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## SEMIOTICS OF NORDIC ELEMENT AS A THEATRICAL METAPHOR: AN INQUIRY INTO THE 'SPATIALIZED AESTHETICS' OF JON FOSSE AND CECILIE LOVEID

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### ABSTRACT

The Nordic Element, a multi-levelled concept, constitutes the metaphysics of Scandinavian life. As a signifier of the most dense sign system of theatre, this element enriches the semiosis of Norwegian theatre. This metaphysical element provides a new paradigm for understanding the prevalent patterns of postmodern theatrics of Norwegian drama. The 'landscape dramaturgy' through a '**spatialized aesthetics**' has made it as one of the constituent elements of theatre that produces new structures of performance. **Jon Fosse and Cecilie Loveid**, the two famous contemporary playwrights of Norway, may be considered as pioneers of this new '**spatialized aesthetics**' who through an inspired mise-en-scene transform the Nordic landscape into a mental event. This new spatialized dramaturgy helps them to achieve an alternative Norwegian theatrical canon. In this paper, I am mapping out the aesthetic strategies utilized by these two playwrights to make Nordic element as a theatrical metaphor in the realm of theatrical sign system. This comparative study traces the postmodern treatment of psychology, structure and landscape which account for the similar patterns of staging geographic imagination. The study finally, explores the metaphysics of Nordic element as a theatrical metaphor which performs the Nordic identity in the postmodern framework of a '**spatialized aesthetics**'.

**Keywords:** Nordic Element, Landscape Dramaturgy, Spatialized, Semiosis, Postanthropocentric etc.

**Semiotics of Nordic Element as a Theatrical Metaphor: An Inquiry into the 'spatialized aesthetics' of Jon Fosse and Cecilie Loveid**

The 'Spatial turn' of contemporary European theatre thought generates the idea of postdramatic theatre where the traditional constituents of theatre have been substituted with 'performance' as the nucleus of any theatrical representation. This theoretical debate between 'text' and 'performance' progresses with the inception of postmodern modes of theatrical representations. This spatial paradigm offers a new theoretical framework to analyze the possible structures and patterns of postmodern performances. The concept of theatrical space that epitomizes the existential space of human life in all its possible dimensions - historical, social, cultural - is the most diverse, abstract and unfeatured element for any possible theoretical framework. Therefore, the concept of landscape which is essentially a form of 'space', grounded and available to visual experience, has been considered as a framework for fresh thinking on the theory and practice of postmodern theatre productions.

Landscape theories through a new conceptual space with its pervasive new spatiality, have made 'Landscape' as the modern theatre's new paradigm. "The signs of a shift from preconscious to conscious are everywhere to be found in the European dramatic texts of the end of nineteenth century. "In the symbolic avalanches of Ibsen, the threatened forests of Chekhov, the ecstatically open or pathologically closed world of Wedekind, the trembling atmosphere of Maeterlinck, and the lehrscapes of Strindberg one can begin to see landscape itself as independent figure: not simply a support to human action, but entering it in a variety of roles, for instance, as mentor, obstacle, or ironist".<sup>1</sup> In the introduction of their book Una Chaudhury and Elinor Fuchs state:

The theatre of the past century has challenged as never before the Aristotelian hierarchy. Demoted in theory and displaced in practice, the most privileged of Aristotle's six "elements," plot and character, have been undermined by a host of flexible dramatic structures and a gallery of fractured subjectivities. A pervasive new spatiality, of which scenography is only the most obvious site, has turned the Aristotelian hierarchy on its head: now the spectacle may be the "soul" of the dramatic enterprise. As yet, however, no critical project has been devoted to rehabilitating this term so decisively slighted by Aristotle. The meanings that attach to landscape, we suggest, can elaborate the nature and implications of this "spatial turn" in modern drama and theatre. Landscape names the modern theatre's new spatial paradigm.<sup>2</sup>

'Landscape' theorizes the spatial paradigm of new theatre. Landscape within theatrical space represents the complex spatial mediations within postmodern theatrical forms and between contemporary theatre and the world. In this spatial dimension, landscape, visually and dramaturgically, appears as a figure along with character and other constituents. As a perspective and a method that links staging, text, scenography and spectatorship, landscape progressively invaded the traditional dramaturgy of plot and character. "Every dramatic world is conditioned

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<sup>1</sup> Fuchs 2002, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Fuchs 2002, 1.

by a landscape imaginary, a “deep” surround suggested to the mind that extends far beyond the onstage environment reflected in the dramatic text and its scenographic representation”.<sup>3</sup>

With her theoretical paradigm The landscape play which has brought the non-human order and natural into deep structure of performance, Gertrude Stein converted landscape into a theatrical language that brought the ‘spatial turn’ in the theoretical environment. John Brinkerhoff characterizes this ‘spatial turn’ as the theatricalization of the world. In his classic essay “Landscape as Theatre” he argues, “the Renaissance metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*, the world stage, was the manifestation of a synchronous development in the fields of art and geography; a new conception of drama, matched by a new technology of stage representation, suddenly joined forces with a bold new geographical conception of the world as a visual space”.<sup>4</sup> This landscape poetics of theatre seeks to re-animate the life-art dialectic.

Despite being a part of the European artistic and theatrical tradition, Nordic theatre grows in the aesthetic and cultural framework of Scandinavian life. The Nordic Element, a multi-leveled concept, constitutes the metaphysics of Scandinavian life. As a signifier of the most dense sign system of theatre, this element enriches the semiosis of Norwegian theatre. This metaphysical element provides a new paradigm for understanding the prevalent patterns of postmodern theatrics of Norwegian drama. The ‘landscape dramaturgy’ of the postmodern playwrights of Nordic land has produced new structures of performance which dramatized the life in a post-human framework.

Jon Fosse and Cecilie Loveid, the two famous contemporary playwrights of Norway, may be considered as pioneers of this new ‘spatialized aesthetics’ who through an inspired mise-en-scene transform the Nordic landscape into a mental event. This new spatialized dramaturgy helps them to achieve an alternative Norwegian theatrical canon where the Nordic identity is performed through the theatrical metaphor of ‘Nordic element’ in a postmodern framework. The postmodern treatment of psychology, structure and landscape in the dramatic texts of these Norwegian playwrights generates similar patterns of staging geographic imagination. Both of them are celebrated for their elliptical style and the idiosyncratic poetry of dialogues.

The metaphoric function of the Nordic landscape in the plays of these dramatists has brought out the dramatic essence of natural environment which plays a crucial performative role along with characters and dialogues in theatrical communication. They achieve a fragile balance between emptiness and meaning. Their emphasis on things that can’t be expressed has been developed into a theatrics of a performative structure which is difficult for reading as well as staging.

Along with their common Norwegian identity, the landscape dramaturgy with a deeply rooted engagement with the natural environment generates common aesthetic engagements in the playwrights. With a liminal textual pattern, the stories, their plays exist between abstract action

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<sup>3</sup> Fuchs 2002, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Fuchs 2002, 15.

and concrete emotion with an open-ended pattern without a definitive ending. Landscape constitutes the theory of their plays. For creating a landscape dramaturgy, they consciously re-conceive every element of the stage work spatially reflecting that the landscape is the primary lens through which to comprehend human culture. “Nothing contains [landscape], while it contains everything,” writes Casey.<sup>5</sup> Their vision extends into the esoteric landscapes of the soul where Human lives are constructed by the complex coding of landscape geography.

Both the playwrights take space as landscape independent of written ‘text’ or theatre conventions and attain a kind of de-hierarchization of theatrical means. To transform the space into landscape, they sculpt the stage with elements such as using non-hierarchical structure, minimal progression, without identities, aural and visual elements, carnal experience and continuous present etc. “If we are again to learn how to respond emotionally, aesthetically and morally, to the landscape, we must find a metaphor – or several metaphors – drawn from our human experience”<sup>6</sup>.

The post-anthropocentric framework of their alternative dramatic form integrates human form with non-human in spatial structures through aesthetic figuration of all objects of nature. “Postdramatic theatre is a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations”.<sup>7</sup> “The theatre here showed ‘less a succession, a development of a story, more an involvement of inner and outer states’”.<sup>8</sup> This spatial poetics enables them to perceive the diversity of existence as a single reality. As Braidotti in her essay “Postmodern Critical Theory” states, “Life as it happens, is not the exclusive prerogative of the humans.”<sup>9</sup> This aesthetics dissolves the dramatic action and creates a landscape of ‘occurrences’ where objects and figure appear and disappear. It was the aesthetic transformation from stage space to landscape through scenic dynamic. The aesthetics of this dramatic experience seems to operate on the Posthumanist concept of ‘Nonlinearity’. “Living matter” is a monistic process ontology that interacts in complex ways with social, psychic and natural environments, produces multiple ecologies of belonging”.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the dramatic experience in this postanthropocentric framework is not confined to within our species

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<sup>5</sup> Casey 1993, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Jackson 1980, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Lehman 2006, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Lehman 2006,68.

<sup>9</sup> Braidotti 2017, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Guattari 2000, 16.

but includes vital forces of life that cut across and reconnects formerly isolated categories and domains.

In one of his interviews, Jon Fosse, explains how his creative imagination and subjectivity has been a cumulative effect of the landscape where he has lived his life. He answers:

I am quite sure that growing up in a small Norwegian community by the Hardanger fjord, in the western part of Norway, has influenced my writing a lot. In fact, so much so that it is almost impossible for me to see how much. You know this story about the fish who doesn't know anything about the sea? I left home at sixteen years of age to go to college in another small place, though a lot bigger than the town where I grew up. After three years there I went to an even bigger town to continue my studies: Bergen, the second biggest town in Norway. I am still living there. I have an old house in Bergen, but in fact I do most of my writing not where I grew up—a place I visit rather seldom—but in a cottage north of Bergen with a view to the fjord similar to the view from the house when I was a child. And just this simple aspect, this view to the fjord, feels crucial to my writing. Somehow I need to see the water to write. (Interview with Caridad Svich (Rail))<sup>11</sup>

**And further he adds:**

Another thing which has had a more directly understandable influence on my writing is the way of talking in these rural areas of Norway, where people are famous for not talking much. They are rather silent people, like the people in my plays. They are also famous for almost never expressing their feelings out loud, but the truth is that they have very strong feelings, and the feelings somehow come out in other words. You talk about something very usual, but underneath you are talking about something else, full of sympathy or disgust, of closeness or distance. That may explain why it is often said that the people where I grew up are always ironic. They are! They never say what they mean or feel, they say something else. The talk is at least double. (Interview with Caridad Svich (Rail))<sup>12</sup>

Jon Fosse's answer reflects on the birth and growth of a creative genius in the geographical and cultural surrounding of Nordic region later which served as the most dominant/essential artistic metaphor of his theatre to capture the deepest sense of existential truths in the form of rhythmical movements inexpressible in ordinary language. In his theatrical texts, the Nordic element specifically its landscape, acquires the status of a dramatic utterance equal to his characters' elliptical dialogues and expressions. The entire oeuvre of Jon Fosse, a unique theatrical mode, has been built, aesthetically and structurally, on this physical metaphor of Nordic element. However, Jon Fosse manifested this unique theatrics with his very first play *Someone is Going to Come*.

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<sup>11</sup> Svich 2004, June.

<sup>12</sup> Svich 2004, June.

The figurative representation of the ocean and other Nordic landscape is prevalent in the text of the play. Although the play is culture-bound yet remarkably allegorical: the visual imagery contains the universal meaning about human existence. The Nordic landscape as a theatrical metaphor in this play – notably, the wilderness of the open sea as a mirror to She's state of mind – unfurls external and inner action in a series of consistent patterns. The natural landscape in Fosse reflects the characters' state of being. Symbolically, the Sea constitutes the structure and temperature of the play, constructing set and story around the main metaphor of the landscape. The sea envelops the mental space of characters embodying the loneliness of the long, dark, silent Norwegian winter months. The loneliness of the seascape has been expressed through these words:

SHE. Imagine when it gets dark  
 Imagine when there is a storm  
 When the wind goes  
 Right through the walls  
 When you hear the sea roaring  
 And the waves crashing  
 When the sea is white and black  
 And imagine how cold it will be in the house  
 When the wind goes right through the walls  
 And think how far it is from people  
 How dark it is  
 How quiet it is going to be  
 And think how the wind blows  
 How the waves crash  
 Think how it will be in the autumn  
 In the darkness  
 With the rain and the darkness  
 A sea that is white and black  
 And only you and I  
 In this house  
 So far from people. (13)<sup>13</sup>

Even without any overt references in the stage directions in the text, the visual image of sea has been evoked through dialogues. The affective and mysterious qualities of the sea are expressed in the HE's and SHE's rhythmical speech that appears to follow the music of ocean waves:

HE.  
 And there

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<sup>13</sup> Fosse 2002, 13.

[points]  
 is the sea  
 no one is going to come  
 And look how beautiful the sea is  
 The house is old  
 And the sea is beautiful  
 We are alone  
 And no one is going to come  
 No one is coming  
 And down there is the sea so beautiful  
 Look at the waves  
 Look at how the waves  
 Roll themselves up against the round rocks  
 Down there on the beach  
 Wave after wave [...] (15–16)<sup>14</sup>

As spiritual and mysterious image-symbol, the sea determines the inner actions and elements of Fosse's play. Fosse considers space as a mental notion. In his words, "the place disappears in a way, at the same time as it exists. It is as if the place gets its "not," [it] becomes a "not-place."<sup>15</sup> Structurally, the physical environment of this play (exterior as well as interior) that contains in a single spatial dimension symbolizes several other places, both experienced and imagined. In his theatrics, space has become the most potent indicator of mood and emotion. Fosse has said, "What I am writing about is the relationship between people, the spaces between them, and that in a way what I writes are the empty spaces. And more than writing about place I feel I am writing what is in a place and doesn't belong to that place in any visible or concrete sense."<sup>16</sup>

Fosse's *A Summer Day* and Loveid's *Austria* exemplify a dramatic vision that redefines the traditional binary oppositions nature/culture and human/nonhuman, paving the way for non-hierarchical and egalitarian relationship among the elements of play/performance. Most of their plays enfold landscape and characters in its structure and offer the same/equal dramatic potential to the spatial elements as is given to characters or 'written text' in a traditional drama. Aesthetically, Nordic landscape – Water, a lonely house on a bluff, windy climate and chilly whether etc. - functions as a potential theatrical metaphor defining and determining the external and internal action of their plays. The very first line of Fosse's *A Summer Day* as stage direction confirms this:

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<sup>14</sup> Fosse 2002, 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Sidiropouloul 2018, 198.

<sup>16</sup> Sunde 2007, 59.

Black. Lights up. A living room in an old house on a bluff overlooking the water. An older woman stands by a window and looks out. She turns and looks towards The older friend, who has stood up from the sofa and walked across the floor a bit (2)<sup>17</sup>

A Posthuman/postanthropocentric framework seems guiding the story-line of the most of the plays of these playwrights and especially plays under reference here which operate on a nonlinear structure of incidents. Their plays do not depend upon a story-line unfolding sequentially. Here, temporality is less an organizing principle. In both the playwrights, a progressive spatialization of character and a rhythm of exchange between figure and ground can be traced. In Fosse's *A Summer Day* the narrative progresses in two time frames simultaneously. Nordic landscape - its water and seaside, lonely houses – is the binding element of the play, determining the movement and reaction of the characters in their specific or individual ways.

The dissolution of the individuality and identity of character seems to be one of the most marking features of their dramatic output. It is an essential element of landscape dramaturgy where human subjectivity is seen as a collective and composite result of the entire vital forces of life i.e. human and non-human. "Human subjectivity in this complex field of forces must be redefined as an expanded relational self, engendered by the cumulative effect of all these factors"<sup>18</sup>. In most of Fosse's plays and especially in *A Summer Day*, the characters have not been identified or marked with particular names. Rather, they are referred to as THE YOUNG WOMAN, THE YOUNG FRIEND, THE OLDER WOMAN, THE MAN etc. In Loveid's plays like *Austria* and *The Viewing*, although the characters have been identified with individual names yet their individual identities do not matter in the play.

In *A Summer Day*, Fosse identifies the conflicting space between The Young Woman and her husband Asle through the metaphor of 'water'. The young couple could not have come to terms with each other due to the 'water' between them. The speech from the play expresses this:

THE YOUNG WOMAN. laughing

Yeh now it's  
a little late in the year  
But there's no real  
rush Asle goes  
What are you doing  
today  
then

ASLE.

I think I'll take the boat out on the water

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

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<sup>17</sup> Fosse 2005, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Braidotti 2000, 16.



Again

ASLE.

Yeh I think so

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

You're hardly ever home

ASLE.

I am

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

You're almost always

out there on the water

never home

hardly ever

ASLE.

But there aren't that many things

to do here

other than go out on the water

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

But you're out there

more than you're at home

It seems like that anyway

ASLE.

Yeh maybe it seems like that

but I am actually here at home with you

More

And by the way

short pause

i love it out there on the water

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

I have never understood

what's so great

about trapping yourself on the water

in a little boat

Spending hour after hour

in a little boat

You just sit out there

in the middle of the bay

for hours

all day

all evening

until it gets dark

you can just sit there  
 in the middle of the bay  
 in that small boat of yours  
 What's so amazing  
 about it  
 It must be  
 cold  
 windy  
 especially now that it's autumn  
 And ridiculously boring  
 it must be boring

ASLE.

Yeh it might be boring  
 I don't know  
 But I like it (13-14)<sup>19</sup>

The 'water' basically separates the two and captures the inner mysterious consciousness of Asle. These poetic expressions from the play express this:

ASLE.

Yeh I guess it's the waves  
 maybe  
 I think so

THE YOUNG WOMAN. questioning

The waves

ASLE.

Yeh  
 I guess I like to just sit there  
 feeling the waves  
 crash and crash  
 maybe  
 and also I like  
 the boat diving  
 up and down He laughs. Short pause  
 And I like to watch the water  
 And I like to think about  
 how incredibly far it is down to the bottom  
 You know it's very deep  
 It's one of the deepest

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<sup>19</sup> Fosse 2005, 13-14.

in the country  
 right here  
 I sit there in that small boat  
 The waves crash  
 And it's a long way to the shore  
 And the boat is small  
 a thin hull  
 Is what separates me from all that water  
 separates me from all that depth  
 And the boat dives up and down  
 up and down  
 R E H E A R S A L ! D R A F T 17  
 and the wind grabs my hair  
 and I am alone looks toward her  
 because you hardly ever want to come with me  
 And so I sit there  
 and the waves crash  
 and the boat dives up and down  
 and time passes  
 and Short pause  
 You should've come with me once in awhile  
 you too

THE YOUNG WOMAN.

No  
 But you know that I  
 really don't like it  
 out there on the water  
 I get scared  
 and I get bored

ASLE.

Yeh I know  
 that's how it is for you  
 I'm not saying anything  
 That's just how you are  
 I understand (16-17)<sup>20</sup>

‘Seascape’ in this play, fundamentally, controls the inner and outer action in a way that one may conjure up the most abstract things as concrete ones through a mere reading of the script. Apart

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<sup>20</sup> Fosse 2005, 16-17.

from this theme of lack of communication between human beings, the play's Nordic landscape in the form of a lonely house and the specific Nordic weather also convey the deep sense of Nordic life. Although the setting of the play seems to be culture-bound yet it attains universality for translating theatrically the deepest truths of human existence through its spatial dimension.

Jon Fosse through his unique dramaturgy has invented a 'spatial language' for theatrical communication which goes beyond the limits of ordinary linguistic communication in conveying the deeper existential truths of human life. In his own words, he propounds, "Theatre is translation. Everyone involved in it is translating all the time. The play is translated, the actors translate their parts, as they translate one another in playing and so on. Translation is at the same time an open and a closed process."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in his theatrics everything at his disposal becomes a tool for translating the densest and abstract meanings as experience. In the same interview, Fosses claimed:

What language can say is just a very little bit of what there is. To me that is obvious. And my plays are, I think, somehow saying just this—what is the most important is impossible to say in the language of words. And if I manage to write well, I still can say what is not possible to say by words—it is said in the silences, the pauses, the breaks. It is often said that the characters in my plays don't manage to communicate. In a way it is obviously so. In another way it is not so at all, because they understand one another completely, I feel, they don't need to complete the sentence to say what they want to say. I often have the feeling that the characters are in a way clairvoyant.<sup>22</sup>

The playwrights seem to share similar patterns of staging due to the spatial dimension of the landscape dramaturgy that both have effected through their theatre. They re-conceive Nordic element as space made of landscape images; a theatre of complex visuality or a scenic poem. The play of character in Fosse's *A Summer Day* and Cecilie Loveid's *Austria* reflects a spectrum of Nordic landscape ideology laid out in variations that stretch across the text. In these texts, landscape itself becomes a character. It appears to be endowed with independent agency. In their plays the landscape metaphor determines how the characters should perform in the texts.

Cecilie Loveid's *Austria* challenges the conceptual framework of Western thought by interrogating the hierarchical binary oppositions underlying it and opens up these oppositional dichotomies for theoretical exposition in a postmodern context. Lovied's postmodern experimentation with special emphasis on oral, visual and spatial aspects of her dramatic texts challenges the established Norwegian Ibsen tradition and heralds a new way of understanding theatre in twentieth century. The play lends its title from the cabin built by Wittgenstein on a geographically remote place known as Skjolden, called as *Austria* by the locals. It reflects the sheer force of visual imagery of Nordic landscape for Loveid's theatre. It has been conveyed through these expressions from the monologue:

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<sup>21</sup> Svich 2004, June.

<sup>22</sup> Svich 2004, June.

In there is the cabin.

In there Ludwig sits thinking.

A cluster of houses down by the sea. Mountains all around. Two rivers running into the fjord. (6)<sup>23</sup>

Now Ludwig has built himself a cabin on a precipice in there. People here call it "Austria", for all the time Viennese dance music is heard from the verandah, and there are wafts of schnitzels or Viennese pastries on the air, or so people say, he wrote to me.

That is my beloved who needs a face in the morning.(8)<sup>24</sup>

The fjord landscape of the play symbolizes the philosophical landscape which is inaccessible and replete with inner contradictions.

Now I have travelled to see my friend who wanted to go to the land of the midnight sun in winter.

- It will be dark then, Ludwig.

He said he hated daylight.

- It will be lonely, Ludwig.

He said he sold his soul talking to intelligent people .

- You're mad, Ludwig (6)<sup>25</sup>

This esoteric philosophy has been conveyed through the inaccessible Nordic landscape where Agnes couldn't situate herself. Being unable to reach the heights of Ludwig's philosophical refuge i.e. Austria, Agnes has to take the help of the aerial cable. It is a patriarchal house that has no place for woman. It is philosophy itself.

LUDWIG.

It is philosophy.

It is pointless.

AGNES.

Exactly!

LUDWIG.

Exactly?

An uninhabitable house.

A house for gods.

Uninhabitable!

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<sup>23</sup> Loveid 2004, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Loveid 2004, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Loveid 2004, 6.

Should be uninhabitable.

Should be for gods. (48)<sup>26</sup>

The centrality of the Nordic landscape metaphor has been announced in the very beginning of the play *Austria*:

\ The play is set in our time, in and around a settlement by a fjord on the West Coast of Norway.(1)<sup>27</sup>

Then the statement is followed by the prologue:

## Agnes' Monologue: Independent Tours in Western Norway 1931.

A woman travels into the Norwegian fjord landscape of the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. She is in contemporary dress but brings as a companion and alter ego a Victorian woman's habit: an Agnes dress, and a copy of Henrik Ibsen's play "Brand", as well as a travel typewriter marked Underwood. Music from a broken *langeleik*.

AGNES.

I am dressed in a travel habit tailored in a very elegant Viennese cut from the Thirties. I am sitting in a deck chair on board one of the express ships going into Sognefjord, Norway. I am wrapped in a lot of blankets, to make it bearable. On and off I get up to get a view of the fjord.

Independent TOURS in Western NORWAY, it says on my travel brochure.

These waters are supposed to be very deep.

Deepest in the world. (2)<sup>28</sup>

The setting, stage directions and Agnes' monologue in the very beginning of the play conveys its spatial sturcturality and the metaphorical importance of Nordic landscape which constitutes the roots of Loveid's dramaturgy. The play has been constituted as a tour or a travel by a woman into the difficult Norwegian landscape. In turn, the landscape itself functions as the controller of the actions and behavior of the characters. The whole monologue can be taken as a poem of landscape imagery.

Agnes' self realization of the futility and pointlessness of Western philosophical thought has been well conveyed through the landscape imagery of the play. She perceives hopelessness as a concrete symbol:

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<sup>26</sup> Loveid 2004, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Loveid 2004, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Loveid 2004, 2.

AGNES.

I want to see the northern lights.

But here is nothing but darkness.

AGNES.

So it was true that it's so dark here.

But amazing.

I hope there will never be roads here.

At the bottom I'll lay a base of sorrow, under deep water.

- In case I should paint it one day. (42)<sup>29</sup>

Towards the end of the play Loveid defines theatre as 'A beautiful scene'. She locates the possibility to transform the human soul through the spatial aesthetics of the art of theatre.

And still I believe it is always possible

to improve the condition of the soul

by creating a beautiful scene in a theatre.

Yes.

But in the theatre.

An actor on stage is only an actor.

In the theatre.

A beautiful scene. (71)<sup>30</sup>

The posthuman framework of the landscape dramaturgy legitimately demands to designate their dramatic work as postanthropocentric theatre. This heading refers to a theatre of objects without entirely human actors that integrates human and non-human elements in landscape-like spatial structures. It is not a theatre of actions but of states based on scenic dynamics showing a formation rather than a story. A careful reading of the plays of these two contemporary Norwegian playwrights reveals how Nordic element as a theatrical metaphor creates a structure of performance which represents the most abstract elements of existential reality as a tangible event. The pictorial imagination and metaphoric scope of their texts have created possibilities for representing space on stage through an inspired mise-en-scene that can transform a landscape into a mental event. The postmodern theatrics of these playwrights embodies landscape imagery that functions as bridge between experienced and imagined. In comparing these two playwrights, one acknowledges a complex landscape affinity in the structure of their texts continuously pointing towards Nordic element as the essence of Scandinavian life.

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<sup>29</sup> Loveid 2004, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Loveid 2004, 71.