Nietzsche 432/[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org) ). They forget Kierkegaard's thoughts about God and

Dostoevsky's dictum, "If God is dead, then everything is permitted" (Dostoevsky 743). They forget the existentialist's (especially Kierkegaard's) theology as a whole which "focuses on the single individual about a known God based on a subjective truth" (Wikipedia Theology of Soren Kierkegaard submitted to Liberty University). They should keep in mind that based on theology, it (existentialism) is divided into two groups. The first one is atheistic existentialism and the second one is theistic existentialism. In it, the former disavows belief in the religious or spiritual world while the latter, also called humanistic existentialism, accentuates the worth of man's life—his/her existence together with essence. It is to say that in every state of mind and thought, the existentialists believe in God, but their focus was especially on beings' essence. Their ifs and buts about God matter nothing. If anything matters here a lot, it is how Fosse's novels delve into the existential question of God.

If one glances at the works of Jon Fosse, one may find that he is an atheist like Kierkegaard. His novel, especially *Septology*, which has been highly probed into existential questions, proves that he has artistically firm faith in 'the hypothesis God'. In this novel, he frequently usages paradoxical phrases—'invisible light', 'the invisible inside the visible', and 'the shining darkness'—that seem to suggest celestial presence. Such a mosaic of paradoxical shorthand solidifies his belief in God and suggests a divine presence that makes the mobility of the cosmos. "God" in his hand, becomes an acrid, challenging, overpoweringly esthetic power, e.g., "the invisible inside the visible" ([fitzcarraldoeditions.com](http://fitzcarraldoeditions.com)). His characters are offshoots in a deific calculus that incessantly surpasses their understanding. His novel "The Other Name" (*Septology I-II*) illustrates the existential interrogations through the life and deeds of an elderly man of colour (painter) and his doppelganger, starts with Asle, the first, driving between Dylgja, his living place, and Bjorgvin, his working place. He starts to fancy about the other Asle, who is alienated from his friends and family. He (the first Asle) nags at himself for not stooping to see him. On reaching home, he instantly decides to return to him, where he fortuitously sees Asle, the other, lying in the snow. He realizes he smudged and cataleptic. At once, he takes him to a hospital where he has a happenstance with such fair sex that reckons him to be the other Asle. Illusory consistency of such proceedings is speckled with such parenthesis on portrayal and invocation that analogously displays what Asle calls "invisible light" ([www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)). In the novel "I Is Another" (*Septology III-V*), he philosophically writes: "... a person comes from God and goes back to God, I think, for the body is conceived and born, it grows and declines, it dies and vanishes, but the spirit is a unity of body and soul, the way form and content are invisible unity in a good picture" (*I Is Another: Septology III-V* [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)). These lines may remind the readers of Lord Buddha who lived and died

on this earth only to solve existential puzzles—of pain and sorrow—through the NIRVANA. In the context of God's existence, he (Fosse) writes that "God is so far away that no one can say anything about him and that's why all ideas about God are wrong, and at the same time He is so close that we almost can't notice Him because He is the foundation in a person or the abyss, you can call it whatever you want" (A New Name: Septology VI-VII). The blues of existentialism, which he directly or indirectly wants to present is visible in the words namely 'no one can say anything about Him', 'all ideas about God are wrong', 'we almost can't notice Him' and 'the abyss', i.e. his faith in God is firm, but there is a little pain in his heart which seems to be the synthesis of Robert Browningian and Hadrian beliefs—"God's in His heaven/ All's right with the world" (Robert Browning 25) and "God's not in His Heaven/ All's wrong with the world" (Thomas Hardy 235), i.e. he seems to be a pendulum between these two paradoxical dicta. Through the mouth of Asle, as he conveys in his painting, convincing the inner fits of depression and doubt, Fosse writes:

It's always, always the darkest part of the picture that shines the most, and I think that that might be because it's in the hopelessness and despair, in the darkness, that God is closest to us, but how it happens, how the light I get clearly into the picture gets there, that I don't understand, but I think that it's nice to think that may be it came about like this, that it came to be when an illegitimate child, as they put it, was born in a barn on a winter's day, on Christmas in fact, and a star up above sent its strong clear light down to earth, a light from God, yes it's a beautiful thought, I think ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)).because the very word God says that God is real, I think, the mere fact that we have the word and idea God means that God is real, I think, whatever the truth of it is it's that too, even if it's no more than that, but it's definitely true that it's no more than that, but it's definitely true that it's just when things are darkest, blackest, that you see the light, that's when this light can be seen, when the darkness is shining, yes, and it has always been like that in my life at least, when it's darkest is when the light appears, when the darkness starts to shine, and maybe it's the same way in the pictures I paint, anyway I hope it is (The Other Name: Septology I-II 336/ [www.themodernnovel.org](http://www.themodernnovel.org)).

In the dictionary of existentialists, the words that come after the word God are self or ego and identity. Out of the two, the self or ego, according to Sartre, as he describes in the book *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* (1957), does not dwell in consciousness at all. It is always transcendent and can be categorized as 'self-as-doer/ subject' and 'self-as-process/ object' in which the former is introduced as a self-schema that stirs incentive for interactive rendezvous and the upkeep of behavioural modification which is offered as a paradigm that intends to design an individual in terms of their identification with doing a behaviour, whereas the latter is primarily concerned with thinking about oneself in valued ways, i.e., the existential self is both the doer and done. When one goes into Fosse, one finds a terrifying encounter between the eternal and external self, and between self and place. In this context, while describing his (Fosse's) literary tradition, Manas F. Bhattacharjee:

I hold Walser to be Fosse's precursor, considering the shape that the Swiss writers give to language that pauses, reflects, and moves in that promising or terrifying encounter between place and self. This encounter is the source of Freud's *unheimlich*, or the uncanny, where a strange unfamiliarity is born out of an experience of alienation. It is often understood as the psychic state of modern life (Scroll. in).

According to Bhattacharjee, Fosse's precursor is Walser. Although there is no need to describe his literary tradition, Manas' comment is mesmerizing for presenting the 'encounter between internal and external selves, and between place and self'. Both selves of Asle are described well in the following lines:

And I think I shouldn't just drive past Asle's building, someone like him the way he is now can't just be left alone, weighed down as he is now, so weighed down by his stone, a trembling stone, a weight so heavy that it's pushing him down into the ground. I think, so I should turn around and drive back towards Bjorgvin. I think, and I should go see Asle, I think, I have to help pull him out of himself, I think and I see Asle sitting there on the sofa and he's shaking and shaking, I should have driven back, he needs me, but I'm tired and I want to get home... (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2019 [tonysreadinglist.wordpress.com](https://tonysreadinglist.wordpress.com)).

The lines of this paragraph describe the first Asle's will as a subject or doer which rouses him to take action in helping his friend of the same name as an object or done. It is none and nothing, but his self-schema, which is the result of self-as doer/subject stimulates him to go and help his friend, whereas his self-as-process/ object is seen in his return to his doppelganger or the second Asle. The notable thing is that Asle often plays both roles. Sometimes he is a self-as-doer and sometimes self-as-a-process. His doppelganger is self-as-a-process or object forever. Causing a good shower of existential blues, the self as the subject and self as the object find a good place in his *Septology*, in which the novelist has presented two versions of the protagonist's self. About it, for illustration, Dustin Illingworth inscribes:

Fosse offsets the vastness of Asle's inner worlds with intimate, sometimes airless narrative environments. As physical space shrinks—a significant portion of the book takes place within an isolated homestead, a car's interior, or a hotel room—so too does the distance between versions of selves, between the past and the present, between the dead and the living ([www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)).

No one should forget Fosse's lines at the question of Literary Hub when his novel *A New Name: Septology VI-VII* was finalized for the National Book Award for Translated Literature. On being asked about the best and the worst writing advice he had ever received, what he answered stunned all. He answered: "I think the best advice I've learned from life is to listen to yourself, not others. Stick to what you have, not to what you want or wish to have. Stay close to yourself, to your inner voice and vision and how you want the writing to be" ([lithub.com](http://lithub.com)). Whatever he said here reflects not only his self but also the self of his characters, which constantly dwells in blues in his creations, for the man of the self presents the self of the men.



After self comes identity crisis in the phrasebook of the existentialists. Both are correlated things. Identity crisis, which is a period of such vagueness and muddle in which a person's sagacity of identity becomes uncertain, stereotypically due to an alteration in their anticipated aims or role in society, is one of the existential anathemas about which most existentialists make a great fuss. It is moderately visible in his novels, *The Red Black* (1983) and *The Septology* (2020). About the identification which naturally comes to the surface, it's said that:

The degree of his identification with a past pushing the girl on a swing becomes, as *Septology* progresses, both as loose and as tight as his identification with the present doing the watching. And if a principal source of disquiet is hard identitarianism concerning oneself—here's me, there's all the rest of you—then the softening of the boundary between past-self is central to the arrival of quietus. The hard-bounded, lovingly polished, carefully protected present selves we've enshrined begin to melt, first into their pasts and futures, then into those of others (Paul J. Griffiths 23/ international.la-croix.com).

In *Septology* (2020) as a whole, whatever is found is identification. To attain it, Asle, the narrator and protagonist, is persistently languishing between the time and tense of past and present. Whatever he does, he watches again and again and whatever he watches, he does again and again. It becomes, for him, the course of constant foreboding. He tries to make them soft, but it is such that is never going to be so. As he again and again feels, his self begins to melt into nothingness, assimilating the selves of the time's three categories —past, present, and future. In this process, whatever he tries to do his best, results in nothingness. They seem to end in the smoke. The result is identity crises that ceaselessly turn into existential blues. Seeing all going out of his hands, he gently tries to make a compromise, but no one can shun the existential concept of 'The Look and the Other'. In this context, the Outreach pens:

The narrator Asle, a Christian painter, is trying to save and find reconciliation with the other Asle, an alcoholic painter. Even if the work progresses in long periods without sentence breaks, it is held together by repetitions and prayers and is deeply absorbing and accessible. Fascinating is how the doppelganger motif is inscribed in the painting that the narrator can't be separated from and that he meditates on in every part of the novel: two diagonal strokes crossing one another, one purple, the other brown. As if the painted cross represents the reunion of the two parts of the split personality at the moment of death (Nobel Prize Outreach 20 Oct 2023/ www.nobelprize.org).

On the horizon of the philosophy of existentialism, choice plays a dashing role. According to its thinkers, man is none and nothing, but a puppet in the hands of choices, not in the hands of God. To prove who s/he is, man is to make choices. S/he is condemned to choose it under the guidance of personal obligations, desires, and spirits. Hitherto, s/he is reluctantly stuck between two spheres of life—either/or—that s/he must choose between aesthetic or ethical. When one peeps into Fosse, one finds choices playing a pivotal role. Both his novels and plays deal with situations of either/or—what to do or what not to do. His most famous play *Nightsongs* (1997) presents it well in existential phenomenon. It's the play in which, bestowing the quirks of

human characters, he presents the existential choices well. Here, the spectators meet a young couple with their newborn baby. The male protagonist is determined to be a writer whereas the female feels uneasy about passing the rest of life with him. She swings like a pendulum whether she is right in deciding to go off with a new lover. Mishaps disturb her. It disturbs her ethical and esthetic sphere of mind. In such conditions and situations, a few lines, translated by Gregory Motton, catch the eye especially:

I don't know what it is  
That always makes something happen  
But it must be something  
Because something always happens  
I don't want anything to happen  
And then something  
Happens all the same (booksfromnorway.com).

His *Septology* is not lagging in such situations. There are many situations in it where the readers find the either/or situation. For instance, Asle's returning home and his thought on whether to return to his doppelganger or not is spellbinding. Further, in *I Is Another: Septology III-V*, the novelist spiritualizing the longing that is the base of choice, says that:

Everyone has a deep longing inside them, we always long for something and we believe that what we long for is this or that, this person or that person, this thing or that thing, but we're longing for God because the human being is a continuous prayer, a person is a prayer through his or her longing... (I Is Another, [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)).

In Fosse's works be it novel or play, be it verses or short stories, there is a relentless drizzling of existential discomfort and perplexity caused by the "guilt about something" for instance "losing a loved one in death", or fronting the authenticity "of one's own death" (submitted to CSU, Fullerton). His typo scripts repeatedly reflect it through their deed and actions. In this context, Heidegger's allusion seems to be best. "In" an e-paper engraved, "Letter on Humanism (1946), Heidegger describes the modern condition as one of homelessness, a state of oblivion both in the ontological and ontic sense (in the idea of being and its material properties, at once metaphysical and physical). In literature, we find the expression of this state of being on occasions when a writer highlights existential discomfort and perplexity" (Scroll. in). Something like this, the readers every so often star in Fosse's literary sphere in which both the major and minor characters continually feel empirical uneasiness and bewilderment. In this context, The New York Times writes that "his writing is spare and existential, often focusing on the interior lives of rather solitary characters" (p.1). To calm down the discomfort and perplexity of the soul of the characters, Fosse uses prayers. His *Septology*, in which one may

recurrently find prayer to soften not only the fences of time and tense but also the discomfort and perplexity of the heart and soul, is its witness.

The mysticism of ordinary or everyday life is such a juncture in which one deeply excavates the complexities of beings' rainbowy experiences, their good and bad relationships referring to man to man, or man to nature, and their encounter with nature. It is at the core of Fosse's literary world. He is often called the mystic of ordinary life. In his literary world, as it is observed, mysteries of nature do double deeds. Often, they trance and onset a cognizance of wonderment, fearfulness, and the conflicting relationship of man's mind to the outside world. This is why, it is said that "with the human condition central to his writing, he builds layers, with characters talking or thinking about the past and present, their feelings about love, loss, grief, and the eternal quest to find peace, often times unattainable, amid life's vicissitudes" ([www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)). It's not only Franz Kafka but also Samuel Beckett, Tarjei Vesaas (a Norwegian poet and novelist), and George Trakl, an Austrian poet (as Jon Fosse has already articulated "about his wahlverwandschaften or elective affinity" ([www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)) who are responsible for his mysticism of everyday life. He has accepted that it is chiefly Kafka who is behind such inspiration. This is why like F. Kafka; he increases the eerie to a menacing level. His play *Scenes from a Childhood* is its witness. Bhattacharya writes about it: "Fosse brings minor, often intense, moments of life to light and makes it vanish as suddenly as it appeared. The writer tells us memory is a fragmented cluster of images where you retrieve fleeting consolations and terrors of life. The self discovers no ground of its own except grappling with life's accidents" (Scroll. in).

Beings' yearning for order and justice, outraged by the dispirited drift of the cosmic forces has often been at the core of the existentialist's literature. Like the existentialists, the absurdity of the universe is too common in Jon Fosse's literary realm. His novels and his plays both present the predicament of human existence in the universe. Sometimes, the condition of his chief characters seems like the condition of Sybil, the prophesier, who pines for demise yelling: "I want to die. / I want to die" (Eliot 75), and sometimes they seem in the condition of J. Alfred Prufrock, the singer of the love song, who is ever busy in saying only "Let us go then, you and I" (Eliot 8). Such conditions are common in his pendulous characters. The readers, spectators, and scholars often find disharmonious and pendulous conditions between men and the universe in Fosse's literary universe. Whatever they propose, the cosmos often disposes. As the translated resources prove, such a condition is presented well in his play *Rambuku* (2007). Although none is told whether it (*Rambuku*) is a place or a person, it describes the universal absurdity in absurd language well, He says: "we have always been here (pause); year in and

year out...and you don't say anything... why don't you say something...don't just stand there ...and look and look" (Rambuku, [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)). She makes an effort to make him happy, but all in vain. He tells her about his plan to leave for Rambuku to get "freedom from the unbearable here" (Rambuku, abstracted from Hindu). Both of them (He and she) want to leave this universe (place) where they dwell because it is "deaf, silent" (Robert Lane 1) to them, in Camus terminology, and to their conditions of life. It's, as it seems, because of the existing confrontations between them and their universe. The place (universe), where they, live seems to be inharmonious.

The philosophy of existentialists has lots to do with death, death-wish, and suicide. Generally, unbearable and uncompromisable life gives birth to death-wish that stirs and leads man to commit the heinous crime of suicide. The former twos are natural to all. All live with death wishes to different degrees. In some, it may be little, in others less, and in some it may be least. But all feel its existence. The latter is conditional. It depends on the intensity of the conditions. About the latter, the existentialists make a great fuss. Some approve of it. Some disapprove of it. In the beginning of the essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus, one of the foremost theoreticians of this train of philosophy, writes:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not that world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes forward. These are games; one must find the answer. And if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, that a philosopher, to deserve out respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it precedes the definitive act. These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect (Camus 3, [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)).

Like the existentialists, death, death wish, and suicide are common in his (Fosse's) literary world. His works, be they novel or play, highly deal with it. In this context, his exemplary works are *The Other Name* which persistently deals with death wish, *A Shining* which presents the boundaries between life and death, and *Morning and Evening* has the breath of human existence, capturing the essence of birth and death whereas his *Red Black* with suicide. Undoubtedly, Fosse's literary world abounds in death-wish, suicide, and death but it differs a lot from that of the existentialist. It's not unexpected in his realm. Like him, his characters seem to be ready to face death. In this framework, the interview that he gave to Merve Emre, a Turkish-American literary critic, on the eve of the Jon Fosse International Symposium is mentionable. When he was asked about death by Merve Emre. He replied:

No. I think the closer you get, the older you get, the less you think about it. I think it was Cicero who said that philosophy is a way of learning to die. And I think literature is also a way of learning to die. It's as much about death as about life. I guess this has to do with the form of great literature, of art. Art is

alive when you create it, and there's a reader who can bring it to life again. But as an object, it's dead (www.newyorker.com).

The new thing that Fosse has presented in his *Septology* is the possibility of the two paths of a single existence. In the book of the Existentialists, man is a creature with a dual existence (being). In general, it's counted as the physical and the spiritual, but in the literary world of the Norwegian playwright and novelist, i.e., of Fosse, it differs a little. The existentialists talk about a man with two existences—physical and spiritual, whereas Fosse talks about two men with a single existence. For instance, in the sequence of his latest novel of *Septology* titled *The Other Man*, he (Fosse) gifts it. It trails the lives of the two men of the same name. Both are named Asle, which one can know as the first Asle and the second Asle. The first Asle, the protagonist, is a proficient painter and widower. He breathes a soft, Spartan, and obdurate life in a little village. In contrast, the second Asle is also of the same profession. However, his cerebration and lifestyle differ a lot from the former Asle's. Both of them have the same yearning for alcohol. Once, they were in a bar, and the patrons looked strangely at his doppelganger, who was often busy asking for alcohol. What the patrons would have thought about them, Asle gravely narrates:

The sea inside them is large, whether stormy or calm, as they sit there and wait for the next and last crossing they'll set out on...it must have a meaning, yes, Our Lord must have given it meaning, they think, he writes straight on crooked lines, they think, or anyway the good Lord is part of it all somehow, and it's the devil who made the lines crooked, they think and they hold onto their cigarettes and pints and then they pray a silent prayer, a prayer more like a look out over the sea inside them, wordless, but as far as the eye can reach over that sea the prayer extends, entirely wordless, because the words will be left behind...(The Other Name/ [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)).

He is a hard drinker and is continually drinking to death. An unfathomable convergence occurs in gesticulation, and a chance happens between the two disparate groups. The readers realize they are never more twain distinct personnel, except for two probable trails of an idiosyncratic extant. In this context, *The Nation* writes, "across various and often surprising simultaneities of character, geography, and form, Fosse's existential scrutiny suggests a world not yet denuded of its mystery" (Dustin Illingworth, [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)). It's to say that Fosse, the novelist, artfully opens the door for two possible ways of a single existence.

Thus, it can be said that Fosse's literary sky is illuminated with the myriad stars of existential blues. Where his *Trilogien*, which comprises *The Wakefulness*, *The Olav's Dreams*, and *The Weariness* and that jointly came to light in 2014, boons the search for purpose, his *Melancholia I and II* (1995 and 1996), the troubled psychology fueled by anxieties about talent; his novella *Morning and Evening* (2000), the breath of human existence capturing the essence of birth and death; his novel *The Other Name: Septology I-II* (2019), a fascinating duality of human soul;

his play *Nightsongs* (1997), the theme of solitude; his novel *Aliss at the Fire* (2010), a vision of the self along with love, longing, and loneliness; his novel *A Shining* (2023), the boundaries between life and death; his novel *Boathouse* (1998), jealousy, betrayal, and death, i.e. combinedly, they present all those existential themes, thoughts, and theories which causes existential blues in his literary territory. Again, in short, it can be said:

Fosse has earned a place of distinction in the world of contemporary literature. His unique narrative style, characterized by minimalist prose and intense introspection, allows readers to delve into the depth of the human psyche. His exploration of existential themes, his profound examination of human existence, and his ability to evoke deep emotions in his readers make him a literary luminary whose works will continue to resonate for generations to come.... (SCP).

The world will never forget his literary realm for being the good dwelling place for existential blues and for dominating it in its ways. In the words of the Russian Novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky: "Pain and suffering are always inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart. The really great men must, I think, have great sadness on earth" (thesaker.is). Undoubtedly, Fosse is a great literati, and great literati does not exists without the existential blues so how can Fosse remain untouched by the existential blues? The answer is never never, and never. (Note: This article is predominantly grounded on available e-media.)

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