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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

MYTHICAL MOTIFS IN MARK RAVENHILL'S PLAYS

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İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

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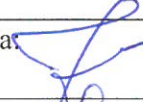
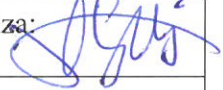

Sibel KILINÇ



*for women whose cry pierce our hearts...*

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Sibel KILINÇ tarafından hazırlanan “**Mark Ravenhill’in Oyunlarındaki Mitsel Motifler-Mythical Motifs in Mark Ravenhill’s Plays**”konulu YÜKSEK LİSANS Tezinin Sınavı, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Öğretim Yönetmeliği uyarınca 11.09.2019 günü saat ...11:30.....’da yapılmış olup, tezin ..kabul edilmesine.....  
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## ÖZET

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Bu çalışma Mark Ravenhill'in Shopping and Fucking, Faust is Dead ve Some Explicit Polaroids oyunlarındaki mitsel motiflerin liberal kapitalist sistemde, postmodern kültür içerisinde konumlandırıldığındaki ilişkisi üzerinde durmaktadır. İlişkilerin ekonomik faaliyet alanının bir parçası olması, piyasa ekonomisi içerisinde seçimin niteliği, özgür irade, özne, bilgi ve iktidar kavramları, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault ve François Lyotard gibi önde gelen postmodernist filozoflar ve teorileri aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Dahası, bu oyunların Suratına ("in-yer-face") Tiyatroyu temsil etmesinden kaynaklanan kısırtıcı doğası tarihi ve sosyo-kültürel bağlamı içerisinde detaylı açıklanmıştır. Bu incelemeler sadece kültürel değişim ve bu değişimlerin kişilerin yaşamları üzerindeki etkilerini vurgulayarak sadece politik sorunları değil, aynı zamanda dönemin teatral değişimlerini de ön plana taşımıştır. Shopping and Fucking oyununda bireyin otonomisi, kendini gerçekleştirmede fedakarlık ve acı kavramları, varoluşun kanıtlanmasında beden bir kontrol alanı olarak yeri ve cinsel ilişkiler ekonomik faaliyet alanı içerisinde incelenmiştir. Faust is Dead oyununda yabancılaşma, insanın ilerlemesine olan inancın yitirilmesi, tecrübelerin gerçekliği, arzu ile fenomen ve numen dünyalar arasındaki uzlaşabilirlik araştırılmıştır. Son oyun olan Some Explicit Polaroids' de ise genç nesillerin benimsediği hedonist ve kapitalist değerler, daha önceki nesillerin değerleriyle kıyaslanmış, yirmilerindeki bir grup insanın tecrübe ettiği, kapitalizmin de bir parçası olan pozitivist çürüme, erkeklik krizi, bedene yapılan şiddet ve taciz ile disiplin toplumlarından kontrol toplumlarına geçiş incelenmiştir. Ayrıca bütün oyunları içine alan alışveriş mitinin yazar tarafından değiştirilerek kişisel ve nesnelere sınırlı olan alışveriş eyleminin, insanları ve duygularını da içine alan bir eyleme dönüştürdüğü anlaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** mit, mitsel öğeler, mitsel motifler, mutlu dünya miti, alışveriş miti, postmodernizm, kapitalizm, piyasa ekonomisi, biyopolitik, in-yer-face tiyatro, postyapısalcılık, drama, yabancılaşma, varoluşçuluk

## ABSTRACT

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The focus of this study is to discuss the mythical motifs in Mark Ravenhill's plays; Shopping and Fucking, Faust is Dead and Some Explicit Polaroids, in relation to their positioning in the postmodern culture with the liberal capitalist systems. The concepts of relationships as a site of economic exchange, the quality of choice in market economies, free will, subject, knowledge and power are investigated through the theories of prominent postmodernist philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault and Francois Lyotard. Moreover, the provocative nature of the plays as a part of being representative of in-yer-face theatre is further explained in its historical and socio-cultural context. Such investigation not only brings political issues to the forefront, emphasizing the cultural change and its impact on individual lives but also the change in theatrical concepts of their milieu. Shopping and Fucking investigates the autonomy of the individual, the idea of sacrifice and suffering as a way to come to self-realization, the body as a place of control in authenticating the self and sexual relationships as a site of transaction. Faust is Dead explores the issues such as alienation, the loss of faith in the progress of man, the authenticity of experience, desire and the reconcilability of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. In the last play, Some Explicit Polaroids examines the hedonism and the capitalist values that the younger generations adopt, contrasted with the values of older generations, the positivist decay experienced by twenty-somethings which is also a part of capitalism, the masculinity crisis, violence and abuse on the body and the transition from disciplined to controlled societies. Also, shopping myth which was found to be encompassing all the plays was inverted by the playwright through transforming the act of shopping from being personal and limited to the objects to be public and including humans and their emotions.

**Key Words:** myth, mytheme, mythical motifs, happy world myth, shopping myth, postmodernism, capitalism, market economy, biopolitics, in-yer-face theatre, post-structuralism, drama, alienation, existentialism

## PREFACE

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is twofold. First, it is to analyse the playwright's treatment of myths and mythemes in his plays, where he reinterprets, retells, subverts these stories in relation to the postmodern condition. Then, it explores particular situations and crises in the characters' lives as being essentially and socially produced in relation to the concept of power and ideology. Considering the playwright's characterization of society as a postmodern one and heavily influenced by consumerism and globalization, the plays were considered within the theoretical frame of post-structuralism.

In the play where human beings are commodified, myths and mythemes also become another consumer product. Therefore this study attempts to reveal the playwright's revisioning of different myths under the impact of consumerism and globalization to search a new set of values and a meaning of existence.

This research focuses, in particular, the reinvention of different myths and mythemes in Mark Ravenhill's plays: *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* and *Some Explicit Polaroids* by revealing the way the playwright altered, re-created and transformed myths and his intention in dealing with the re-construction of these myths.

The first chapter informs about the definition of myth and its various interpretations as to the nature of them. Then, the myth and its nature are further explored from the perceptions of different mythologists. In addition to their contribution to their definition of myth, its place in the complex web of knowledge, ideology and power relations were explained within the context.

The second chapter introduces the enactment of myth on the contemporary stage. It explores the re-visioning of myths by the contemporary playwrights in order to reflect the social and political (non)values of a society at the time. The ambiguous relationship of the chorus to the community and its adoption by the contemporary playwrights is further investigated, together with the problem of the



obscene representing 'the other' or 'alienated'. Next, some of the characteristics of in-yer-face theatre are highlighted. This chapter ends with the description of the British theatre scene during the 1990s in order to reveal this new sensibility which Mark Ravenhill brought into the stage.

Chapter three considers the play *Shopping and Fucking* in connection with the 90s British theatre. It emphasizes the particular dramatization, characterization, and the issues that the playwright brings into focus in the play.

It also discusses the myths and mythemes in the plays *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Finally, myths are explained within the whole structure of the play in comparison to the original myths and how the playwright deconstructed them. The mythemes which are given in sub-sections contributes to the overall meaning in relation to the effects of postmodernism, globalization and consumerism.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. MYTH AND THE MEANING**

#### **1.1 Defining Myth**

Since the Western ‘Revival of Learning’ is based on classical mythology, it is important to understand the definition and the construction of myth. Myth is described as a story either of a sacred or a secular kind. However, until the fifteenth century, the word ‘myth’ did not exist in English vernaculars and instead of the Latin word ‘fabula’ was used and later was developed into ‘fable’. Fable, which originated from oral tradition both means a story charged with ancient wisdom as well as a foolish, idle tale to an offensive degree. Fable, which had no function of moral teachings at the beginning, started to acquire its didactic quality when affected by the Greek and Roman fables.

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the word ‘myth’ triumphed and replaced the word fable. The myth comes into use with a religious connotation since it is defined as a ‘sacred story’. It is also considered to be true or non- fictive story because it recites a sacred tradition or a primordial revelation. The creation myths and cosmological myths are those among them which are considered to be sacred for archaic man for whom its truthfulness never doubted. Yet, some modern theories also consider myth to be a fairy tale told for amusement, where its characters are not real and the story fictitious. However, the aim of this study is not to dwell on the sacredness or profanity of myth but to indicate that myths are used to recite a story about what human is and how they are shaped by their actions and situations that bring them in.

Therefore, though when it comes to defining myth there is no one consensus as to ‘what myth is’ in literature, it might be beneficial to go through different definitions offered by some mythologists to understand its nature.

Mircea Eliade while accepting the complex cultural reality of it and the difficulty to come up with one definition states,

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'. In other words, myth emphasises how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality- an island, a species of a plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution (Eliade, 1963, p. 5).

This emphasis on the 'beginnings' takes us to the Creation myth where everything that came into existence is manifested. Thus for Eliade, myth function as an explanatory model for the establishment of the World and humankind which accounts for their sacred quality. This sacred quality plays an indispensable role in individual life for it explains their mode of existence to this world.

Joseph Campbell in *Myths to Live By* defines myths as the foundations of moral order in societies. He underlines myth's function as the pillars of civilisation and to him without myths any society would collapse on itself. Thus it is through myths that any given society would interpret its values, and make meaning of their everyday experience, harmonise their lives and become knowledgeable about the universe on the microcosmic plane.

Emphasising the fictive nature of myths, anthropologist Maya Deren phrased myth as "facts of the mind made manifest in a fiction of matter" (Philip, Wilkinson, 2007, p.15). Since they are the facts of the mind but emptied of their religious value today and become secular stories, then when interpreted they can be considered as psyches in the form of fiction.

According to Roland Barthes, myth is a discursive practice analogous to language thus he calls it "*a type of speech*". But it is not any type of speech, it embodies a message. A message which its secondary manifestations are "somehow frozen, purified, eternalised, and made absent by its literal sense" (Barthes, 1991, p.122). Therefore, for Barthes myths conceal a message which is distorted and made absent but nevertheless, it is not hidden.

Levi Strauss argued that myths are structured in terms of binary oppositions. According to Levi Strauss, the socio-cultural purpose of myth is to make the world intelligible, by resolving its problems and contradictions magically. Myth generates binary oppositions such as good/bad, female/male, gods/mankind, right/wrong, mother/father, beautiful/ugly, to explain the concept of what is socially acceptable and what is not.

Bronislaw Malinowski in *Magic Science and Religion and Other Essays* looks at the sociological theory of myth in primeval societies and explain that “Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man” (Malinowski, 1948, p.79). Therefore, his emphasis on myth’s active agency on civilisation dispels the definition of myth as an idle tale and places myth as an important part of the culture. Furthermore, he opposes the modern interpretation of myth as a mere story for explaining the world and points out its pragmatic significance as a constitutive function for an ideal world.

Therefore although the definition and perception of myth changed through time, its main quality of being a story with a message is retained. This message as intricate as it was, contained the creative faculty of a society, regulated its social, cultural, and moral life by explaining abstract concepts in a concrete and intelligible way. Regardless of its explanatory agency as a passive model or as a constitutive agency for an ideal and thus an active model, the gem of myth lies in its capacity to provide certainty in a place of uncertainty, order in a place of disequilibrium and illusion in today’s world.

## **1.2 Mircea Eliade’s Perspective on Myth**

According to Mircea Eliade, the distinction between true and false stories are clear to archaic men. True stories deal with the supernatural, and sacred whereas false stories deal with the profane content. Therefore true stories can be considered as myths and false stories as fables or tales.

Myths explain the beginning of the existence in primordial time and it includes not only the creation of the World but also people, plants, animals and primordial events in order to teach man the Cosmos and his mode of existence to it.

However, in terms of the definition of myth, there is a distinction between archaic and modern man. Archaic societies re-enact their myths and experience them constantly, and thus remembering myths is an important part of their lives. Yet, modern men considering themselves as historically constructed, consider the events irreversible and do not feel obliged to know all of it. Therefore Eliade concludes that "To know the myths is to learn the secret of the origin of things. In other words, one learns not only how things came into existence but also where to find them and how to make them reappear when they disappear" (Eliade, 1963, p.14). This idea is important since for archaic man to know the myths and the secret of the origin of things give them a certain power to manipulate and exercise power over them.

Whereas, for the former, knowing the story implies 'a secret knowledge' given by magico-religious powers and thus gives one the ability to manipulate and control things; for the latter, the same stories are the result of the historical time. Yet, the importance of such manipulative quality of myths will enable us to reconsider the characters or institutions that are in possession of such myths, examine the power relationships and eventually become the reader of myths.

Two things are important here, which of the first is the Eliade's description of the function of myths. She wrote,

[...] (3) that myth is always related to a 'creation', it tells how something came into existence, or a pattern of behaviour, an institute, a manner of working was established; this is why myths constitute the paradigms for all significant human acts; (4) that by knowing the myth one knows the "origin" of things and hence control and manipulate them at will [...] (Eliade, 1963, p.18).

This function of myth which is to go further down at the roots to explain the workings of an institution or pattern of behaviour and even significant human actions will be benefited in the analysis of the dramatic action in the plays. Furthermore as

mentioned before, the possessor of these myths having a certain power of manipulation will be under the scrutiny of this research.

Another significance of Eliade's perception of myth is his explanation of the perfection of the beginnings in 'the end of the world' myth and its interpretation in the eyes of the archaic men and modern man. It will be our focus to explore that myth which is used extensively in the plays. Absolute beginnings which refer to a renewal of the world by the destruction of the old and building anew is a deeply seated idea in societies. Its symbolism reflects the human longings to regain the Lost Paradise and to reach a state of unperturbed equilibrium and peace which the existent, weary, degenerated and the chaotic world can not provide. In other words, it is a desire for human beings to go back to Chaos, that existed before the creation to rebuild an ideal world. Since the end of the world myth is a recurrent idea in the plays, this nostalgia for a new world will be further explored.

In accordance with this idea is the wish of the archaic man "for something genuinely new to begin, where the vestiges and ruins of the old cycle must be completely destroyed" (Eliade, 1963, p. 51). The New Creation can not live up to and be built on the remains of the old to have its initial perfection, therefore, the complete annihilation of the old is necessary.

Also, it is important to point out here that the end of the world and its regeneration out of its degenerated state is common in archaic societies performed within rituals. But "from proto-agricultural stage of culture on, there was a growing acceptance of the idea that there is also the possibility of real (not merely ritual) destructions and re-creations of the World, that there is a 'return to the origin' in the literal sense, and a relapse of the Cosmos to the amorphous, chaotic state, followed by a new cosmogony" (Eliade, 1963, p 52). This is followed by projecting the end of the world myth into the future to enact the idea of perfection of beginnings in the eternal future which will be detailed when exploring the plays.

### **1.3 Roland Barthes' Perspective on Myth**

Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* describes myth as a type of speech but he initially describes it as a system of communication, a message. Considering myth as a semiological system which is inspired by Saussure's idea of the signifier, signified and the sign, he applies it onto myth to reveal the layers of significations. According to Barthes this inherent message in myth has two contradictory aspects which are literal and intentional, its signification empty and present, and meaning both absent and full at the same time. The deciphering of that message is important because it is loaded with the ideological which functions to impose this message on us as a statement of fact.

Barthes believes that there are two semiological systems in the myth which are called language object and metalanguage. Since myth uses language to communicate its message, the language object is where myth functions at the primary or literal level of signification. The second level of signification occurs at the metalanguage or mythical level where the intended meaning is communicated. There is also a third level of signification, which works at the sociological level when the former and latter significations create a plurality of meanings, an ambiguous form. It serves to its politically charged nature when the ideology it contains functions as neutralising and making the political speech natural.

While myths act on a double system their signification is never arbitrary and partly motivated. In this double system, Barthes concludes, both mythical and literal meanings and significations of the myth are constantly moving back and forth between the meaning of the signifier and the form, a language object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and purely imagining consciousness. What concerns us in his theory and will be useful in our analysis is this function of the myth's signifier acting as an alibi which is both there and absent at the same time, empty but present and its meaning absent but full.

Another important aspect of myth according to Barthes is the quality that myth hides nothing. Myth only distorts the meaning by an interplay between the concept (signified) and form (signifier). He explains this process of distortion as:

[...] the signifier has, so to speak, two aspects: one full, which is the meaning, (and) one empty, which is the form. What the concept distorts is of course what is full, the meaning(...) But this distortion is not an obliteration, they are at once stubborn, silently rooted there, and garrulous, a speech wholly at the service of the concept. The concept, literary, deforms, but does not abolish the meaning; a word can perfectly render this contradiction: it alienates it (Barthes, 1991, p.121).

According to Barthes, in order to decipher myths, one needs to focus on three types of readings. In the first type, it is the producer of myths who focuses on an empty signifier and lets the concept fill in the form of the myth without ambiguity, and arrive at a simple system where the signification becomes literal again.

The second type is that of the mythologist who deciphers myths and understands the distortion who focuses on a full signifier, and distinguishes the meaning and the form or demystifies it. Consequently, one distinguishes the distortion which the one imposes on the other, where one undo the signification of the myth and receive the latter as imposture.

Finally, the last type is the reader of myths who focuses on the mythical signifier as an inextricable whole made of meaning and form, and one receives an ambiguous signification. We would like to use the second and third type simultaneously in our research.

Barthes also advises that it is at the level of the third type one must read the myths where they reveal their essential function and this research aimed at doing this type of reading. He further informs that one should stop seeing myths as a causal process of the natural relationship and consider myth as a semiological system rather than an inductive one. Thus we should be aware of the fact that myth distorts meanings by transferring history into nature and thereby neutralising it.

#### **1.4 Joseph Campbell's Perspective on Myth**

His emphasis, in his book *Myths to Live By*, is interpreting the symbolic forms in myths in the metaphorical sense which is important to this study. It is important because these type of readings provide society with a sense of cohesion, vitality, creativity and enable them to stay integrated in times of crisis. From his



viewpoint, when a society discredits their own myths; moral law and certainty dissolves into thin air, leading the society into degeneration through immoral acts, violence and chaos. He also condemns science with its emphasis on truth or illusion to displace myths out of its place and leading modern societies into vice, crime, mental disorders, suicides, shattered homes, despair, violence and murder. However, he does not reject science altogether and instead, he questions whether there is a way to bring them together.

Therefore his faith in myths as a constituent part of the moral order in societies is unquestionable. His starting point is myth being a part of faith since the archaic time and its function as the moral constitutive part of societies. However, his standpoint is that these myths are an imaginative part of each society, and rather than taken literary they must be interpreted as facts of the human mind. Emphasising the fictive, imaginary nature of the myths and at the same time their function in assisting humankind with their contained wisdom through understanding the cosmos, it would be very relevant in our investigation of myths.

Rather than interpreting them as actual people and events, Campbell sees myths as the reflections of human psyches. Therefore his interest in the psychological gives us a perception to look at myths as the hidden reflections of the human psyche in all its complexity and irrationalism. From this perspective he quotes "Myths, so to say, are public dreams; dreams are private myths" (Campbell, 1972, p.16). He includes two important psychoanalysts into his discussion of myths, Freud and Jung, and explains that according to Freud, myths and dreams are "both systematic of repressions of infantile incest wishes, the only essential difference between a religion and neurosis being that of the former is more public" (Campbell, 1972, p.16). Therefore he draws a parallel between mythical figures and individuals with neurosis where they are equally projected in-depth unconscious desires, compulsive fears and delusions.

Opposite to Freud, he positions Carl Jung and describes his view on myths as an intertwining agent between our outward-oriented consciousness and inward

forces. In other terms, it brings a human being into completion by mindful action and enables them to keep in touch with their inner feelings permanently. He explains that “They (myths) are telling us in the picture the language of powers of the psyche to be recognised and integrated into our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of species by which man has weathered the millenniums” (Campbell, 1972, p.16-17). Therefore Jung believes that we must establish an uninterrupted dialogue with our dreams because they are the inward forces of the psyche and also studying myths will enable us to come to terms with our own deeper, wiser, inward selves. This is the way to build up a healthy, stable, strong society.

Jung’s idea of dialogue which mentioned above is important to our study. The idea of dialogue functions as explained by Campbell “a dialogue, not a fixture at either pole; a dialogue by way of symbolic forms put forth from the unconscious mind and recognised by the conscious in continuous interaction” (Campbell, 1972, p.17).

In his book, he also compares the world of science and the world of myth which is also relevant in our modern society. According to Campbell the mind of the Western man is eager to grow and his world is all about perpetual growth, new thoughts, new magnitudes and continuing transformation and change. Therefore, “his mind allures him to seek for the truth which is the language of science” (Campbell, 1972, p.18). He adds, individual’s quest for truth is nevertheless a vain attempt but only to find that its nature is displaced. On the other hand, rather than offering truth myth confides us the solid, comforting wisdom of the mode of existence and reconnect us with our world on the existential level. Consequently, the meaning of myth for Campbell is the inward journey into spiritual and get in touch with the psyche.

### **1.5 Ian Watt’s Perspective on Myth**

Ian Watt’s definition of myth is “a traditional story that is exceptionally widely known throughout the culture, that is credited with a historical or

quasi-historical belief, and embodies or symbolises some of the most basic values of society” (Watt, 1966, p.16). Watt’s ideas, different from the above- mentioned mythologists, bring transition at the heart of the mythical thought. So, although he believes there are common myths in some societies, in fact, every society transforms and creates their own myths. This transformative quality of myth ensures its persistence against time and reflects the ever-changing cultural and social atmosphere of societies at different periods. However, that does not mean all myths persist through time, some myths might also be debunked and lose its validity over time.

He is important to our research for his study of myths of modern individualism in Goethe’s Faust. Individualism is important for it is placed against the community with its cultural values and social drives. Mark Ravenhill using Faust myth also characterises his protagonist in *Faust is Dead* as an individualistic, self-driven, narcissistic character whose values reflect the social and cultural milieu of his society. Watt in his book *Myths of Modern Individualism* takes Faust as his mythical hero who is an embodiment of values and conflicts of the Renaissance man and a transitional figure of that society through his self-reflective journey. A similar approach is taken by Ravenhill who places his anti-hero in the process of transformation with his values and conflicts with the society in a world devoid of myths. He reflects individualism in every way and shares typical characteristics of the ‘excess’ and ‘arete’ inherent in a tragic hero. However, Ravenhill by subverting the Faust myth places his characters on a journey in another direction which is to a world more sterile and without metaphor.

### **1.6 Claude Levi Strauss’ Perspective on Myths**

According to structuralist Claude Levi Strauss, myth uses binary oppositions to get its transcoded message communicated and he calls these oppositions as the great pairings. Man uses such binary oppositions in order to make sense of his being and non-being in a world that does not give any significance to his

importance. Moreover, according to Strauss man himself has a divided nature between such binary oppositions and struggles between nature and culture division.

Myth, in that case, supplies man with the necessary skills to make a coherent sense of the world and his experience as a part of it. It provides for a figurative and transcendental explanation for his dual nature and the world which he alienated himself from. Also, men do not only consume myths but as a '*mythopoetic primate*' (Levi-Strauss's term) they also create and are capable of creating stories and myths to make meaning for their struggle in a world governed by contradictions. Therefore, he is insistent that myths are the building blocks of a society and without them, individuals will disintegrate.

Another important aspect of Levi Strauss's analysis of myth is the divide between Nature and Culture. In his book *Nostalgia for the Absolute* George Steiner explains the Nature/ Culture divide as "man experiencing a dilemma between the interplay of his biological constraints and social variables. Because in the inmost of his being and history, man is a divided composite of biological and socially-culturally acquired elements" (Strauss, 2013, p.63). He further comments that "That interplay is at every point dynamic because the environment, as it impinges on human biology, is itself modified by man's social and cultural activities" (Strauss, 2013, p.52).

Characters in Ravenhill's plays, also living in a society based on physical gratification and pleasure, are thus experiencing a cultural alienation throughout their action. Therefore such Nature/ Culture division is relevant to our study since they are driven by 'Nature' in their action and their motivation is based on solely satisfying their instincts. In that, they stand as complete opposites to 'Culture' and became marginalised.

For Strauss, 'the transition of man from nature to culture was also destructive on Man's part and left scars on the human psyche and the organic world' (Strauss, 2004, p.64). What was lost on the way was Man's capacity to sense and have a connection with his inner archaic self as well as knowing his place in the great

chain of beings. Therefore realising he has lost his place in this world, he frantically started to look for the lost paradise and plunged the Earth to find it. Thus in that circumstances the aim of myth should be as Strauss explained in *Anthropology Confronts the Problems of the Modern World* “(...) to demonstrate the soundness of the world as a whole and that of the particular society to which one belongs, to inspire the absolute confidence that they will remain the same as when they were created at the beginning” (Strauss, 2013, p.84). Therefore myths assure people that their existence is meaningful in the order of things. Myths, for Levi Strauss also give people the hope that “present will not reproduce the past and that future will perpetuate the present, but that the future will differ from the present in the same way that the present will differ from the past” (Strauss, 2013, p. 85).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY STAGE**

#### **2.1 Background**

Theatre in the early stages are considered human subjects as uniform and absolute and it represented reality as everyday life enacted on stage. The plays, therefore, represented human life in actuality without mimesis where characters are fully rounded and presented through interpersonal relationships. Back then, the theatre did not have a distinction between reality and representation. In the nineteenth century that type of traditional drama which lacked the content and form to represent life in actuality lend itself to a different, a more personal type which is called modern drama. This new content and form in drama live up to the conflicts and dilemmas of modern characters by focusing on “individual inner development and, ability to act upon outside world” (Larea, 2013, p.81). So, in terms of character, the shift was from unified to fragmented, in terms of content from interpersonal to inner, from social to personal, community to individual and reality to representation which mark the distinction between the traditional and modern drama.

However modern drama with its departure from reality also generated its ‘mimesis crisis’ in 1880 where “theatre’s relation to reality came to be questioned together with the primacy of text and dialogue, the linear sense of time and place, and the psychological understanding of narrative and character” (Laera, 2013, p.82) Thus in the twentieth century, drama witnessed an experimental era, where avant-garde emerged as a reaction against the representability of the real. In the book

Reaching Athens, this movement is explained as “From that point, the theatre began a process of emancipation from reality, affirming an autonomy from it, challenging naturalism’s rational and unified vision of the world [...]. Subjectivity and identity began as essentially relational, plural and even collective” (Laera, 2013, p.83). This is considered, in the book, to be the explanation of why so many contemporary authors use Greek chorus in their plays.

### **2.1.1 The Problem of Chorus and The Obscene in Modern Plays**

Chorus is an important part of the Greek plays because it represents a unified plurality. Mark Ravenhill uses chorus in his plays *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust is Dead* where the chorus acts as an intermediary between the characters and the audience but there is a twist.

Chorus represents the community as a whole, and its function as a mediator by voicing the beliefs and values is indispensable for the concept of a democratic society. These values and beliefs used to represent the Greek community in the past and while infusing such values, it unified the community around those certain values and beliefs. So in other terms, it worked as a facilitator between laws and community.

In the contemporary plays where the modern world stands with all its complexity, dramatist adapted chorus in their play to understand and resolve some of its conflicts. However such initially facilitating function of chorus acquired a new and quite opposite character in modern drama. It served as an alienating device for the modern spectator by creating a discomfort. Its discomfort sprung not only from the connotations it brought such- as socialism or fascism- into the context but also from the conflict it raised between the individual and the collective in the modern spectator. The modern spectator who liked to emphasise its individual uniqueness and its own voice as distinct from the rest felt alienated from the unity of voices of the chorus.

Moreover, chorus having an ambiguous relationship with capitalism invoked debates about being used as an ideological tool to maintain power

relationships. Its ambiguity lies in capitalism's conflictual nature for encouraging individuality but at the same time its need in communities for ongoing production and consumption. This contradictory relationship finds its double in modern plays with the ambivalent relationship between the spectator and the chorus. Mark Ravenhill aware of this conflicting character, use chorus as an impersonal voice. Therefore he ensures that the relationship of the chorus with the spectator would be problematic and create discomfort in the audience.

According to Edith Hall in the book *Reaching Athens*, "classical Greek tragedies adapted and enacted on modern stage explore issues such as homosexuality, parenthood, masculinity, child abuse, imperialism, adoption, immigration, exile, asylum, kidnapping and even Holocaust" (Laera, 2013, p.43). It is because myths in Greek tragedies are not only good examples for the restoration of balance and order by Gods punishing extravagant behaviour of the hero, but also for their reflection of the primary values of humankind. That places the ancient plays on a subtle balance between the crime committed against gods and the punishment to bring back the lost tranquillity into the universe. These issues are explored in the modern world by contemporary playwrights in order to bring up these social issues to the forefront and thus make the public more aware of it.

However, the problem arises when it comes to the staging of this explicit content in relation to the social issues when the boundaries between personal and public are abolished. Greek tragedy allowed these obscene scenes to be performed off stage because rather than the common debated idea that such scenes have the capacity to corrupt morals, it was because of the "dramaturgical conventions and practical conditions of staging" (Laera, 2013, p.150). For instance, if death took place on stage, there was the problem of removing the body from stage without interrupting the natural flow of the play.

In modern plays, these obscure scenes came to represent 'the other', as the one alienated or separated out from the rest of society and which society described itself against. Moreover, with the emergence of social theories, it gained a new perspective as to the idea of 'obscene' being a controlling device for governments.



Controlling how much public must know or what they must think or even feel. Thus it became another ideological taboo which the state inserted its power on its citizens to preserve its status. As in the book *Reaching Athens*, Margherita Laera comments “Regulating visibility is thus not a matter of morals, but one of power over individuals and the horizon of their knowing, feeling and thinking practices” (Laera, 2013, p 140).

Thus sex, sexuality, violence and foul language on stage considered as common obscene material, enacted on stage by the contemporary dramatists. The main idea apart from going beyond the conventional norms of the drama was to create a questioning audience on what is power and how power exerts itself upon the individuals. They were hoping that using violence as a critical tool, the audience would experience a cathartic moment of fear and pain where the distinction between the self and the other would break down and they would be aware of the other’s suffering. So, violence was a critical tool because although it happened on a personal level on stage, it was hinting at social and political connotations infiltrated into the lives of the characters.

The interrelationship between Greek and contemporary tragedies where myths interweave them both deal with the same issues. If we look at modern life, we come across problems such as child abuse, immigration, kidnapping and homosexuality which point to the common wounds of most societies. However, these issues are swept off and made invisible to the greater number of public. In that respect, playwrights use myths as a way to explore these issues and make the audience as consciously responsible for it.

Playwrights in that sense explore myths while keeping in mind what Barthes said, that myths should not be taken innocently without the critical mind since its truthfulness usually disguises political and social hegemonies. It is because their function is to create a cultural consciousness that perpetuates power relations and serves to a false ideology.

Thus ‘*re-visioning myth*’ used as a concept to bring down the ideological and reveal the hidden message behind. It is a term used by Babbage Frances to name

the process where myths charged with political loadings are stripped off their ideological construction and exposed. It is a redefinition of myth, where its ideological symbols and narratives are inverted and made anew to use for a purpose. Myth, in that case, becomes a site of deconstruction and renewal with the creative agencies at play. It is old which is debunked and new is created afresh to provide for the present day. Babbage explains this process of re-visioning as various as “reinterpretations and deconstructions, to subversions or outright rejections of the ‘original’ (i.e the dominant) narrative” (Frances, 2000, p.209). The myths of the past while encompassing some universal truths are nevertheless wrapped in different layers of false consciousness. Therefore, this process is indispensable in demythologising and bringing out the truth that the myths might have conveyed. Contemporary theatre likewise might re-interpret myths of the past to make their audience aware of the voiceless in society, or it might deconstruct myths in order to reveal the social apparatuses controlling the public by maintaining power relations or they even might subvert them so to expose injustices and inequalities and create counter-myths to invoke a societal change.

### **2.1.2 In-Yer- Face Theatre**

Mark Ravenhill deconstructs myths in his play by using particular myths to question particular assumptions on power and ideology, consumerism, equality, humanity, identity, family and violence. He is a part of the group of playwrights who started what Alex Sierz called ‘a new sensibility’ in theatre. Alex Sierz who coined the term for this new sensibility describes *‘in-yer-face theatre’* as shockingly sensational, experimental, and confrontational. This significant movement brought flesh and blood to the 1990’s British theatre scene. It used shocking techniques, obscenity (nudity, sexuality), and blatant language on stage in order to shatter taboos, urge extreme emotions to encourage the audience for questioning general assumptions.

According to Sierz’s definition *‘in-yer-face theatre’* is “any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message” (Sierz,

2001, p.13). In order to grasp the audience by the neck, they knew they needed to get the audience out of their comfort zone by being provocative, extravagant, aggressive and intense. In their attempt to achieve this, they removed the boundaries between private and public so that audience would relate themselves to the pain and suffering of the actors on stage and conscious of their dark sides which are inherent in us all. They, just as Greek tragedies do, told their audience about 'what it is like to be a human' and asked questions such as 'what is acceptable and non-acceptable?', 'is this supposed to be the moral norms and social mores?' and 'who decides it?', as well as bring into the spotlight the problems of globalization, consumerism, capitalism and gender issues. In their attempt to make the audience uncomfortable in their skin nothing would fit better than adapting myths. However, we must also keep in mind that in their *'re-visioning'* of myths they constantly deconstruct the simple binary oppositions that myths contained and thus provide a space for the critical mind.

Myths in their extravagant content of incestuous love affairs, child abuse, rape, gender ambiguity, violent punishments, abandonment, and murder, enabled in-her-face playwrights to explore the dark aspects of the British society in the 1990s. Their deep-seated discomfort with social and moral degradation finds its reflection in their plays and their struggle to shake the audience out of their optimistic and callous attitude towards societal issues. They anticipated a change and they would use all the means in their language, content and character to make it happen.

Alex Sierz draws parallels with Greek tragedies and in-her-face theatre by commenting "The content of tragedy is a meeting between the waywardness of fate and some of our most intimate fears, and the Greeks were well aware of the mixture of heroism and hopelessness involved in taking a stand against the inexorable and inexplicable" (Sierz, 2001, p.19).

Thus, in-her-face playwrights while experimenting and subverting myths transgressed what is conventional and naturalistic created an avant-garde where the stage became the site of purgation. As Sierz put it, "the idea was to put them through

the hell in order to exorcise their inner demons was at the root of the experimental theatre” (Sierz, 2001, p.31).

So, with the employment of myths the stage becomes a representation of the exploration of the macrocosm where violence is internalised, brutal sacrifices became the way to end human suffering, mechanic sexual experience the norm, and drugs welcomed to intensify the experience, while abusing families is socially ignored and the death of the man is carnivalesquely celebrated.

### **2.1.3 British Theatre in the 1990s**

Before the cultural shift in theatre in the 1970s, political theatre dealt with the large-scale political plays which covered several years, the subject was epic in scale and cast of characters were in a very large number. The writers of that period believed that present cannot be understood without a social and historical reference to the past because the recognition of historical movement was important for individuals to understand their place in the world. In his introduction to the play *Shopping and Fucking* Dan Rebellato explains that “What these structures did was to embody a vision of the world, the grand scale of these plays encouraged the audience to situate the individual characters within historical and social context” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.xiv).

Yet, after the 1970s there was dissatisfaction with these plays in the epic style which was a result of a change in the audience’s sensibilities. Rebellato points out that “Those epic plays were structured to foster a sense of historical movement and collective power. But the consumer society in Britain was working in the opposite direction” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.xxviii). By the end of the decade, large-scale political theatre weakened its hold on its audience and new, more experimental forms emerged to live up to its audiences’ sensibilities. Hans-Thies Lehman described the theatre after the 1970s as “tendencies were more about foundings rather than representation, a shared experience rather than a theme, process rather than product, indications rather than meaning, energetic impulses rather than knowledge” (Buglalilar, 25:2008).

It is precisely this new world where the characters of the *Shopping and Fucking* emerged; lacking any sense of history, extremely individualised and alienated for being brought up by broken families, with no sense of community and defined everything based on consumption. Yet they were also looking for a whole new set of values.

The characters in the play are reflecting this contemporary culture, they are sketchy and we know little or nothing about their families, ambitions, beliefs, value judgements, jobs, or even their last names. Yet the intention behind such thin characterisation was the authorial intention of shifting the focus of attention onto the characters' responses to the events, their inaction in the calamity of events, to the micro-stories they tell, the disruptions in their speech, their hesitation, their conflicts and struggles.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 A Reflection of the 90s Theatre in Shopping and Fucking

Mark Ravenhill's characters are set in the mid-nineties, in a world where a cultural shift took place towards cultural degeneration, moral nihilism, spiritual emptiness and relentless consumption, and they are "desperately trying to find a different set of values, but they can't" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.xx). Therefore we have at hand a political play with the postmodernist attitude, treating its subject matter in an elusive, ambitious, ironic manner with using violent, sexually explicit content for a head-on confrontation of his social milieu that's in crisis.

As the playwright David Edgar underlined the relationship between theatre and politics to be 'the project of explaining public events in a privatised way', Ravenhill creates a microcosm to represent the power relations which seeps into the cracks of a society and not only affecting the deviants, and underclasses and making them sacrificial scapegoats to the system that is based on economic value but also children of the middle-class England, as some of his characters who belong to this educated middle class also struggle along with less privileged ones. It is a world extremely individualised, and characters with no sense of history, politically inert, stripped bare of the meaningful human relationships, and who define themselves over economic values. In Mark Ravenhill's description "The people in the play are just trying to make sense of a world without religion or ideology" (Sierz, 2001, p.xx).

Moreover, Ravenhill also claimed that his play was written in response to Thatcher's dictum of "There is no such thing as society" (Sierz, 2012, p.161). Graham Saunders points out that there were polarised views against Thatcher's rhetoric and policies, so, a great number of plays written in the aftermath of

Thatcherism focused on the questions of individualism and individuality. Saunders comments about Ravenhill's plays by saying:

in its place (the 1970s the state-of-the-nation plays), in 1990s theatre, the focus was on the contemporary superseded the epic sweep of history; characters discoursed tersely about ready meals and their addiction to drugs and sexual encounters rather than giving fifteen-minute set speeches on the state of the nation or the progress of socialism (Sierz, 2012, p.164-165).

Dan Rebellato was convinced that it was a reaction towards an expansion of Thatcherite values in the society which were "virtues of competition, individual choice, entrepreneurialism, and the making of money as a moral duty" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.16-17).

Thus Mark Ravenhill, skilfully dramatises the collapse of the values of the old world in *Shopping and Fucking* and *Some Explicit Polaroids* and replaces its subject matter for exploring the new values which have some serious issues such as consumer capitalism, justice, in/equality, freedom of choice and morality and he does so by using 'Brechtian- inspired gestus' (Graham Saunders' term).

### **3.2 Mythical Motifs in Shopping and Fucking**

The play starts with Mark being unable to hold the food in his stomach that Lulu and Robbie forces into him and this is the conflictual state that audiences are made to consider. Why Mark cannot eat? and Why do they force him to eat? or 'What is it that they cannot change?' are the questions that this brief moment arises in the mind of the audiences. Thus, Mark as the protagonist of the play represents this conflictual persona which problematize the concept of control at the level of the individual's body and which requires further explorations on the social level.

The struggle means conflict and conflict is always political, Foucault claims. Mark's resistance to hold the food in his stomach, might be due to his questioning the authenticity of his life, the meaninglessness of his current existence and the power that is infiltrated into his everyday life. In a society where money becomes the dominant determining value, human beings can also become

commodified. By being commodified, we mean that their life can be turned into a rather dull object determined by the economic values of the market. This might be the reason why the stage directions hint at the current state of their flat which "*Flat-once rather stylish, now almost entirely stripped bare*" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.53) and brings the outer into the sphere of the inner. Characters are indeed stripped bare inside out and barely surviving, they are only trying to keep their heads above the water.

No matter how much they strive, they suffer from unexpected consequences partly coming from their own action but mostly from events which they have no way of foreseeing. Therefore, it would be naive to think that the calamity that their lives face come from their own choices. Foucault explains in his article Subject and Power that "while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex" (Foucault, 1982, p.778).

As we have mentioned earlier there was a shift in politics after the General Election on May 1979 when Conservatives came to power under their leader Margaret Thatcher. This government, being the far most right-wing government, overturned a set of values such as state ownership, support of industry, government interference on unemployment, the validity of unions for being the voice of employers; and administered what Foucault called 'the new art of governing'. This new type of governing included, "a major programme of privatisation, opening all sectors of the economy to the commercial competition, breaking the power of the unions, preferring to let the market rather than the government decide prices, wages and levels of unemployment" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.16-17).

According to the Foucauldian theory of Biopolitics, 'the new art of government' began to be formulated, reflected upon, and outlined around the middle of the eighteenth century. The characteristic of this new art of government with all its "organisation of numerous and complex internal mechanisms' was not so much 'to ensure the growth of the state's forces, wealth, and strength' but 'to ensure its



unlimited growth, as to limit the exercise of government power internally” (Foucault, 2008, p.27).

In this new system of government, “the market constitutes a site of verification” and “a mechanism of exchange” (Foucault, 2008, p.32). That means “the market determines that a good government is no longer quite simply one that is just but a good government has to function ‘according to (a standard of) truth which the market determines’” (Foucault, 2008, p.32). Therefore, Foucault concludes the system works in two ways which are “exchange for wealth and utility for the public authorities: this is how governmental reason articulates the fundamental principle of self-limitation” (Foucault, 2008, p.44).

Its utility to limit the power of public authorities, since the new economic system also encourages the least government intervention and regulation to ensure the unlimited growth of the market economy, leads to the problem of “how to set juridical limits to the exercise of power by public authority where it is the most useful and positive” (Foucault, 2008, p.39). In other words, the new system tries to define “the natural or original rights that belong to every individual, and then to define under what conditions, for what reason, and according to what ideal or historical procedures a limitation or exchange of rights was accepted” (Foucault, 2008, p39).

However, when it comes to that point, the main question becomes whether the government recognise and guarantee the natural or original rights of the individuals. According to Foucault, the government do not respect freedom and on the contrary, it is the consumer of freedom. So, it acts in a political double bind that while it produces freedom, generating a discourse to be free, it also determines the conditions and rules to be free whereby consumes freedom.

Mark, whose vocabulary had been defined by the market intellectually unable to grasp the presence of such restrictions being penetrated into their everyday life by this new art of government. Under such a government which destroys all the values that are not economic, he mistakenly sense that he needs to be ‘free’. He needs to be free of his drug addiction, his emotional attachment with the group so

that he can decide with his free will, go to rehab and gain control over his life again. However, the market economy as a part of this new type of governing perpetuates the discourse of freedom while at the same time has the power to undermine the individual will and desire through restricting or encouraging knowledge. It does that by reading the minds of the individuals and their desires and expectations.

### **3.2.1 The Obsession with the Lost Pasts**

When Mark tells he has lost control of his mind and body, Lulu asks him to tell how he sees them in a supermarket and buys them for twenty. Graham Saunders refers to the obsession with the 'lost pasts' which is a recurring mytheme throughout the play and it prevails in the shopping story. In the story, Mark buys Robbie and Lulu from a fat man in a supermarket who owned them but does not want them anymore because they are trash. So, "You've seen the transaction" Mark says, "And I take you both away and I take you to my house. And you see the house and when you see the house you know it. You understand? You know this place" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.56).

This moment in the past is supposed to be a precious reminder of why they wanted to be together in the first place. So, repeating it may bring back the past into a meaningful context of the present time, underlining the endurance of emotions with the understanding of transformations. However, the lost past mytheme here is told from the perception of the transaction leaves no room for emotions.

On the contrary, rather than invoking the nostalgic longing for the establishment of their relationship, it rather disrupts our feelings of nostalgia for this lost past.

Stories are important for they tell about the characters in a fictive mode and by way of distancing characters and events. Since myth is also a story 'the shopping myth' told by Mark, demonstrates their relationship to be based on ownership and transaction. It is a bleak description of society so fragmented and broken that love relationship which supposed to be private is made an object of economic exchange.

Joseph Campbell reminds us that it is through myths that a society can interpret its values, make meaning of their everyday experience or harmonise their lives but shopping myth represents only the superficial values of consumption and ownership in which the most humane feelings of love and affection substituted by shopping.

In his re-visioning of the myth, Ravenhill demythologizes the act of shopping being personal and confined to the consummation of objects and imagines it being collective and very much attached to human relationships. On the social plane, it points at a society whose myths prioritizes the value object of an economic exchange over the most significant human values. Therefore, through the act of shopping, Robbie and Lulu become another object in the sphere of economic exchange and love is no longer a private feeling but another object of consumption.

Robbie and Lulu become afraid and resentful about Mark's decision to go and get help to sort his life out. They cannot accept the fact that they aren't strong together but they might be pulling each other down and perhaps doing it involuntarily. Besides not being as independent as Mark, at the end of the day, they would like to think they were owned by Mark who still desires them and wants them infinitely. So when they realise they are not wanted anymore, Robbie looks weak and it is Lulu who puts on a hard face to assure Robbie that they can do without him. She insists "You don't own us. We exist. We're people. We can get by. Go. Fuck right off. Go. GO" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.58).

It is, in fact, Lulu, when boys mess things up and chaos prevails, who is able to bring order and unity. For that reason, Ravenhill being aware of the problems of blokedom inherent in previously staged plays brings into focus the crisis in masculinity in contemporary culture by adapting the girl-in -a -boys- gang play.

One of the theme in the play, Alex Sierz explains, how the playwright brings forward the issues of masculinity in contemporary culture. He informs:

The play's gender confusions are about the definition of maleness: Gary, the abuse victim who wants to die; Mark, the emotional dependent who is also a junkie; Robbie, the bisexual. In scene after scene, the boys foul up and it is Lulu, the

woman, who holds things together. When Robbie gets sacked, Lulu gets work. When drug dealing needs to be done, Lulu knows 'the first rule'. When Robbie gives away the Ecstasy, it is Lulu who begs Brian for time to repay the money. She is also the one who shoplifts food for them all (Sierz, 2001, p.136).

When Mark leaves them to be cured for his drug addiction and his emotional dependencies, it is Lulu who as a trained actress strives to find a job so that they can shop to get by. When Lulu gets an interview for a job as a shopping channel presenter, we are introduced to Brian, a middle-aged man with a passionate spirit to defend capitalism and who is obsessed with the film *The Lion King*. During the interview, Lulu acts cunningly and plays into his hands by showing that she inherits socially accepted norms such as appreciating order, occasionally seeing her parents and celebrating Christmas.

Brian, having seen the society before capitalism but internalizing the capitalist values, ironically yearns for the lost past. When he utters "So many today are lost" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.60), he means not only so many families are broken and they are lost but also all the meanings that hold any society together such as Christmas, family values, traditions etc. are lost. However, in order to restore these feelings, he imitates and makes a living by marketing these feelings in their simulation. Therefore, Lulu in her acting must give the sense of something special or in other words give that 'meaning' so that the spectators also feel special and so that they can feel but in reality, it is make-believe of a more easier, richer, fulfilling world. A simulated world, which people have the opportunity to passively consume these emotions, because in real life there is only shallowness, disconnectedness, loss, and the lack the fulfilment and security of these feelings of such life brings.

### **3.2.2 The emergence of ALIENation**

Brian's obsession with the Story of the Lion King hints at the destroyed family structure of the 1990s. Alex Sierz writes about living in the 1990s and notes about dysfunctional families with a comment that "The traditional family is dead,

killed off cohabitation and divorce. [...] Unmarried motherhood rockets, with the highest rate in Europe of children born outside marriage” (Sierz, 2012, p.2).

When Lulu is asked to show her acting talents her declamatory speech “One day people will know what all this was for. All this suffering” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.11) comes as an insight into their current state of confusion.

These lines are from Chekhov’s three-act play ‘Three Sisters’ which “focuses on a small group of self-obsessed young people with very little self-knowledge” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.143). When this speech is taken into account, together with Robbie’s vision under the influence of drugs, it emphasises that people all over the world who lack this self-knowledge to identify where their suffering comes from would feel powerless to change their current situation. It most resembles the quixotic fight against windmills, due to capitalism being inherently formless. Ravenhill also informs us that his characters are desperately trying to make meaning in this world that comes as a strange, brute, and meaningless to their existence. They are desperately searching for new values and ethics to guide them in this ‘ALIENation’ (Fredrick Jameson’s term) where everything is turned into economic value. Their dissatisfaction with the limitation of their lives gives voice to such declamatory speeches mixed with irony and cynicism throughout the play.

Likewise, Robbie after giving away the ecstasy tablets which he was supposed to sell gives voice to a similar insight of alienated persona. In his epiphany he visions:

[...] I see this kid in Rwanda, crying, but he doesn’t know why. And this granny in Kiev, selling everything she’s ever owned. And this president in Bogota or...South America. And I see suffering. And the wars. And the grab,grab,grab. And I think: Fuck Money. This selling. This buying. This system. Fuck the bitching world and let’s be...beautiful. Beautiful. And happy (Ravenhill, 2005, p.90).

Although his speech comes as ironical since his vision of the world most likely to come from the drugs, still, some part of the truth in his speech cannot be ignored. His connection between the suffering in this world to ‘this selling, buying’ and the system that is based on ‘grab, grab, grab’ is relevant and insightful.

In liberal capitalist societies, where everything is commodified, and individuals are falsely led to believe they have freedom and choice while at the same time capitalism working to undermine it by emptying all the values that are not economic, and disrupting the individual's sense of the relationship with the world, turns individual experience and existence into a schizophrenic one.

Brian unlike other characters has a vocabulary of the market and voices the values of the current consumerist society. During the interview, at some point he insists that, Lulu should take her jacket off and blackmails her when she refuses. She begs him and explains that she desperately needs the job. Just as she concedes and takes it off, two chilled ready-made food falls down on the floor. Brian questions and makes her admit that she stole them. Her justification for her crime is striking and show how appalling the conditions are for the marginalised people.

She begs, "We have to eat. We have to get by. I don't like this. I'm not a shoplifter. By nature. My instinct is for work. I need a job. Please" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.12).

If her choice is towards working to buy food then stealing is what she is forced to do. Her speech declares the inequality and poverty in the society where there are lack of jobs even for the educated middle class people. But since society is one based on the relationship of power, further to exploit her, he demands she should take off her shirt too. Although she does again what she is told, Brian does not offer her a job but a test. If she wants the job, first she has to sell drugs. The interview becomes a place of domination, humiliation and abuse rather than a determination of her competency for the position, which focuses on the relationship of power fuelled by the current ideology. The dominant group subordinating the other in such power structured society is relevant in this revelatory scene. The motivation behind Brian's demands lies in his power to control others' behaviours and this relationship is sustained by the ideological apparatuses.

This form of power Foucault explains in his article 'Subject and Power' makes individuals subjects. Subject, Foucault informs has two meanings which are to make "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and to tie to his own

identity by conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault, 1982, p.781). He concludes that all types of subjection are the outcome of economic and social processes such as “forces of production, class struggle, and ideological structures which determine the form of subjectivity” (Foucault, 1982, p.781). Foucault also claims that bringing into play the power relationships includes, obtaining consent as much as the use of violence and although it may employ only one, it usually uses both at the same time. But still, he informs that the basic nature of the exercise of power is neither of them. The basic nature of power is ‘acting upon an acting subject’. Therefore, the exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Therefore in order to act upon the possibilities of action “it (power) incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult and in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely” (Foucault, 1982, p.789).

It is through ‘the acting upon an acting subject’ Brian exerts his dominance and controls Lulu’s behaviours. When Brian understands that, contrary to what Lulu made him to believe, she is morally degenerate and economically desperate, he can conduct her behaviours towards a certain outcome. On a personal level, his exercise of power obtains consent for the final outcome which is to sell drugs to pass the test. On the social level, Lulu in her alienation and dependency can perform little self-reflection as to the source of their suffering. She is precisely made to serve the system of suffering by negotiating her life every day and by looking for a job that would pay for the food so that she can continue to her hedonistic and inert lifestyle.

### **3.2.3 The Problem of Choice**

The problem of free choice as a mytheme recurs in the scene where Robbie is attacked in his McJob by a customer because he decides to offer him a choice and also when Mark retells the mutant version of the shopping story taking place in the distant future and where characters show a fear of choice.

Moreover, Mark at the beginning also thinks that he is free to choose between living with Robbie and Lulu or being free.



According to Foucault liberal governments produce freedom in order to consume it. He further emphasizes the fact that this new art government regulates freedom not in the sense that forcing individuals 'to be free' but rather it sees what it needs to produce for individuals to be free. So, in this production of freedom, the new art of government risks the limiting or altogether destroying that freedom.

To sum up, liberalism is not about freedom of the individuals but the freedom of the market, the freedom of buying and selling. Broadly speaking, the freedom of individuals must not become a threat to the enterprise or production.

In a society where the most important act is buying and selling, freedom of choice is also produced according to the needs of the market. Individuals have no autonomy, their free will is predetermined by the economic, political and cultural life and they are unconscious of the power relations. That is the reason why when offered with choice their inability to subjectivise themselves of that power makes individuals feel dazed and confused.

Yet, due to witnessing a brutal murder at a convenient store, Lulu, in her desperation, is not entirely unconscious of the control that is imposed in her life by consumer capitalism. When she is distracted at the shop by so many choices, her comments "they do deliberately" and then "I'm only partly aware- and really why should I be more aware?" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.79) reflects her awareness, although half-conscious, into this construction of the society of control. So, Lulu from making an inference that all these choices are the same and only serve to distract us from the real issues in the society is echoing this darkest place at the heart of the global capitalist system.

Thus, Lulu questions this system and asks; why do they have all these choices while they constantly struggle to make a decision, and in fact all choices are the same, and they end up in negotiating their life every day.

Likewise, Mark makes a decision to get rid of the emotional attachment he has with others to make his life better only to come back again with greater emotional attachment than he had before, while Robbie with his decisions constantly fails more in any job, and Lulu, repeatedly makes a decision to prevent their lives



from falling into pieces. This same recurrent pattern brings into mind the question if they are free to make decisions to change their life. Fredrick Jameson in his book *Postmodernism* asks if the market has anything to do with choice or freedom precisely because those are all determined for us and we have no control over our choice.

### **3.2.4 Sexual Relationships as a Site of Transaction**

When Mark is kicked out of the rehab centre for having broken the rule of no intimate relationship with the inmates, he refuses to call it 'intimate' because he paid for it. In order to avoid emotional attachment, he defines relationships purely in terms of a transaction so that it would not be personal. He rhetorically asks Robbie, "And when you are paying, you can't call that a personal relationship, can you?" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.69-70 ). But Robbie feels disappointed and, and despite Mark's weak comment that "*It's not real*" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.71), he takes two ecstasy tablets which he was supposed to sell. Lulu does not give Mark a warm welcome either and says the microwaved food is designed individually so she cannot share it.

In his introduction to *Shopping and Fucking*, Dan Rebellato identifies Mark's tendency to define a relationship based on transaction as a 'parody of therapy speak' where he parrots a therapeutic vocabulary of 'emotional dependencies'. Rebellato concludes, "Perhaps his ability to feel emotionally involved with others is not such an illness that he has to be cured" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.27). However, we also have to accept the fact that one's compassion for others can also become destructive when the market society is designed to empower the dominant groups more, and marginalise the other. This dilemma inevitably causes moral vacuity and insensate shallowness for the individuals who exchange long-standing, non-economic values with the economic ones.

Rebellato points out that, "For Mark, as we have seen, money acts as a kind of anaesthetic, a barrier that softens the impact of the world on us and of us on the world. In a society where money has become the dominant value, we live our lives in a permanently desensitised state" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.33-34).

Mark's quest to numb his feeling for others starts with Robbie and in order to test himself, he finds Gary, a rent boy whom he can pay for sex to make sure it is a 'transaction' and does not mean anything. He explains Gary that:

"Right. Well. Today you see is my first day of a new life. I've been away to get better, well to acknowledge my needs anyway, and now I'm starting again and I suppose I wanted to experiment with you in terms of an interaction that was sexual but not personal, or at least not needy, OK?" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.76)

On another level, Mark's inability to distinguish what's real and what's simulated directs him to have experiences which aimed at understanding himself and the meaning in the world. In his current state, he thinks by denying himself the emotional attachment with others, he can achieve order and control in his life.

Mark repeats his problem of emotional attachments to Gary as:

"Listen. I want you to understand because. I have this personality you see? Part of me that gets addicted. I have a tendency to define myself purely in terms of my relationship with others. I have no definition of myself you see. So I attach myself to others as a means of avoidance, of avoiding knowing the self. Which is actually potentially very destructive. For me – destructive for me.[...]" (Ravenhill, 2005, p. 83-84)

Fredrick Jameson brings forward the 'Lacanian underpinnings of Althusser's theory' which points at the irreconcilability between existential and abstract knowledge and he argues that:

The existential- the positioning of the individual subject, the experience of daily life, the monadic "point of view" on the world to which we are necessarily as biological subjects, restricted- is in Althusser's formula implicitly opposed to the realm of abstract knowledge, a realm which, as Lacan reminds us, is never positioned in or actualised by any concrete subject but rather by that structural void called **le sujet suppose savoir** ( the subject supposed to know), a subject-place of knowledge (Jameson, 1997, p.46).

In other words, Althusserian formula points out to the irreconciliation between existential experience and scientific knowledge in which ideology functions between for connecting these two different concepts.

In this complex web of new representations, Fredrick Jameson offers cognitive mapping in which postmodern subjects are to grasp their positioning in relation to this new world “as an individual and collective subjects to regain the capacity to act and struggle, which at present is neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion” (Jameson, 1997, p.46).

### **3.2.5 The Absence of Paternal Figures**

The fact that Mark used to define himself in economic terms in which his happiness once depended on, robbed him of his capacity to act and struggle in understanding his existential experience.

On the whole, Mark’s questioning is the authenticity of his life. As Terry Eagleton noted “It’s the claim that what matters is less the content of one’s life than its coherence and consistency” (2003, p. 249)

Moreover, although Mark wants sex to be based on economic exchange, Gary still comes into his life with his own emotional baggage. Gary is only fourteen and a victim of sexual abuse by his step-father. His body has been a place of violation and abuse as a child until he was able to run away from home.

The motif of the sexual father repeats itself throughout the play. Garry’s step-father abuses him with a knife yet he imagines his ideal partner to be abusive as the one who will protect him and hurt him at the same time. Likewise, in Mark’s shopping story, his role is both a protector and an owner for Robbie and Lulu. Brian who also could have been a father figure to them acts as a sexual predator but at the same time teaches them a lesson.

Dan Rebellato notes “it is the transformation of the social ambiguity of the paternal role, transformed into a deep political ambiguity’ which is what is at stake” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.32). Since the conventional family structures changed and the traditional family model transformed, the roles it used to encompass also changed. As the social welfare changed into economic welfare so does the protective, disciplinary paternal figure into a predatory, money ridden figure. Perhaps this change can be heard to echo in Brian’s question to Robbie “[...] at the end of the

day, at the final reckoning, behind beauty, behind God, behind paradise, peel them away and what is there” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.99), and to Brian ‘father’ is not a good enough answer compared to ‘money’.

The symbolic death of the father in contemporary culture accommodates itself into The Lion King story which the moral message Brian takes to the heart. In one scene Brian tells about, the lion king goes to the stream because some inner voice tells him to go and speak to his father and when he was by the stream, he first sees his own reflection and then the water ripples and he sees his father’s ghost who in his revelation announces the future destruction of generations if the families are to be destroyed. Similarly, the present violence and madness in society are reflected through the characters’ experience in the play, their encounters with other characters, their frustrations, dissatisfactions, fear, struggle and things that they cannot change.

### **3.2.6 Blood as the Reminder of a Trauma**

In a scene where Lulu walks into a seven-eleven shop to buy chocolate only to witness the girl at the counter to be stabbed to death is an example of such violence. In this society, not a minute passes without a life-shattering event to take place, yet the characters are made passive observers of such calamities. Since they are unaware of the fact that refusing to take responsibility comes with a price, they prefer to ignore it. When the girl at the counter in a seven-eleven shop is killed by a mental because he was given a wrong packet of cigarettes, Lulu can not walk out of the shop without evading some blood smearing to her face.

Dan Rebellato explains the occasional breakthrough in characters’ sensitivity:

at various points in the play, the body’s leaky instability comes to represent both the promise and the danger of breaking through that anaesthetic haze and renewing our numbed sensations. It’s a positive thing to Brian, when he discovers a tear, and describes it as a ‘little drop of pure emotion’ However, for Mark, shocked to discover blood in his mouth after rimming Garry, or Lulu’s horrified reaction to finding some on her face, blood is an untidy reminder that other people cannot easily be commodified. As such the body appear to be a site of resistance to capital (Ravenhill, 2005, p.33-34).

Similarly, the consequence of ignoring such brutal murder catches up with her when Lulu and Robbie set up a phone-sex business and a customer uses the copy of CCTV images of the stabbing scene at the store as a snuff-porn. Thus, it is a reminder that her inaction would only perpetuate more violence and moral degradation unless she refuses the current dehumanizing values imposed on her by the ideology of the governmental system.

It is true that the modern state works only for the interest of certain groups, ignoring the individuals. However, “modern state is not an entity which was developed above individuals ignoring what they are and even their very existence”, Foucault informs, the government is on the contrary “a sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated under one condition: that this individuality should be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns” (Foucault, 1982, p.783). So, the exercise of power is both individualising and totalising. Foucault calls this power technique ‘pastoral power’ which originated in the West from the Christian institutions. He associates the qualities of this type of power with, “knowing the inside of people’s mind, exploring their souls and making them reveal their innermost secrets” and also “being salvation oriented, oblativ, individualising, coextensive and continuous with life, and linked with a production of truth- the truth of the individual himself” (Foucault, 1982, *Critical Inquiry*, p.783). The same power reading the minds of individuals and deciding what they desire produces products which will satisfy their desires instantly, and it will also condemn them to the benumbed moral vacuity, personal disconnectedness and insensate shallowness. This is what makes Lulu walk away from the murder with the chocolate bar she stole. Consequently, characters questions ‘who they are: a monster or a human being.’ So Lulu asks herself “She’s being attacked and I picked this up and just for a moment I thought: I can take this and there’s nobody to stop me. Why did I do that? What am I?” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.80). Robbie’s response to the murder also reflects such a desensitised state. He feels no compassion for the girl who was brutally murdered and his comment only normalizes the situation. “They must be used to it. Work nights in a shop like that, what do they expect?” (Ravenhill, 2005,

p.81). His justification of her murder with the nature of the work is the result of his lack of judgement and his ignorance of humanity. In his comment, Robbie reflects a corrupted morality and commits the evil in the society which will only perpetuate more injustices, violence and soulless individuals. Robbie in his allegiance to the system acts as the slave of this system and defends the degenerated, inhuman values of it through his speech.

Since Lulu is in shock of witnessing such brutal murder, Robbie goes to that night club to sell the drugs Brian gave her. He convinces Lulu that he is educated and selling drugs do not require a lot of skills. She concedes but reminds him that “the only rule is one who sells shall not use” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.82). However, Robbie breaks the rule and in a moment of attraction to his male customers at the club, he gives away the whole bunch. He is not a money person, he is a natural giver but the ironic part is that he does this under the influence of drugs. In the end, he is beaten by another customer who could not get enough free ecstasy from him.

Then, their situation worsens when Brian asks for his money threatening them by showing a video of a tortured man and gives them a week to raise the money. He uses the myth of the Fall and the First Sin to open up the current wound in society. His nostalgic longing for the past when he declares:

“Because once it was paradise, you see? And you could hear it – heaven singing in your eyes’ is quickly darkened by the first sin ‘But we sinned, and God took it away, took away music until we forgot we even heard it but sometimes you get a sort of glimpse – music or a poem – and it reminds you of what it was like before all the sin” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.96-97).

The Fall of Man from the paradise is described in the Book of Genesis. According to the biblical myth, there are two identical trees, a tree of life and a tree of knowledge. Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but Eve, with the cunning tricks of the cursed serpent which is Satan in disguise, eats the forbidden fruit and she also makes Adam eat it as well. As soon as the knowledge is acquired they knew that they are naked and look for clothing. As

a consequence of their sin, which might be considered as a breach of contract with God, they are punished and sent to earth that God had cursed.

According to the accounts of the idyllic world, God could have only created a perfect model of the world where there is no sin, unspoiled by greed, pride or chaotic events. Because, as we are told in the first chapter in Genesis, 'God saw all that he had made and convinced that it was very good'. Therefore it is very common that everything we find disturbing in nature is the result of a fall in nature which coincided with the fall of man. So when Brian longs for the paradise before the sin, his longing is for the perfect world for man's benefit. Brian's idea of lost paradise can not be related to a world before capitalism since he passionately defends the object of economic values to be the building blocks of civilization, it is neither a place of harmony nor the presence of beauty or the God but rather it is the place of maximum profit. His Edenic vision which consists of the abundance of money is no different than the cursed world he lives on earth which gives away his destructive paranoia.

In his re-visioning of the lost paradise and the fall of man myth, the playwright removes the difference between the ideal or apocalyptic and the actual or the demonic. Brian brings the demonic into his vision of the paradise which is represented by money and thus disturbing the Edenic harmony and serenity of that vision.

So, when Robbie is questioned what is behind beauty, God, or paradise, and he comes up with an answer 'father' is immediately rejected by Brian until he gives the correct answer which is 'money'. It connects the idea of the first sin and humanity losing its place in the Edenic world, to the idea of humanity falling into the world of market capitalism where God or the symbolic 'Father' is substituted with money and now all that matter is to get it in the first place. In this world characters with no God and values to guide their struggle for the meaning, as Ravenhill explains cannot find any. The truth is, every individual makes their meaning in life through introspection and others can not determine what would be meaningful for the other. However, a life devoid of care, tenderness, connection, sympathy, intelligence,



creativity, and without long term projects, as well as commitments and relationships would not be a meaningful life. But most of all, perhaps a crisis in meaning may occur when someone else determines what a meaningful life would be for us.

Alex Sierz explains the abandonment of twenty-somethings as:

“Here is a nation where the grown-ups, represented by Brian, have a vestige of old values but also advocate the most excessive spirit of capitalism, whose moral lesson is: ‘ Get the money first’ (Ravenhill, 2001, p.137) When Gary complains about being abused, his social worker, another grown-up, offers him a leaflet. Young people have been abandoned. However funky and uninhibited, they are dazed, confused and boiling over. With all adults corrupt, there is little to relieve the pain and the tedium except shopping and fucking” (Sierz, 2001, p.137).

The question is how they can, in the same body, work when the work is scarce, make future plans when they cannot even get by, make meaningful relationships when marginalised, make commitments when there is violence everywhere, show affection and sympathy when neglected socially, and find what is a meaningful life when capitalism determines the values of that meaningful life which generates infinite consumption and rampant individualism.

In the scene where Lulu and Robbie start telephone sex, Lulu switching from one customer to another uses small anecdotes from different myths such as the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, and Phaethon myths. It is important to analyse these myths and how the playwright envisions them in a new perspective.

Apparently Lulu, in her speech, is opening a window into societal solidarity when she says “That’s what I say. Standing in the Garden and it’s All of humanity, the course of history. / Look, I’m offering it to you. Because we are the first, we are the only ones. And I want you to take it” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.101). Originally, the garden of Eden myth consisting of Adam and Eve in their idyllic world which is given to them by God to live in peace, abundance and harmony with nature, signifies sacral humanity. The Edenic Garden implies the perfection of beginnings, however for such genuine beginnings to take place, the old cycle must be abolished completely. So, in her desacralization of humanity, Lulu offers a paradise on earth



build anew, not on the vestiges of the old world but, the one similar to the lost paradise. However, the qualities of that paradise are not defined explicitly. Lulu's declaration of humanity's existence in the Garden of Eden on earth is one devoid of God, or sin and her emphasis are on the individuals' capacity to realise and seize what had been given to them in this world. She might be informing us about the notion of utopia based on the autonomy of the presumably self-sovereign individual in a world devoid of any grand narratives and autonomy as an alternative to the absence of values in guiding the individuals in their journey. But since her speech is to make money, its falsity makes its authenticity doubtful. So, in Ravenhill's envisioning of the myth where he throws light upon the desperate and unspecific longing of the characters for meaning, origins, connections, and existence in this degenerated world, is suddenly countered by the apparent facticity of the real, imposing the idea of a world which bows to only one God: money.

Mircea Eliade in *Myths and Reality* explains the notion of '*eschatology*' as 'the prefiguration of cosmogony to come' (1963, p.52 ) or in other words imagining perfected serene beginnings in the future. He points out that every eschatology presumes a total annihilation of this world before the new is created. The main reason for this destruction is to eliminate the old and thus the degenerated in order to attain this blissful initial perfection.

Through her demythologizing Lulu offers the whole humanity a secular earthly paradise in future that is based on the total annihilation of the existent world. As Eliade informs:

“from the protoagricultural stage of culture on, there was a growing acceptance of the idea that there are also real (not merely ritual) destructions and re-creations of the World, that there is a 'return to the origin' in the literal sense, that is, a relapse of the Cosmos to the amorphous, chaotic state, followed by a new cosmogony” (1963, p.52).

As Rebellato underlined that although “the play depicts a world fragmented and broken, where there are no values that are not economic, it does not accept that world” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.20). Thus, Lulu, being aware of the consumerist,

corrupted society that is in a state of moral decline offers the myth of Garden of Eden and imagines this new world as a symbol of her longing for the perfection of new beginnings. Yet since she is not specific what are the values of her idyllic world it gives the impression that it is only created for consumption at that spot. Since she is also a product of this consumerist culture, she can not find the new values to replace the old world.

When Lulu uses Phaethon myth in *Romeo and Juliet*, it is also for selling the telephone sex in exchange for money. The myth mentioned in the play is from the passage of Juliet's soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where Juliet mourns for the dullness of the day and waits impatiently for the night to bring her lover with it. Although the love of Romeo and Juliet is passionate, pure, enduring and transformative; as Lulu tries to recite the words quickly, they get interrupted and the meaning becomes disruptive and superficial. At the end of her speech, when she starts to use dirty words to live up to the expectations of her customer, the context of enduring, passionate love becomes obscure. Through the character's usage of the myth, it becomes dull, devoid of any meaningful emotions and acquires a new function towards being another consumer product to sell for sexual gratification.

In the original Greek myth, Phaethon was the son of the sun-god Helios or Phoebus and in order to confirm that he really was his father, Helios took an oath making River Styx as his witness to grant Phaethon any wish. Phaeton's pride was kindled and he asked to drive his father's chariot pulled by fire-breathing horses. When Phoebus heard his son's wish he immediately repented of his oath but Phaethon was insistent in his demands and finally persuaded his father. When Phaethon seized the reins, he quickly lost control of the chariot as the horses felt they were guided by an unskilled hand and the chariot was less than its usual weight. The winged horses "whinnied, tossed their heads, and plunged wildly about, forsaking the broad track and racing towards the highest heavens. The wretched Phaethon was terrified when he saw how far the earth lay beneath him [...]" (Frye and Macpherson, p.294). In his fright, Phaethon let go of the reins and then the horses entirely out of control dashed towards the earth scorching everything on their way with their speed. The

earth also caught fire, creating destruction by setting the mountain tops, meadows, crops, forests and hills on fire. Witnessing such catastrophe Zeus called together all the gods and they agreed that “if the whole earth were not to perish the desperate charioteer must be stopped” (Frye and Macpherson, 2004, p.295). Then Zeus from the peak of the highest mountain struck the chariot with a thunderbolt. It struck Phaethon too and “he tumbled down the chariot with his hair on fire and fell like a comet, leaving a trail of light” into the River Po in Italy (Frye and Macpherson, 2004, p.295).

In the myth, Phaeton’s excessive pride and immaturity prepares his downfall since his desire is to possess a thing which no mortal being can attempt without paying the cost. Similarly, the society that the characters live in the play consists of self-possessed individuals who are seeking to get money to sustain their hedonistic lifestyle and their motivation is always towards self-serving needs. In that sense, Lulu, Robbie, Mark and Gary are all modern Phaethons aiming for the sky in their despise for the society so damaging to their existence but due to their mortality, they lose control and fall down to earth with each attempt.

From another perspective, it’s also a myth that brings into focus the father-son relationship which is a recurrent theme in the play. In his contribution to the idea, Thomas Horan in his article ‘Myth and Narrative in Mark Ravenhill’s Shopping and Fucking’ explains that “Phaeton’s story is, after all, more than that of a boy seeking the stability and authority of a father; it is the story of the individual’s desire to break beyond the limit of what is socially acceptable” (Horan, 2012, p.256-257). In that light, he assumes that Mark, Robbie and Gary as the three young men who are at the centre of Shopping and Fucking play are seeking to validate and understand themselves and their existence in relation to others entirely through the problematic variations of father-son relationships. Thus they can be considered as modern-day Phaetons in their drive to find the absent father figure or in some cases be that figure, however, in their attempt they fail to perform the role and instead they bring about the problems in their relationships. He also notes that within this relationship Lulu like Phaethon’s mother Clymene strives to legitimise and protect

her atypical family despite the undermining of the rest of the boys in the play. Moreover, in her maternal role “like Clymene’s encouragement of Phaeton’s quest to find his father, Lulu urges the caller to seek Phoebus’s lodging [...]” (Horan, 2012, p.256).

In a similar manner, Robbie also refers to the myth of Forbidden Fruit while talking to a customer in a way the whole sentence is fractured. He says “Here in my hand. Skin. Core. Red. Red skin. And there’s juice. And you see the juice and you want to bite. Bite. Yes. Your tongue. The apple. Good. The forbidden fruit” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.101-102).

The act of consuming the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden is important because before that humankind lived in a state of innocence and harmony with nature. They knew their duty in the garden as well as their prohibition to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is after eating the fruit that the first man and women fall from the grace of God, expelled from that pleasure and delight that Eden once offered them and they are condemned to hard labour and suffering. With the fall from Eden, humankind not only lost the pleasures but also their privilege of living infinitely. Therefore, it can be said that The Fall myth offers a foundation for the first suffering, ignorance and death of the man. It is therefore relevant to the play for the characters who are trying to make meaning of the world and their relation to it.

In their transgression for being as knowledgeable as God, they fall into tragic which can be considered as contradictory aspects of the experience. According to Joseph Anthony Mazzeo in his article ‘Fallen Man: Forbidden Knowledge, Forgotten Knowledge’, “The forbidden knowledge may have been the proximate cause of his fall, or the forgetting of the knowledge of who and what he truly is, but what he should have never known or never forgotten were events located in the past” (Mazzeo, 1978, p.52). He brings forth the relationship between the myth of the fall and myth of progress which points at the modern-day human sufferings. He comments that “Both the myth of the Fall and the myth of progress address themselves to the problem of what is wrong with our present life, how we got into

the state we are in, and what we might do, if anything, to extricate ourselves” (1978, p.52). The theme they both share is, whether knowing the moral knowledge of good and evil is a transgression leading to the tragic end for men.

In Robbie’s version of the myth, the apple becomes a mouthwatering desirable object devoid of any meaning when uttered within Robbie’s fragmented speech. Although, in the original myth, the fruit is forbidden by God for Adam and Eve to eat, in the consumer culture such desire is encouraged and valued. Robbie acts the role of the trickster in offering the apple that will give his customer the knowledge in the mythical sense. This knowledge might be considered to be from a state of innocence to a state of culture, an intricate weaving of both life and knowledge, which requires both the judgement of good and evil.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer the term ‘desiring-production’ in their collaborative work *Anti-Oedipus* in which they based their theory on the process of production by turning human beings into machines driving other machines and being driven by other machines. It is relevant here for the characters’ production of myths, which is filled with metaphors of desire turned into products of consumption. In consideration with the theory, Lulu and Robbie’s relationship with the phone machine connects them to the outer desiring-machines so it is a circuit of distribution whereby each machine is connected to the other. Deleuze and Guattari point to the fact that everything is production or ‘a production of production’, including the consumption. It is because “producing is always something “grafted onto” the product and for that reason desiring-production is production of production, just, as every machine is a machine connected to another machine [...] This continuity of ‘producing of production’ is a characteristic of desiring-machines [...]” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.6-7).

According to the theory, desiring-machines are what make us an organism, however, the main issue is that the body still suffers from this production of production, and the way it is organised in this specific way and not the other or indeed having no organisation at all. So, desiring-machines gives the body with organs satisfactions but it also tortures the body by trapping it within the flows and

interruptions that 'pierces the flesh' and breaks it apart. Moreover, machines stop working when they break down, however, desiring-machines cannot work properly unless they break down; 'they continually break down as they run' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.45).

In the telephone sex scene where Lulu and Robbie reproduce myths of desire for consumption is an example of this interplay of desiring-machines connected to each other. Lulu and Robbie as desiring-machines are connected to other desiring-machines represented by their customers in order to satisfy themselves with the subject of their desire. Since desire is not bound by one object, it is not the object that desire lacks but its subject. Lulu and Robbie acting as desiring-machines provide them with the subject of their desire through using myths that are emptied of their meaning and thus ready for the quick consumption.

Another important aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's theory is that their placement of a dismantling organism which they call the 'the body without organs' against the organisation of organism called '*desiring machines*'. The condition of the body without organs is explained to be a state that is nonproductive, sterile, unconsummable. In other words, it is the schizoid realm of non-interruption and non-flows. So, there is this conflict between the desiring-machines and the body without organs in terms of their productive and nonproductive nature. For Deleuze and Guattari between such conflictual states arises another machine: 'the paranoiac machine'. In this conflict, they argue, "[...] the desiring-machines attempt to break into the body without organs, and the body without organs repels them since it experiences them as an over-all persecution apparatus. When body without organs resist the organ machines representing the composed words of articulated speech, 'it utters only gasps and cries and unarticulated blocks of sound' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.8). This occurs when Robbie recites the myth of the Tower of Babel.

Robbie utters "And now we're in the . . . ? Tower of. . . I see . . . the Tower of Babel. All the tongues in the world. Splashinsky. Mossambarish. Bam bam bam. Pashka pashka pashka. Alright then. You're done? Good good. That's good. You take care now. Yeah" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.103).

Tower of Babel myth, which is mentioned in Genesis, is similar to the Fall of Man in its transgression from the divine command to become one like God. According to the myth, Nimrod who was considered as a heroic figure of his time takes advantage of his popularity and with the support of the clan patriarchs, offers himself at the service of peoples of the Plain of Shinar. (Sicker, 2002, p.132) However as Martin Sicker described the situation of that time, the clan patriarchs had a concern for a forcible displacement of some of the clan families by the pressure of population. So Nimrod offered to build a city which would serve to settle disputes and bring peace and harmony to people.

Under his command, the Noahide clans built the city which would allow their civilisation to spread throughout the world. However, according to Sicker, if the purpose had been to built the city according to divine instruction for spreading the mankind on earth that would have been reasonable but Nimrod's ambition was different. Sicker notes that, Nimrod thought the nature of men was frivolous, they were not equal in any sense and that he was superior to them all.

He would use that city as the basis for institutionalising the inequality of men. [...] He would transform the very essence of Noahide civilisation by introducing a secular morality based on reason alone, and his reason argued for essential inequality among men (Sicker, 2002, p.133).

Therefore he set out to built not only a city but also a tower with its top in heaven so that his fame would spread all over the world. That tower more than serving as a watchtower, would also represent the city's power and be "a constant reminder of the heavenly powers of man" (Sicker, 2002, p.133).

Sicker explains what the tower symbolises as:

With those powers man could set his own moral standards without reference to the creator. The tower would constantly serve to remind man he was not dependent on the divine power and could reach up to the Creator's heavenly abode at will. The man was supreme on earth, where he was essentially free of the sway of the Creator, whose realm was restricted to the world of the heavens above (2002, p.134).

Moreover, his intention was to convert people from Noah's teachings of equality and its social, moral and ethical codes to the allegiance for the city. In that



sense, the transgression was collective rather than individual as was the case in Adam and Eve. Consequently, the Creator comes down to earth to see the product of the children of men, a human project being built entirely to serve their needs and wants. "It was being built not as a means for achieving the Creator's purposes but, rather, to subvert them" (Sicker, 2002, p.135).

Despite the fact that the Noahides were blessed with the ability to communicate freely with another, that the language and mode of speech were the basic requirements to build a universal and moral society; the leaders were corrupted and their intention was to turn the city into an instrument of oppression. Sicker adds that "Once the city was completed and the populace accustomed to it, and later dependent upon it, the leaders will be in a position to carry out their plot against the Creator and man, and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do" (Sicker, 2002, p.135). Therefore Creator confused their language so that they may not understand each other and misunderstandings and mistrust would breed among them to hinder their effort in building a corrupted society. As a result, the society would fall apart before the city was completed and "without the cohesion of a common culture social disintegration and emigration followed" (Sicker, 2002, p.136)

In the end, the Creator's attempt lead to the multiplicities of nations and cultures rather than one absolute culture.

The Tower of Babel myth Robbie refers to is not about one coherent language understood by all but rather a society with a plurality of languages. "All the tongues in the world" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.103), he says. Therefore going beyond the plurality of languages he hints at the society which is disintegrated because it is not a cohesive culture which they live in, and moreover they lack understanding which breeds mistrust and finally not only the values such as equality, but also social and moral codes which bring humanity close to each other are destroyed under capitalism. This pluralism naturally raises issues of the 'other'. In the lack of social solidarity, very little consideration would be given in understanding other or



tolerating other. The world in the play which also reflects the modern society of today seems to sacrifice the other at the expense of a better society.

Raimundu Panikkar discussing the issue of other in his article raises important question about diversity in culture which is how to “pretend to deal with the ultimate problems of Man if we insist on reducing the human being to only American, or to only the Christian, or to black, or the male, or the exclusively heterosexual, or the healthy and ‘normal’, or the so-called civilised?” (1979, p.203) He further offers “the true foundation of a pluralistic society to be not pragmatism, not common sense, not tolerance, or the lesser evil but rather that pluralism be rooted in the deepest nature of things” (Panikkar, 1979, p.203).

What the characters in the play experiencing and symbolised by the myth of the Babel is the problem of pluralism. Panikkar explains the nature of pluralism with the “insoluble conflict of ultimate values: on the one hand we can not renounce the claims of our personal conscience, and on the other we can not renounce the claim of our personal consciousness” (Panikkar, 1979, p.208) Robbie is torn between his conscience which tells him to serve the system which only perpetuates more suffering and his consciousness which tells him to overthrow the system and just be happy.

The relationship between Mark and Gary also progresses into being one of the power-relations. The power shifts from Mark to Gary when Gary comes up with stolen credit cards and offers Mark to buy expensive designer clothes. As he lures Mark into the pit of consumerism, showing off his power over an object and using his youthfulness to his advantage; Mark starts to feel more attached to Gary.

Although Gary seems to want Mark to love him, once he makes sure Mark admitted his love for him, he feels empowered and exerts his authority over him. Gary when Mark kisses him and admits his love confirms his power over Mark by not feeling anything. Mark hopelessly try to re-establish the rules but admitting his love costs him to lose his place within the relationship.

So Garry tells Mark “Which means (not feeling)...gives me the power, doesn't it? So, I'll tell you. You're not what I'm after. I don't want it like that” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.107).

For Foucault sexual relations were seen as being between “a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished” (1990, p.215). In ‘the Object of Pleasure’, Foucault explains the mechanism that works in the sexual relationships which consisted of an adolescent boy and his older sexual partner. The boy is the subject of pleasure since he is young and thus inexperienced, and has not yet attained manly status. However, one has to keep in mind that there would be a time when he would have to be a man to exercise his own power, and he would no longer be an object of pleasure. Yet, until then the boy for his own sake should not consider him and be that object of pleasure despite man's willingness to appoint him for that position. He was supposed to resist, flee, escape and refuse because he cannot identify with the part he was to play. Foucault's crucial comment “The relationship that he was expected to establish with himself in order to become a free man, master of himself and capable of prevailing over others, was at variance with a form of relationship in which he would be an object of pleasure for another” (Foucault, 1990, p221) is relevant here in terms of Gary's personal development and Mark's relation to it. Foucault further explains “between the man and the boy, there is not- there cannot and should not be- a community of pleasure” (Foucault, 1990, p223).

When Mark gives in to show softness towards Gary, on another level he also yields to the pleasures that the relationship offers and his incapability to master himself places Mark to be lesser than Gary. It is because Mark is in a state where he let his desires rule him and for Foucault there is a condition that “when one played the role of subordinate partner in the game of pleasure relations, one could not be truly dominant in the game of civic and political activity” (1990, p.220). Still, though, the boy was supposed to yield only if “he had feelings of admiration, gratitude, or affection for his lover, which made him want to please the other”

(Foucault, 1990, p.223). However, when finally the boy gave in, he was not supposed to experience pleasure but take pleasure in man's pleasure.

Foucault emphasises that if in the relationship the boy was only to benefit from money it was rather shameful, and he was supposed to yield if he might benefit from his merit, his status, his virtue and such relationship was honourable if he was to benefit from training for manhood, social connections for the future or form a lasting relationship. He concludes that :

So that the sexual act, in the relation between a man and a boy, needed to be taken up in a game of refusals, evasions, and escapes that tended to postpone it as long as possible, but also in a process of exchanges that determined the right time and the right conditions to take place (Foucault, 1990, p.224).

That is why when Mark admits his love and kisses Gary, he responds "I didn't feel anything" (Ravenhill, 2005, p.106) and exerts his power over Mark.

As we have already mentioned before, a relationship between man and a boy is not about love and naturally, Gary is not after love. He has twisted feelings about love which he associates with power and hurt. Rather than having a 'soft' partner, he wants to be 'owned' and subordinated by a 'strong' male partner. He does not only want to benefit from his partner's affluence, his virtue or social connections but he also wants to be bought and his sexual relationship to be hurtful. When Mark tells him there is no one out there but him, Gary refuses him, but Mark who has already formed an attachment with Gary asks him for another day to take him home.

When Mark introduces Gary to Robbie and Lulu, the events escalate to the point of the climactic moment in the play. It might be interesting to question here if atomised individuals can act altruistically. Gary is an abused victim who is only fourteen and needs a safe place, a home and should to be taken care of by someone who will give him unconditional love. He associates sex with violence, he is alienated in a society with no values where everything is about shopping and fucking, money and transaction. His mother was not able to protect him and so does the government. He was advised to bring a leaflet to his abusing step-dad by the government consultant which reveals the government's dysfunctionality. So, does

Mark's motive come from his socially responsible consciousness in order to bring the best in Gary or is he simply following his desires? It is, in fact, the latter. The individual is shaped by the social and modern society also turned these individual personalities into the machines which constantly seek the gratification of their desires and ambitions.

Garry and Mark arrive just as Lulu was forcing Robbie to eat from individually packaged microwave food. Lulu's speech is a revelation in its criticism of this new type of cultural imperialism. She points to the microwave food and insists:

“Come on, you've got the world here. You've got all the tastes in the world. You've got an empire under cellophane. Look, China. India. Indonesia. In the past you'd have to invade, you'd have to occupy just to get one of these things and now, when they're sitting here in front of you, you're telling me you can't taste anything” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.112-113)

Ravenhill's characters living under this new commercialist culture, with the playwright's authorial intention, ironically mock this new imperialist mode which reflects itself in packaged consumerism. This new mode of imperialism is called market capitalism. It determines the needs of the individuals and imposes them a new sense of freedom to choose from plastic, packaged forms of culturally globalised products. This new mode of culture which has gradually colonised by commodification and market system makes individuals define their identity based on consumption. Lulu reflects her self-image through her choice of consumption which is an example of value-realisation at the level of consumption. Because the exchange value in modernist societies *'come to be described as the realm of identities'* (Jameson,1997, p.157). While characters in the play desperately strive to make meaning, in post-modernist societies with neoliberal economies, brands and marketing become a way of giving meaning to life through consumption. It replaces ideology and religion and becomes a new individual practice of solitariness. Because value-realisation is hedonistic, temporary, solitary, ad superficial which boosts the ego of the individual. Therefore, it is an imposed behaviour to shelter individuals

from being conscious of the power relationships, to mystify the knowledge of their current state of government control, a new type of governing which for the market economy strips individuals of their freedom and equality.

In that case, Robbie's inability to taste from that food might be due to his realisation of the artificiality of this imposed freedom and self-identity and he rejects the little treats market economy offers them to obey the rules. Robbie's resistance to eating and his declaration that he cannot taste anything is in a way a manifestation of his unwillingness to participate in a system with all its predetermined values where individuals are the passive consumers of products rather than skilled producers of their life. It is therefore in modern societies Foucault claims that "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (Foucault, 1982, p.785).

His opposition is against the idea of the market which puts the self as a product to buy rather than a personal project to create. It's directed against this 'new type of governmentality' in Foucauldian terms which is at the heart of liberal democracies, generating artificial discourses of freedom, choice and equity while abolishing them at the same time.

Fredrick Jameson notes:

The intervention of the machine, the mechanization of culture, and the mediation of culture by the Consciousness Industry are now everywhere the case, and perhaps it might be interesting to explore the possibility that they were always the case throughout human history, and within even the radical difference of older, pre-capitalist modes of production (1997, p.55).

This struggle for resistance to deny the power and control that market economy exerts on their life and their constant failure to make meaning in a society with capitalist values leads to their psychological fragmentation and thus their alienation. Such fragmentation reflects in the text with the logical breakdown in the order of things and discontinued sentences. The hesitation and uncompleted sentences give away the characters' utmost confusion for making sense of the world.

When Mark introduces Gary to both, they do not show any sympathy and Robbie gets jealous. Moreover, Gary provokes Robbie by telling them Mark loves him which makes Robbie even more jealous and the tension escalates until Robbie attacks Gary and Mark attacks Robbie, who is strangling Gary in his jealousy. Finally, Gary explains Robbie that he is not after Mark because he is weak and he wants someone firmer, stronger and not gentle like him. Then Robbie makes the most quoted speech which echoes Lyotard's Postmodern condition and explains that there are no such big stories and we all make our own micro-stories.

"I think . . . I think we all need stories, we make up stories so that we can get by. And I think a long time ago there were big stories. Stories so big you could live your whole life in them. The Powerful Hands of the Gods and Fate. The Journey to Enlightenment. The March of Socialism. But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we're all making up our own stories. Little stories. It comes out in different ways. But we've each got one" (Ravehill, 2005, p.116)

Although Robbie mocks Gary's self-constructed phantasy, he accepts the fact that we need our own stories. He offers help to Gary but only in exchange for money. Since he had the first lesson 'Get the money first' from Brian, he only starts the game if Gary would pay it upfront. In the truth and dare game, Gary was to put his self-constructed phantasy into words yet he cannot find any. Gary's inability to find the words to describe the experience might be explained by Jameson's theory of postmodernism.

Fredrick Jameson relates the breakdown in the relationship between signifier and signified to the cultural upheavals and change that postmodernism brings and which reflects itself in schizophrenia. For Jameson it is:

the meaning generated by the signifier to signifier and not to the signified that causes the problem and that meaning, or now rather called as the 'meaning -effect', which is generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves. So when that relationship between signifier and signified breaks down then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers (Jameson, 1997, p.229).

As much as a victim of the masculinity crisis of the postmodernist culture, Gary is also a schizoid character. His inability to put his experience into words is due to his inability to merge his past, present and future experiences in his psychic life. In his mind, the abusing step-father of the past and the protective lover of the future is closely related in the new presence of the present lover who owns him and hurts him but it's a 'good' hurt. Fredrick Jameson explains this process in the psyche as:

The connection between this kind of linguistic malfunction and the psyche of the schizophrenic may then be grasped by way of a twofold proposition: first, that personal identity is itself the effect of a certain temporal unification of past and future with one's present; and, second, that such active temporal unification is itself a function of language, or better still of the sentence, as it moves along its hermeneutic circle through time. If we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life. With the breakdown of the signifying chain, therefore, the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time (Jameson, 1997, p.29).

In the game, Robbie acts as the initiator and all-powerful authority to put down the rules. When at some point Gary refuses to play, Robbie insists he must be punished. Yet the game more and more ceases to be imaginary and becomes intimidating. If there is a game, there is always a challenge and challenge is akin to seduction. So, although Mark tries to persuade Gary to stop playing by hugging him, and showing him there is another way which is love and affection, Gary is too eager to live his self-constructed sexual phantasy. Since the playwright places his characters in a society where all values that they have are based on economic exchange, love and affection also equal to shopping and fucking.

Therefore, Gary is blindfolded and Lulu makes a storyline similar to their shopping story where this time Gary has no control and was sold to a strong and rich someone for twenty by the same fat guy who sold Lulu and Robbie to Mark. Now, Gary can live his story in this simulated phantasy world which may never happen in real life. It is Robbie and Lulu who stimulate Gary's experience and gives it shape



but the question is if they are the ones in control. Although it seems like Robbie and Lulu has the power to direct Gary in his experience there always might be a twist which can reverse the power relations. Terry Eagleton questions this concept of free action and its collision with other's actions in his book 'Sweet Violence: The Idea of Tragedy'. Eagleton declares, "Our free action is inherently alienable, lodging obstructively in the lives of others and ourselves, merging with the stray shards and fragments of others estranged actions to redound on our own heads in alien form. Indeed, they would not be free actions at all without this perpetual possibility of going astray" (Eagleton, 2003, p.110).

Mark's constant intervention to stop the game is in vain because in his schizoid state Gary is experiencing the present intensely. The relationship between Mark and Gary is also open to scrutiny. Gary seems to consider Mark as a weak person and Mark thinks that Gary not knowing that he can choose love over violence acts self-destructively.

Foucault asks about the possibility of transforming that relationship into a friendship by stating "how was this relationship to be integrated into a larger whole and enable to transform itself into another type of relationship, a stable relationship where physical relations would no longer be important and where two partners would be able to share the same feelings and same possessions " (Foucault, 1990, p .225).

His answer is comes as "The love of boys could not be morally honourable unless it comprised (as a result of the readable gifts and services of the lover and the reserved compliance of the beloved) the elements that would form the basis of a transformation of this love into a definitive and socially valuable tie, that of *philia*" (Foucault, 1990, p.225).

Is Mark capable of transforming this relationship? He has repeatedly tried to help Gary but he was rejected each time. Terry Eagleton explains that "the hero must be representative of humanity as a whole, but at the same time elevated above his fellows" (Eagleton, 2003, p.76). His involvement in Gary's life is undeniable but his interventions are fruitless. This vanity can be explained with the Deleuzian concept of the three-level repetition. For Deleuze, in the first level, one repeats because he



does not know, because one does not remember, or because one is not capable of performing the action (whether this action remains to be performed or is already performed). In the same manner, Mark is powerless when it comes to performing the action and the reason might be because 'the action is too big' for him.

In Deleuzian concept, the negative which Mark might be said to possess expresses in his consciousness the shadow of fundamentally unconscious questions and problems and this negative is due to false positioning of these problems and questions.

So as the game accelerates, Robbie and Mark start to degrade Gary physically and verbally without attributing any value to his existence. 'It is true that unconscious desires and only desires' Foucault notes and Mark in having no control over his desires gives in and becomes another abuser for Gary. The game ends Gary insisting to be abused even more violently by being penetrated with a knife in his rectum but Robbie rejects doing that. It is important to keep in mind that the playwright "makes Gary's abuse consensual: he twice asks to be abused" (Sierz, 2001, p.136 ). Gary's brutal rape by Robbie and Mark triggers in his mind the virtual image of his step-dad to be associated with a real person to give his experience a form. He corresponds the virtual image of his stepfather to Mark's body so that his suffering, his anger, and his pain can find a real object.

Deleuze believes that virtual objects belong essentially to the past and he concludes "This is why virtual objects exist only as fragments of themselves: they are found only as lost; they exist only as recovered. Loss or forgetting here are not determinations which must be overcome; rather, they refer to the objective nature of that which we recover, as lost, at the heart of forgetting[...]" (1994, p.102).

This is the climactic point of the play as now for Gary the distinction between past and present moment is not fixed and past is living in the present. At that moment, his feelings are intensified and he is experiencing that moment where he understands the outside world based on his negative feelings, and the reality loses itself into schizophrenia. The intensity of his feelings leads him to announce that he has that feeling of sadness and pain swelling in him and he wants to end this

perpetual unhappiness and pain which as if “it is gonna burst” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.136)

This process according to Jameson is the ‘*breakdown in temporality*’ and the intensity of the present moment is explained as:

[...] that present suddenly engulfs the subject with indescribable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatises the power of the material- or better still, the literal-signifier in isolation. This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge or affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity. (1997, p.30)

It is also here, at this point of problematisation that Gary from being an object of pleasure becomes a subject who is able to shape his experience and give it a form for his own understanding of it. In a way, he is writing an end to his own story. Since it involves exercising his own power, he also inverts the power relationship and becomes the initiator and ruler of the game.

When Gary admits there is only one way out of this sickness, Mark acknowledges. He steps forward to perform the ultimate act which may end in Gary’s death. So, Gary explains “He’s got no face in the story. But I want to put a face to him. Your face.’ ‘Do it. Do it and I’ll say ‘I love you’ ” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.136)

Mark’s act to step forward to perform the action is transformative in the sense that it is a gift which will lead in Deleuzian concept neither the agent nor the condition to return but rather the autonomy of the subject as a part of the eternal return.

According to Hume repetition does not change anything in the object repeated but changes something in the mind of the contemplating’ (Deleuze, 1994, p.70). This change in the mind, in Deleuzian terms, forms the final synthesis of time and in that ‘the synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living present (Deleuze,1994, p.71)

Then Mark’s transformation in performing the action could also be considered in positive terms.

Gary and his traumatic self in relation to his step-father are one of repetition in time since the past is never the past but repeats itself in present although changed where the traumatic experience takes on different shapes and forms.

What occurs in the mind at that moment is explained by Deleuze as the time is deployed and this present now belongs to both past and future. While the present moment goes from past to future which is to say from particular to general what also occurs is the passive synthesis. Passive synthesis consists of “our habit of living, which we are made of and which comprises contractions, contemplations, pretensions, presumptuous, satisfactions, and fatigues” (Deleuze, 1994, p.78).

The abusive father as a phantom of the past repeats in Gary’s mind constantly, tears his psychic life into past, present and future denying him to bring his life into a meaningful whole. It is his utmost attempt to give his biographic experience a unity, by bringing instances together and giving it meaning or a face to his abuser, Mark’s face, that ends in the infinite game which might ensure the final synthesis of time.

It’s mainly that Gary’s shattered selves that constitute the conflict in the play. ‘Selves are larval subjects’ Deleuze informs us in *Difference and Repetition* and “the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is the system of a dissolved self” (Deleuze, 1994, 78). This struggle of isolated selves can only be resolved by Gary’s metamorphosis where the only thing that would return is the ‘difference’, not the ‘same’ which in Nietzschean terms called the return of the ‘Overman’.

The production of the autonomous self or the Overman might involve the metamorphosis as well as the death of the subject. “We produce something new only on the condition that we repeat once in the mode which constitutes the past, and once more in the present of metamorphosis” says Deleuze (1994, p.113). He expands on the concept of repetition and difference by connecting it to eternal return:

Moreover, what is produced, the absolutely new itself is, in turn, nothing but repetition: the third repetition, this time by excess, the repetition of the future as an eternal return. Eternal return is a belief of the future, a belief in the future. Eternal

return affects only the new, what is produced under the condition of default and by the intermediary of metamorphosis. However, it causes neither the condition nor the agent to return: on the contrary, it repudiates these and expels them with all its centrifugal force. It constitutes the autonomy of the product, the independence of the work (Deleuze, 1994, p.90).

We see, then, that in this final synthesis of time, the present and past are in turn no more than dimensions of the future: the past as condition, the present as an agent.

From the point of the protagonist, when Mark steps forward to move in to Gary's phantasy world, he also steps forward into the second stage in the Deleuzian three-staged concept of action. The second time comes the moment of the caesura or the present of metamorphosis in which the hero becomes capable of action, "a becoming-equal to the act and a doubling of the self, and the projection of an ideal self in the image of the act" (Deleuze, 1994, p.90). The third stage is the revelation stage where eternal return occurs and so the metamorphosis and in Gary's case the death of the hero happens.

This is redeeming for Gary since in his ultimate political act he de-subjectivises himself. In other terms, his shattered larval selves give birth to a new man with the plurality of selves without a name. In his final moment he brings his past, present and future into a whole. Deleuze defines the third repetition or eternal return as:

[...] the third time which the future appears, this signifies that the event and the act possess a secret coherence which excludes that of the self; that they turn back against the self which has become their equal and smashes it to pieces, as though the bearer of the new world were carried away and dispersed by the shock of the multiplicity to which it gives birth: what the self has become equal to is unequal in itself. In this manner, the I which is fractured according to the order of time and the Self which is divided according to the temporal series correspond and find a common descendant in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the 'plebeian' guardian of a secret, the already— Overman whose scattered members gravitate around the sublime image' (Deleuze, 1994, p.90).

At the end of the day, “what defines your freedom is what you cannot walk away from and as far as this goes you do not have all that much choice” (Eagleton, 2003, p.116). All that suffering and pain that Gary has endured comes to an end with Mark performing the ultimate act and leading not the same to return but the difference or the ‘Overman’ who bears infinity in his non-presence. Gary sacrificing his own finitude identifies with fate by making himself equal to it and thereby transcending it. Therefore Gary’s tragic end implies both a victory and a defeat for freedom and at the same time which they simultaneously conquer one another. Gary submits to death which may seem a victory for fate yet he does it so freely, considering death as his ultimate exit to infinity, that he transcends fate in that very act.

The play ends with a positive attitude where the order resettled, conflict resolved and characters are in a state of equilibrium. Brian returns the money back to Lulu and Robbie since they have learnt their lesson of how important the money is in order to be civilised and he asks them to join his group. He claims they need something like a talisman, a guide, a set of rules or a compass to steer them through in this chaos. The meaning of his compass being money, he makes them repeat ‘Money is civilisation, civilisation is money’ dictum which he believes to accomplish and he adopts the duty of teaching the capitalist values to society.

In the last scene, Mark ’s initial telling of the shopping story is reprised when he retells a mutated version of it happening in a bleak world far away and in distant future where people are replaced by mutants and although given the chance to be free they would not choose it. He says:

“This mutant telepathizes into his mind and says ‘ Please. I’ll die. I don’t know how to . . . I can’t feed myself. I’ve been a slave all my life. I’ve never had a thought of my own. I’ll be dead in a week. And I say: That’s a risk I’m prepared to take” (Ravenhill, 2005, p.140).

Finally, the play ends with them sharing individually packaged food and feeding each other where Mark can stomach it now. Robbie comments that Mark has

a bit of blood but Lulu quickly changes the subject to food. They do not mention about Gary but quite possibly the blood on Mark is Gary's.

Throughout the play, there is no change in the values of the characters that are only based on the economic transaction. However, the characters' questioning of the current society gives us hints about their struggle to find new values to make their existence meaningful. That is precisely why characters long for the past that is long forgotten through reciting paradise myths. However, these myths are no longer valid in a society where the dominant value is consumption and indifference to humanity, so myths become another object of consumption. They are emptied and uttered only in fragments for easy consumption to serve personal gratification. In Ravenhill's re-visioning of them, myths' function to bring solidarity to a society and its inherent moral message is debunked since the current society is extremely individualised and the playwright puts in their place the personal micro-stories recited by characters in the play. These stories are based on suffering and understanding this suffering sometime in future, sin and punishment, test and reward, the importance of remembering, money as being the sole purpose of a happy satisfied life and the relationship being based on ownership and transaction.

The characters and their stories with their representation of the current state of the society, and Ravenhill's perspective to a world rotting from the roots find its reflection in family degeneration and moral vacuity of society which voices the playwright's political commentary on the most crucial social issues. He weaves his tapestry so well into his character's action and inaction, their motives and hesitations that, at first, it makes it hard to see the pattern. Yet with a more closer look, it reveals the chaotic state of the life that his characters lead, living on the edge, struggling, alienated, bound by the world ruled by consumption and economic exchange. His quiet criticism does not show a gateway to their current problems but as the representative of in-yer-face theatre, the scenes where characters show indifference to violence and themselves exert violence, victimise others and themselves become victims underline and question about binary oppositions of man-woman,

victim-assailant, freedom-control, morality-money, society- individualism, old-new values, powerful-weak and make the audience to contemplate on such issues.

### **3.3 Mythical Motifs in Faust is Dead**

At the beginning of the play, the chorus is characterised as a very receptive child perceiving the cruelty in the world and crying out the despair that is unlikely to change despite the mother's consolations. We don't know about the child's experience that revealed him the world to be such a dark, violent place but he is extremely disturbed by this image and that pessimism lingers as the play unfolds.

The chorus which functions as mentioned before to mediate between spectators and characters takes a new dimension in Mark Ravenhill's play. The problem of the chorus in the play is that it acts individually, as an external character and instead of bringing together it alienates both sides. It is relevant to the part of the play since the part reflects the whole which is the society as an individualist, disconnected from each other. This is where the playwright inverts the chorus of the classical and adopts it anew thus reversing the order and anonymity of it into a character of its own.

The chorus as another character envisions a dystopic world and it signals us what is to come in the play. He prepares us to the idea that the world is a cruel place, and we will not be exempted from what is to come in the world of theatre either.

When the play starts, we encounter the striking theme of the death of man which is the name of the book written by the protagonist and the name suggests that the rational man is dead, thereby demythologising the myth of Renaissance man. This one string which is celebrating the death of man attaches the theme to the bleak opening, pointing out the social issues. His emphasis in the play of the death of man 'as an idea' is the concern of the playwright to bring this myth anew.

Alain explains what he meant by the title of his book, informing us that it is a new sensibility when the faith in human progress has ended, words as our guide lost their meaning and it is time for people to embrace chaos. That new sensibility



meant for him to be more cruel to others as well as oneself and going after one's desires and embrace suffering and cruelty.

While the main character Alain is inspired by the infamous French philosopher Michel Foucault, the book title is taken from the article 'The End of History and the Last Man' written by Francis Fukuyama. Alain merges these two characters together thus having two roles to be used simultaneously which are of an academic and a philosopher. His journey is triggered by telling stories of an ironic and cruel kind which he repeats to other characters with hardly ever receiving any response. Since mankind is born to tell stories, storytelling becomes a way of re-imagining and re-building experiences. Alain is telling his own in the play to make sense of his existence. These stories are very personal and of minor importance which distinguishes them from the grand stories of the past that are used to be the events of larger importance but this is how people make sense of their world now. So, it is the intention of the playwright who is against the grand ideas of -isms and explains that the big stories ended and now we all have our own micro-stories to tell.

Alain embodies all the qualities of the Faustian man of learning but most specifically in his quest for pleasure and knowledge. He is, as other Faustian figures alienated from society and ready to start his journey in order to find answers to his questions while indulging in the pleasures of such journeys. He is not only knowledgeable in his field but also his mind is one of questioning, theorising and rationalising kind. However, as a great knower, he is also dissatisfied with his culture and lacks the ability to conform to the social rules and norms. So, while such nature may emerge due to his non-compassionate nature for other human beings, it may also be as a result of his willingness to explore the self in position to the society.

According to Ian Watt in his book *Myths of Modern Individualism*, the myth of Faust with its basic plot exhibits "a single-minded pursuit by the protagonist which is one of the characteristic aspirations of Western man. That is the character shows an arete and a hubris, an exceptional prowess and a vitiating excess, in spheres of action that are particularly important in our culture" (Watt, 1966, p. xiii).

In the case of Alain as the Faustian figure, his dissatisfaction with knowledge and indulgence in pleasures causes him to be damned. In its opposition to the classical Faustian man, the rational Western man is dead when placed in a modern society of irrationalism, where sexuality becomes a commodity to be exchanged, the traditional values eroded and replaced by angst, opposition and survival where they desperately negotiate their lives and try to get control over it despite governmental and market manipulation.

### **3.3.1 The Division between Nature and Culture**

In that light, Faustian man with his alienated nature lives the division between nature and culture intensely as it was mentioned earlier by Levi-Strauss as a part of human experience. Both Faust characters' common struggle and their non-conformity can be considered in terms of their estrangement from nature and in their inability to accommodate themselves in culture.

Deleuze goes further in explaining this nature-culture divide in his book *Repetition and Difference*. Both characters' conscience suffers from that dilemma, leading to constant questioning, yet not finding solid ground for these problems to be established and resolved. In Deleuzian terms, they are floating freely above the ground. If it is true that Alain's questioning seeks out the exploration of an idea rather than simply pointing out, these questionings are expected to bring about change or as Deleuze claimed, they must succeed in overturning the ground in order to challenge the rules and norms to bring the difference.

When the ideas do not flourish and their repetition brings no synthesis they are stuck in the negative repetition. Deleuze says "If the mind is only contemplating without producing an artefact then it is a mind stuck in the second stage of the eternal return and he calls such a state to be an indefinite comprehension. Indefinite comprehension is a mind which contemplates Nature, or observes it and represents it to itself" (Deleuze, 1994, p.14).

What is Alain contemplating about is an important question to ask here and to understand the conflict one must look into the individual's relationship to the

culture. The culture which Alain lives is a culture ruled by signs and representations. Language as a sign system is not exempted from the culture where people communicate their ideas and it is through that medium that they get their message across. In general, if a subject makes a statement about an objective matter, it is considered to be either true or false. However, David Hawkes argues in his book, *The Faust Myth*, that “the words are performative therefore there is no truth or false behind the intention or inner state that words represent but only a mere recitation” (Hawkes, 2007, p.3). This is important since he opposes the subjectivity of the speech and instead argues that “there is no inner state, no immaterial spirit, no conscious or autonomous subject- no soul- in the realm of the performative” (Hawkes, 2007, p.3). This is another way of objectifying the subjective where the essence of the subjective or the soul is destroyed. Therefore that performative quality of the signs and its rise to power in postmodernist culture are said to lead the fragmented, non-rational and alienated individuals.

### **3.3.2 Committing the Error of the Phenomenal**

Another idea put forward by Hawkes in his book is that, Faust’s basic sin being semiotic which means his lack for using the language properly. He further notes that according to William Blackburn it is basically due to Faust’s “difficulty in distinguishing between things and his verbal description of those things” that leads him into damnation. Consequently, he is damned “as a result of his attempt to substitute the world of words for the real world” (Hawkes, 2007, p.59). This substitution is apparent when Alain refuse the see the dead body because his self is stuck in the world of words dismissing the brutal reality in front of him.

When Alain decides ‘to live a little’ his alienation and separation from the mind take a new direction towards the body and its pleasures, so turning him into a proper Faustian character. His split nature is due to the irreconciliation between what Deleuze calls the moral law and the natural law. His questions yet to be resolved, coupled with his alienation with the culture leads him to ignore the morals and live by the rules of the natural law. His conscience, in Deleuzian terms, suffers from the ambiguity from supposing the moral law to be external, superior and indifferent to

natural law. "It is only by restoring the image and model of the law of nature to the mind of the individuals that the moral law can be conceived" (Deleuze, 1994, p.4). Or in other words, Alain needs to be able to distinguish the two different concepts which are the objectification of the subject and subjectification of the object to transform into an integrated, unitary and indivisible being.

As a result of his internal alienation, Alain takes side with Nature from which emerges an infinite mind open to new experiences. His rejection of the rules and norms of society due to his perception of the moral laws to be external and unnatural turns him into a misfit, yet it also has the potential to bring about the difference, a whole new set of values, an integrated personality. Although this division creates a conflict in the self and the character can easily be led into chaos, bringing about the death instinct, it can also bring about change in the character to come back as different.

The conflict in the play starts with the scene where Alain was invited by the university director to have lunch with one of their sponsor, a Chinese businessman. Chinese man asks him during lunch what he thinks right now and he responds with a story. It is this story which starts the chain of events and is repeated in the play continuously which is the prominent part in relation to the whole play, for it marks the transgression leading him up to a point of quitting his job at the university and setting him off to his journey.

### **3.3.3 Alienation**

His alienation with his labour is due to the expected norms and etiquette he needs to follow against his personal authentic self. In modern cultures, the commodification process also includes human labour by imposing a financial value upon human activity. While there was a time when labour used to be a subjective activity, with the emergence of the market economy that demanded people to commit some of their time in exchange for money; labour became objectified and commodified. As a result, "as people learn to conceive of their surroundings and activities in terms of financial value, their habits of thought are correspondingly altered, and this applies particularly to the conception of their own subjective

activity' (Hawkes, 2007, p.98 ). Thus the objectification of their subjective activity results in seeing themselves as exchanging a part of themselves, which is a part of their 'essence' or the soul, for money and that commodification starts the feeling of alienation.

For that reason, the protagonist's dilemma in the name of the whole society is repeated in the symbols and metaphors of the violent, cruel objectification of the subjects. In the Faustian sense, to deliver a part of your self which is the 'essence' of mankind is equal to delivering 'your will' and become slave of the system in the market economy. In that situation, the individuals' subjective power is not only alienated but made automatic, mechanical and repetitive. In his objection, Alain steps forward in rejecting the objectification of himself, which is authentic in a society of one-dimensional individuals. That is why Alain is the perfect postmodern Faust, and when he repeats, this is such a necessary part of his alienation. Deleuze explains the nature of repetition as, "in the theatre, the hero repeats precisely because he is separated from an essential, infinite knowledge. This knowledge is in him, it is immersed in him and acts in him, but acts like something hidden, like a blocked representation" (Deleuze, 1994, p.15).

In the habit of repetition, one repeats not to bring out the same but different. A mind that repeats is naturally a mind with questions whose answers have not resolved yet. Thus Alain, who is likely to be endowed with repressed knowledge of the simple common sense; is himself excluded from that knowledge or in other words 'he does not know what he knows'. He doesn't repeat because he represses but that knowledge which he can not represent to himself, expands to the whole, impregnating his every action in the play. In the case of Goethe's Faust, it is this esoteric, absolute knowledge and coming to terms with the limit of man's knowledge and in Mark Ravenhill's Faust, it is the knowing and distinguishing between the essence and appearances. This is the conflict which sets both characters on their journey and makes them to take place in the demonic.

Although their journey has authenticity, it will be outbound for either comic or tragic end. What determines the outcome is the difference between the nature of

the hero's quest. Deleuze makes a distinction between the comic and tragic according to the nature of the repressed knowledge. He clarifies it by making a distinction between the natural knowledge and esoteric knowledge.

For Deleuze if the immediate natural knowledge which excluded from the hero is a simple common sense the journey is destined to be comic but if it is esoteric knowledge it will end in tragic. It is because, Deleuze informs, we live out our experiences forward but only look through them backward and the comic here represents an ignorant who fills our memory with ironic, mad laughter.

Mark Ravenhill re-vision the Faust myth for portraying the end of the old notions in which the Renaissance or modern man in the light of man's progress and science is dead, and he questions the possibility for the society with new values. The problem of society which of the societal cruelty and ignorance finds its counterpart in the theme of power and pleasure. Faust in Goethe's play while being a member of the society, turns into a rebel by making a pact with the devil in his quest for power of knowledge. Alain likewise, turns against the academic circle to experience pleasures of life for power. His acts are of a Faustian nature not only in its inherent rejection and departure from what is acceptable and his quest after the transcendental experience but also for obtaining power for self-serving ends. Thus when considered in relation to power and social problems, both characters aimed at overturning the law of their current society by challenging the current power relationships.

According to Deleuze "This first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears like the art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles" (1994, p.5).

Therefore, if one wants to transgresses the moral and the natural law there are two ways which one might use to overturn the law: humour and irony. Alain uses irony by telling those stories to challenge the laws of his society and mock the system by demonstrating its absurdity and violence which he communicates through the binary oppositions. 'Who is cruel, who is not' or 'Who is the seducer, who is the seduced' are questions which have philosophical depths and they point out to the darker and deeper motivations in human nature. Yet on a larger plane, by asking

these questions he ultimately aims at overturning the moral law which makes a false distinction over these concepts through binary oppositions and he uses irony as his tool of criticism.

The story he tells while having lunch with the director and the university sponsor becomes the turning point in Alain's life. After having been criticised and nearly ostracised from academy for his inappropriate story he decides to quit his job at the university. Although his story at the time seems obscure and untimely, it is important to acknowledge that he was merely repeating the story in his mind and unknowingly trying to extricate the knowledge from it. He needs that repetition in order to come to terms with a certain moment which is that obtaining the true knowledge, or as Aristotle defined in Poetics 'hero's recognition'. "This knowledge hidden from the hero, this blockage or resistance as Freud describes makes repetition a constraint, a compulsion" (Deleuze, 1994, p.14).

In this story, a man makes love to a woman and she asks him which part of her he finds the most attractive to which he replies her eyes. So as the story goes, the next morning he receives a shoebox containing her carved out eyes. Then Alain raises this question of "who was the seducer and who was the seduced" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.13). These questions do not have a clear-cut, ready given answers but rather they motivate philosophical contemplations and problems of cruelty, seduction, pleasure and at most they invoke questions about the traditional roles and values in the society. Furthermore, stories that Alain tells are not original but examples of the seduction game which were told by Baudrillard to his students during his lectures and they refer to the infinite game and reversibility of subject-object relationships.

### **3.3.4 Playing the Infinite Game of Seduction**

Seduction plays an essential part in these stories. According to Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtic in their book *Introducing Baudrillard* seduction is described as "essentially a game of appearances between a subject and object" (1999, p.96). It usually includes people but it can also mean other objects too. They define seduction as:



A circular process of challenge, one-upmanship, and death. Objects seduce by appearances. We are charmed by their seductive secrecy, mystery and artifice, and their signs challenge our claims to truth, meaning and power. But seduction does not subvert power. It is a reversible game which the object plays against the subject. It is the radical irony of objects to reverse, divert, seduce, displace, recuperate all desires of the subject (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999, p.96).

Therefore in the story, a woman stands as the object of pleasure but this subject-object relationship is not an irreversible one. The object has the capability to manipulate the subject by seduction, distancing, alienating and reversing the subject. When the woman sends her eyes this is, although cruel, the ultimate move in reversing her object position to become a subject.

Chris Harrocks and Zoran Jevtic explains that "we assume that the subject who seduces dominates the object who is seduced, but the object can reverse this and catch the subject in the game of appearances" (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999, p.98). So, his argument is that the woman by sending out her eyes takes up the challenge and turns herself into a subject position in the relationship thus 'destroying the meaning' and 'fatally seduces him' in the game of the infinite.

The infinite quality of the seduction game leads the stakes go higher each time between the seducer and seduced which ends as one of them putting an ultimate end to the game. It is explained as:

Seducer and seduced are enmeshed in a ritual of reciprocal exchange, raising the stakes in a game that never ends because the dividing line that separates the victor and the defeated is illegible. There is no limit. Baudrillard sees this "sacrifice" 'as the cruel seduction by the woman as object - whom the subject takes literally by effacing poetic metaphors of love and sending the game to a fateful conclusion (Harrocks and Jevtic, 1999, p.98).

In the context of Faust and Mephistopheles, it is Mephisto who seduces Faust to make a pact with the devil. Alain who associates himself as the one who knows the metaphorical world, the poet, the learned Renaissance man looking for a journey into the realm of the unknown, and a man who craves for accommodating himself in both worlds for supreme knowledge and pleasure, thus comply with the

Faustian character in the story; whereas Pete can be associated with Mephistopheles with his nature foreign to the world of metaphor, and whose perception is solely based on rationale where metaphorical agencies are left out of the thought processes. When this is taken into account both characters are in the world of the capitalised market economy and thus the world of the material, and the playwright aims at redoubling Alain's alienation. He had internal alienation before and now he is about to have an external one.

Therefore when Alain sets out on a journey to live a little, his physical journey to America in relation to his alienation is a purposeful one, as he believes it is only in America he is truly alive and live in accordance to the century. Only in America can he catch the glimpse of the age which is one of commodity fetishism, individualism and consumption. Europe as an old continent is compared to a museum whose last visitor has already gone and America as the land of new hopes and inventions. As the hero in his quest of society with new values, he explores America in order to come to grips with his recognition; but we must also keep in mind that America as the heart of capitalism can also astray individuals to have that of an anarchic, extravagant, out of hand kind of experiences.

In his trip to America, he first meets Pete, the runaway son of a prominent program developer who accidentally takes him as a famous music producer and tries to convince him to sign a contract with Stevie so that he would do a favour to him. This encounter is important since they will start to establish an intimate relationship later in the play.

### **3.3.5 Stories as a Way to Make Sense of the World**

Alain repeats the same stories this time to Pete. The resistance or the blockage links our character Alain to repeat these stories obsessively but without any derived moral or philosophical outcome. In Deleuzian terms, while he is endowed with memory, he is lacking self-consciousness. He remembers the story, the scenery, and people but he can not extricate a natural reason from the story. Deleuze explains that state as "the knowledge itself becomes a repetition, it is played instead of being

known” (Deleuze, 1994, p.14). The reason why he is lacking to bring these stories into a meaningful declaration of human nature is that he is incapable of bringing the essence and appearances, truth and representation, metaphor and the literal into a whole.

These stories are also the revelation of a society of today’s world having seduction in its centre and hinting the age of mass consumption in modern societies where the subject and object has an ambivalent relationship. It is one of the relationships where the ‘infinite game’ is played by desire and manipulation. Subjects are not only seduced by objects but become objects themselves where they can be exchanged simultaneously. In such societies love is also commodified and became a form of exchange. According to Baudrillard seduction is “a game in continuous reciprocal exchange- and not just about sexual strategies. Seduction can end in sex but can exhaust itself in defiance and ‘death’- a dizzy spiral of responses and counter-responses” (Horrock and Jevtic,1999, p.97).

Deleuze, on the other hand, defines the infinite game as ‘the divine game’ where there are no rules or limits and each move assumes a ‘winning throw’. It is a game of extremes and only brings about difference not the same. He further adds that “When representation discovers the infinite within itself, it no longer appears as organic representation but as orgiastic representation: it discovers within itself the limits of the organised; tumult, restlessness and passion underneath apparent calm. It rediscovers monstrosity” (Deleuze, 1994, p.42).

The problem of infinite lies in its incompatibility with the laws of nature. Nature and humans are designed on the basis of limited experiences from the perception of norm and normal, to imagine otherwise is to experience the schizophrenic. Yet, capitalist economies de-normalises and de-individualises people by turning them into ‘desiring machines’ (Deleuze’s term).

Thus it is the unconscious of the social productions which creates a society of desiring-machines. In capitalist societies market economy by turning people into irrational, fragmented, insecure masses unreflectively acting on irrational desires turn human subjectivity into a representational form.

When at the beginning Alain moves to kiss Pete, he rejects him and explains that it is not his thing unless he was the producer who is going to sign the contract for Stevie, a famous rock singer. That reveals the motivations behind Pete's actions which is one based on transaction and purely self-motivated. Likewise in Faust myth, Faust has the illusion that Mephistopheles serves him in return of his soul but in fact, the devil only serves to himself. Like the devil who will not help anyone unless he trades one's soul, Pete is only serving to his own interests. Later, when Pete forms an attachment with Alain it is not an equal one but rather it is one of power relationship where Alain is delusional about Pete serving him. Pete has a fluid sense of self as he does not have certain values and complete sense of direction how one thing might lead to another. He is only hoping to be rich and have real experiences someday. He is curious about life but he does not know exactly where he is heading in life. What do the real experiences mean to Pete is closely related to what we consider as 'real'. How the experience in a society of simulations possibly become a real experience? Considering Pete associating real experience with being rich, the reality is the triumph of money (representation) over the authentic (real).

In terms of a power relationship, Pete is the one who puts down the rules for Alain to obey in the beginning, but after the desert scene where his 'initiation' into the world of homosexuality completed, their roles are swapped and it is Alain who puts down the rules for Pete. In relation to Faust myth, as Faust believes Mephistopheles serves him, it is, in fact, the devil who seduces Faust to sell his soul and commit sinful acts, so that his service is only to his own interest and not Faust's. Alain in that case mistakenly imagines he has the power to control and lead Pete in and out of experiences for his own sake. So, when he puts his first rule as the experience should be limitless we know the experience will be one of schizoid one.

For that reason, that notion of having unlimited freedom is closely related to the liberal governments. Foucault indicated that living dangerously is the motto of liberal societies and explains in his lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics*:

Broadly speaking, in liberal regimes, in the liberal art of government, freedom of behaviour is entailed, called for, needed, and serves as a regulator, but it also has to

be produced and organised. In that new type of governing, exerting power over life and manufacturing the type of freedom where the most intimate areas of human life becomes an object of manipulation and control, freedom becomes something which must be constantly produced within the constraints of neoliberal system. This manufacturing of freedom is also supplanted with the idea that individual life is in constant danger” (2008, p.65-66).

From that perspective, the motivation behind Alain’s wish to have limitless experiences implies a conditioned stimulus of a drive for freedom coupled with the spirit of adventure. Yet the individuals in the capital market economies are not free. As Foucault emphasizes in his lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* the power of the state with the new governmental reason works with interests. The government now acts upon interests which is a complex interplay between “individual and collective interests, between social utility and economic profit, between the equilibrium of the market and the regime of public authorities, between basic rights and the independence of the governed” (Foucault, 2008, p 44-45). It is through these interests the government exerts its power on the individuals and their actions, their lives and rights. Foucault gives the formula of liberal governments as the producers of the slogans to ‘be free’ but at the same time producing the meaning and conditions of ‘what is to be free’. He states the problem of freedom in liberal economies as “ ... in liberal regimes, in the liberal art of government, freedom of behaviour is entailed, called for, needed, and serves as a regulator, but it also has to be produced and organised” (Foucault, 2008, p.65). Therefore creating this discourse of freedom among the individuals, it forms a false consciousness that they can choose to be free despite the existence of constant threats to their freedom.

Chorus’s second appearance in the play is to inform us about the current society. Although it delineates us from the play by having no connection to the characters in the play it also draws us the bleak picture of the society. In there, there is chaos, violence takes over the city, there are riots, shops are raided and consumerism reached its peak point. The society arrived at the contradictory point where there are people who live well-off by labouring their time to bring chaos into

the society, and others who left without food are raiding the shops only to steal VCR's, not food. The striking moment when he utters "What is the point of having food in the house when you have nothing to watch while you're eating it" is the striking summary of the society enmeshed in commodity fetishism" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.15)

Foucault informs us about this new type governing in liberal economies which the government works as the market economy itself and instead of protecting the welfare of the society and exercise the freedom of individuals; it limits, controls and violates human rights. It "tores the individuals away from their natural community and brings them together in the flat, an anonymous mass" (Foucault, 2008, p.113). Through standardisation, individuals are made one-dimensional and they describe their identity through consumption, labels, signs and spectacles. It also breaks the community apart to destroy the solidarity and individuals end up fighting for themselves or not fighting at all.

Alain's persistence to stay in the metaphorical world, the learned man's world, who can not get in touch with his inner self, the soul, the essence of his being; gives birth to a proper Faustian man who retells these stories and committing the error of confusing what Kant calls to mistake the phenomenal with noumenal.

Committing the error of phenomenal with nominal is when Alain values the manipulation of signs over the pursuit of truth. When Faust's ambitions become worldly avarice and harmonised with earthly fame he starts to understand everything in the purely material sense. Alain likewise uses his art of rhetoric to bring out the societal issues of his time inherent in these stories yet he confuses the artificial significance of things with the natural and ignores the conditions of possibilities of their outcome. He commits the error by valuing the representation over the essence of human beings.

Therefore, when he was found lying on the floor in the apartment, covered with blood before saying anything else he repeats to Pete the story of the Japanese man. The assailant first attacks Alain's eyes which might be considered, in the symbolic sense, to see the essence in Pete as a trickster. In the story, the Japanese

businessman has lunch with a Dutch girl whom he met on a business trip. As she reads her poetry to him, he shoots her and cuts her up to eat while professing his undying love. He asks Pete, "Who is more cruel? The man or the women?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.16)

Baudrillard sees that "as a sacrifice when women as the object of seduction reads her poetry full of metaphors and they are taken literary by the sentimental subject which leads the seduction game to end in cannibalistic death" (Harrocks and Jevtic, p.102). Myths are full of metaphors and they hide the real truth if their ideological coatings are removed. Likewise, the myth of cruelty and antagonism inherent in these stories are masking a deeper truth which reveals themselves only after their ideological use are debunked.

Deleuze informs us that myth always involves a further task to be performed, an enigma to be resolved. For Deleuze in myth involves "The oracle is questioned, but the oracle's response is itself a problem. The dialectic is ironic, but the irony is the art of problems and questions. Irony consists of treating things and beings as so many responses to hidden questions, so many cases for problems yet to be resolved" (1994, p.63).

Considering the questions 'Who is cruel, who is not' or 'Who is the seducer, who is the seduced' with their ironic tone, they are thought to bring forth an exploration of the issues not only of human soul but also the individual's 'will' which is sold to the commodified capitalist societies where they are objectified in order to be bought and sold.

Therefore Pete's lack of grasping the metaphors also demonstrates the society's materialist attitude. In the Faust myth, Mephistopheles is represented in controlling the literal and manipulating the material world to create representations for Faust to have simulated experiences. The modern world where Alain is so keen to experience its pleasures is also a material one and constituted based on exchange, objectification, and representation of the subject. When Alain repeats these stories to Pete, he does not understand the meaning since they are full of metaphors of human



essence. So from his perspective, the meaning is always absent from these stories and soon Alain's stories become grotesque for Pete.

On the other hand, Pete is afraid of the overwhelming nature of real experiences. He needs to distance himself from the experience so that he does not feel its impact. As a Mephistophelean figure, he creates simulations of experiences by using his camera and looking at the experience through the camera lens allows him to distance himself from that experience. Recording becomes a way where he actually takes pleasure because it enables him to be both the object and the subject of the experience. On another level, his fear of actively participating in the events leads him to be a passive observant of what is going on around him.

In the desert scene where Pete for the first time has sexual intercourse with Alain, he takes the camera to record it as a documentary about the "initiation into the strange world of the homosexual" ritual (Ravenhill, 2001, p.22). His obsession to make it like on TV explains his discomfort at owning experiences. This split between the one who experiences (subject) and experienced (object) alienates his soul which can be considered as another form of alienation.

Furthermore, this alienation comes from the division within the soul where the soul becomes another to itself. A soul according to David Hawkes is "a concept arises from the recognition of a distinction between subject and the object" (Hawkes, 2007, p.7-8) When human beings experience something they experience it as a subject, and the experienced as an object, while the soul is on the former side yet immaterial and spiritual. He claims that "The concept of performative casts suspicion on subjective identity and instead defines subjectivity in terms of practice" (Hawkes, 2007, p.52) The performative attitude of Pete leads him to experience the act of lovemaking both as a subject and an object, where his self splits into two, as one sees through the camera lens and the other as the subject of that act which alienates him from the one who acts and the other who watches.

Also, although there is no signing with the blood, the theme of the pact is subverted by the playwright with the initiation ritual of the homosexual that took place in the desert.

### **3.3.6 Sexual Relationships as a Site of Transaction**

Foucault in his book *The Use of Pleasure* gives examples from Greek antiquity about the sexual relationship between male partners. He explains that the young man was recognised as the object of pleasure and public accepted an aged man to desire and enjoy a young man as long as the laws and proprieties were respected. Yet the boy, although seen as the subject of pleasure, could not consider himself as an object of pleasure according to ancient Greek society. He explains the reason as, “the relationship that he was expected to establish with himself in order to become a free man, master of himself and capable of prevailing over others, was at variance with a form of relationship in which he would be an object of pleasure for another” (Foucault, 1990, p.221).

Also in the physical relations between the man and the boy, the boy, who undertakes the imitation of women, is not to experience pleasure or take pleasure in the man’s pleasure, not to surrender easily and yield only if he had the admiration, gratitude or affection for his lover to please the other. The most important thing, all in all, is the consent of the boy.

The boy was supposed to make his consent, if he finally gave it, subject to conditions relating to the man to whom he yielded (his merit, his status, his virtue) and to the benefit he could expect to gain from him (a benefit that was rather shameful if it was only a question of money, but honourable if it involved training for manhood, social connections for the future, or a lasting friendship) (Foucault, 1990, p.224).

Considering the type of relationship, exchange again becomes the subject of an intimate relationship between Alain and Pete. Alain uses his status as a renowned playwright to receive consent from Pete and his consent is given so that he could, in turn, benefit from Alain’s ideas and friendship. However, as we mentioned earlier his ideas for its metaphorical nature fails to have any influence on Pete. This is also due

to the fact that Pete represents the personae of his century where imagination is drained out from the individuals for the sake of mindless consumption. Capitalism turned them into reconstructing their identities based on consumption and the natural human inclination to live transcendental experiences are exploited through drug use which serves the market economy.

Desire is a recurring undercurrent theme of the play. From the point of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* ; desire is seen as the “unconscious of the social production” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.xviii).

Foucault in his article ‘Subject and Power’ explores how individuals focus on themselves, to see themselves as the subject of desire and how they discover in desire a piece of truth about themselves. How desire can reveal the truth in human beings is through urging them to abandon all social conditioning and take the journey into seeing what is human and non-human in their being, their will and forces along with their transformations.

Deleuze and Guattari go further in *Anti-Oedipus* to explain human beings as desiring-machines. Desiring-machines are producing and the product at the same time. The subject and the object in the same body. The producer and the consumer of one and the same process.

When Faust makes a pact to sell his soul to the devil he objectifies it by making it a thing to be exchanged. It also alienates him internally as the soul is forbidden to be sold. Since the soul is what the body is not, and it is described against the flesh which is the departure from the mind to the body such act symbolises the degeneration of his soul.

This degeneration of the soul is also a movement from the subject to the object and when the pact is made in the desert a new ground opens up for the exchange between Alain and Pete in terms of their physical relationship.

At that point, the role of the Faust in the original myth as a man of rationale, who later learns from his experiences through sinful acts and whose soul is redeemed by his capacity to built a compassionate relationship with his fellow man, is

demythologised by the playwright. His protagonist instead cannot bring his rational mind with his capacity to understand the essence in another which is a necessary component for human beings to be able to live a meaningful life. Instead, Ravenhill's Faust declares the death of the man which is the death of the soul of man and acts out as a Mephistophelean figure where he leads his fellow man into destruction. He believes in neither man's progress nor humanity, at least not in this world, and he is led to search his answers after death. That quality of not being able to bring the transformative power of the negative, be it ideas or actions brings several consequences, and finally, his incapacity to distinguish the representation with the literal brings the heroic tragedy.

Meanwhile, when it comes to entertainment, the channels are repeating the same shows over and over again which symbolise life as a drag. People's lives stuck in the same and hardly any changes happen at all. Myths as Bronislaw Malinowski puts it ensures that the past will not repeat itself in the present and it promises to change. But since Ravenhill created a world which is clean of myths, the characters are suffering from the same recurrent and eventless life. It is not the fact that characters are repeating themselves, as that repetition consists of a potential change but their fatal error of falling into the negativity and repeating that negativity brings about destruction. Their inability to turn that negativity into a transformative power in overturning the law. Yet that doesn't happen when the current system of government created a passive and isolated mass culture whose needs are determined by the interest of this new type of governing.

Consequently, the chorus goes on stage again to tell about the current problems of such a society. It tells the story of a clergyman and how he is encouraging his society to raise money to bring the internet into town only to have the children become addicted to it and their parents worrying about them. When parents complain, he mystifies the situation under the blanket of religion. That is the state of the nation portrayed in the play. Technological advancement in human lives are not serving its purpose and one can never be sure whether it benefits the society or undermines it. However, it definitely serves the market purposes and consumerist

motives. Another aspect of the story is how children are duped into passivity and the interesting analogy between religion and technology which both need masses to impose their ideology to thrive in their existence.

We are also informed that they are living in a state of surveillance, there are cameras watching them everywhere and people have a simulation of relationships through the internet. That way people's personal spheres are distinctly separated out and everything turns into a simulacrum.

When Alain wants to see Peter's personal profile, he comes across with Donny who subscribed to the website to meet other people like Pete. In the Faust myth, Donny is equal to Helen as a character. Just as Mephistopheles does not bring back Helen in full-body but only creates a reflection of her, internet profile of Donny is similarly a virtual representation.

When they play the video, Donny takes off his t-shirt to reveal his body which he scarred with careful blade strokes and he carries them as a badge of honour. Moreover, he explains he used to hate his body and feel very uncomfortable in it but he worked hard to love it. This completion of fulfilment of his own image is an example of producing himself for the others as an object to take pleasure. It is Donny's deep insecurity and sense of lack for owning his life which leads him to exert violence upon his body as the only place of control. Foucault explains in 'Subject and Power' that power uses masks to hide its true nature and does not act upon individuals directly but instead it acts upon their actions, trying to limit, control and change their current actions or the upcoming ones. Then the ultimate resistance to such power of state apparatuses becomes human bodies which they have control over to a certain extent. Every time Donny slices his body, he feels more empowered and able to feel he is someone with self-worth. He is aware of the fact that if the current society turned everything into a simulation, he would have to prove his authenticity in some way.

We know the characters by their actions and Alain's first reaction is seeing the scarred body is as a piece of art. He does not come to the terms with the problem of violence but rather takes pleasure of seeing the violated body being displayed on

the screen. He aesthetise it and see it as an existential agony. Furthermore, he sees it as a place of power where one strives to take control of the self and an initiation ritual of the end of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, for Pete, it is merely slicing oneself. He thinks that the action is taken to come to terms with what is going on inside and reflect the suffering of the inner to the outer. When both ideas are considered they seem to differ in their opinions which Alain thinks it is beyond the subjective and reflection of power-relationship which is the second-order thought while Pete interprets it in subjective and literal which reflects the first-order thought.

Eventually, Pete gets jealous when Alain's attention is directed to Donny and as he lost his position to be an object of desire. The question is now whether Donny's scars are for real or not and if he is prepared to meet with any demands to authenticate himself. For Alain, it is an initiation rite and if people are cutting themselves he looks at it from the perception of an existential crisis. However this is happening beyond the symbolic world, it is happening for real. Moreover, it will lead to a point where events become more than real or in Baudrillardian terms it will become 'hyperreal'. Yet Alain in his alienated state can not bring together the world of signs and world of real.

Alain takes the camera to record Danny and when Danny talks to the camera he tells about his childhood and his disappointment as a child. We are made aware of his life as a child when he does not have a father and his mother works long hours at the shop to support herself. Donnie has his first disappointment when the slushy machine at the shop, where her mother works, is taken away and his frustration led to his destructive behaviours at school due to his resentment of having no explanation why the machine was taken away. Later, he is also abandoned by his mother and she later diagnoses with cancer from the fluorescent light at the shop. Although he does not believe it was the real cause, he still does not know why so much suffering happened to him. He identifies himself to Jesus for he had scars too and believes one day he would have an explanation from him why he does this to himself.

Pete at the height of his jealousy makes a competition about who has the best scars. This is a competitive society where individuals not only want to win but they also want others to lose. So, while Pete is keen on being the winner, he also wants Donny to be the loser. When Alain as the judge comments Donny has the most cuts he gets even more jealous and asks Donny to cut himself right there. When it's Donny's turn to take up the challenge, he is determined to win. He makes a move to cut his jugular because it is the bravest of all the techniques. But he makes it the wrong way, collapses and dies immediately.

Alain in front of the dead boys comments that "at some point in the twentieth century, precisely at 1987 reality ended and simulation began" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.40). He with his search for synthesis and his compulsive theorising buried his head in the past knowledge or in future prediction, and the present only becomes a reflection of what is known or what is pre-conceived. Yet what he lacks is the comprehension of the destruction he brought to the scene and his lack of sympathy for the dead body in front of him. When Pete urges him to stop theorising and look at the dead body he replies "the event itself is just a shadow, a reflection of our analysis" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.41).

Deleuze explains simulacrum beyond a mere repetition but as a site of resistance to a privileged position. He comments:

The simulacrum is the instance which includes a difference within itself, such as (at least) two divergent series on which it plays, all resemblance abolished so that one can no longer point to the existence of an original and a copy. It is in this direction that we must look for the conditions, not of possible experience, but of real experience (selection, repetition, etc.). It is here that we find the lived reality of a sub-representative domain (1994, p.69).

Pete's inability to see Donny's subjective essence kills Donny. Although the image Donny created was illusional, when he was in front of them in matter and soul both Alain and Pete rejected his authenticity of being a real person. Alain objectified him as being a unique spectacle by recording him on camera and Pete unacknowledged his existence by referring to him as a fake person.



Alain was charmed by the appearances and ignored the truth of the things which permitted the escalation of events where one had to end this infinite game. When Donny was challenged by Pete to prove his existence, he brought into the play the rules of the divine game which is limitless as the stakes always go higher. Also, Pete confuses the artificial Donny which he saw on the internet with the Donny as a person which is to commit 'the error of the literal'. So, his inability to make a distinction between representation and reality is to ignore Donny's essence. Donny is compassionate, he wants to believe he is not alone, people would like him, and his existence means something for others. When his essence is not recognised, he turns his body as the ultimate vehicle for power and commits to the tragic action. Because the only way when he is at a point where he can neither choose, nor do it without the sacrifice; is to play the divine game. In order to liberate himself from the current situation, he commits suicide. The truth is, in the era of late modernity when the moral law is no longer valid, our spontaneous selfhood takes the place and the impulses springing from our inner depths must be acknowledged for the consistency and coherence for our life. This is the existentialist ethics confirming the authenticity of the individual. Therefore when Pete commits suicide he is not only revealing his existential problem but also authenticating himself. He is not an object anymore since his ultimate sacrifice puts him into the subject role.

However, another perspective informs us that "the false claimants must die according to the ancient custom of myth and epic" ( Deleuze, 1994, p. 60). Ravenhill employs this mythic theme of false claimants to reveal the truth that any theory foreseeing a catastrophe in future without a constructive solution on what needs to be done today is a false claim and it is destructive.

Such perspective sheds light to the end of the play when Alain chooses to die and he meets Donny in another world. Alain's claim for the end of the world and humanity leads him into the desire to experience pleasures of this world without recognising the world of representation and the real which eventually ends in Donny's death. Although an intellectual, his inability to bring metaphor with the literal makes him feel even more alienated in the present society and he becomes

aware of the fact that he will not be able to function in that society. Therefore this end might also be a new beginning in another world for his release from this world of repetition. In other terms, his initial desire brings a truth which is free of any social conditioning. Foucault emphasizes the constructive nature of desire by explaining in *Subject and Power* that "How desire can reveal the truth in a human being is through urging them to abandon all social conditioning and take the journey into seeing what is human and non-human in their being, their will and forces along with their transformations" (Hawkes, 2007).

Terry Eagleton proposes the idea that "By accepting one's finitude, one can live provisionally, not fetishising or overvaluing existence and thus free from tragic dependency. What is tragic for some can become the moral value for others. As the real tragedy lies in not being dead but cannot die" (Eagleton, 2003, p.270). Pete stands for the real tragic character who is stuck in the world where he is unable to break free of the world devoid of the essential values and meanings.

In his identification of the tragic Eagleton claims "The demonic are those lost souls who can find release from the anguish of non-being only by destroying others, but who is doing so deplete themselves even further" (Eagleton, 2003, p.256).

Therefore Pete as the Mephistophelean figure will stay in the world to bring the demonic over to this world and destroy others to deny his lack of foundation unless he finds an alternative form of death-in-life which is according to Terry Eagleton "to affirm the human non-hubristically, in the knowledge of its frailty and finitude" (Eagleton, 2003, p.272).

Throughout the play, both characters commit different errors and their inability to bring the world of metaphor with the world of literal is the common theme of the play. Myths are also considered to have layers of meanings and when their ideological assumptions are removed they reveal the truth in a precise, literal way. If the metaphorical meanings of myths are taken literally they create false consciousness and lead any society into destruction by undermining values and moral behaviours. Similarly, Ravenhill's characters suffer from being in a society lacking

the guidance of moral values and beliefs and in their failure to merge the literal with the metaphorical in acknowledging human essence brings about their deaths.

### **3.4 Mythical Motifs in Some Explicit Polaroids**

Some Explicit Polaroids is the continuation of Mark Ravenhill's debut play *Shopping and Fucking*. Ravenhill himself confirms that the characters in the play, the infant 'me' Tim, Victor and Nadia who are "needy, greedy and wounded and only fleetingly able to connect with the world" (Ravenhill, 2004, p.220) are a revisitation of Mark Robbie and Lulu of his previous play and against them are placed the adult 'us' characters of Helen and Nick. The play demonstrates the nineties new writing in its depiction of the new sensibility by focusing on the political and social issues of its milieu through the characters' individual stories of existential alienation coming from the effects of capitalism, consumerism and the subjectivisation of human by power, as well as their desensitization, depressive hedonism, and depoliticised, individualistic lives that are strictly defined by the pleasure principle.

"Although *Some Explicit Polaroids* is considered to be a follow-up play, both plays take a very different approach to British political history", explains Graham Saunders (Sierz, 2012, p.174). According to Saunders, while *Shopping and Fucking* marks the Thatcherite era and the administration of Conservative government, *Some Explicit Polaroids* coincides with Tony Blair's New Labour and the era of Cool Britannia. "In that sense, the characters in *Some Explicit Polaroids* carry the burden of the conservative Thatcherite era with the newly arrived values of Cool Britannia" (Sierz, 2012, p.174). The playwright while contrasting the new values of conformity and hedonism represented by the youth culture and the old socialist values of opposition, anger and resistance represented by older generations; takes the same distance to both sides.

Just as in his previous plays, Ravenhill does not present us with clear-cut, simple answers to the current state of moral and political confusions of his era nor does he offer us a message but rather he portrays us the society in search of the new

values and depict their tragedies. This shift from personal to social reaffirms the notion that 'personal is political'.

The first scene depicts Nick fresh out of prison after his service for two years and his inability to cope even with simple minor daily errands such as using a public phone. As he is like a fish out of the sea and lacking to adapt the changes in a new society, he tries to call Helen whom he once was in a relationship both romantically and politically.

The first contradiction that Nick encounters socially when fresh out of prison is when he takes the elevator in Helen's apartment only to find a seven-year-old kid trying to sell him drugs to buy a PlayStation. The consumerist attitude infiltrating to the lowest age possible to turn children into drug dealers reveals the crises in society. Alex Sierz explains the 1990s culture as the "drug references permeate culture and the higher proportion of teenagers and adults taking drugs in the UK than any other EU countries reported by the European Commission" (Sierz, 2012, p.6).

Moreover, the nineties was the period in the UK when "the popular culture was fascinated by criminals and the news was dominated by social anomalies such as the murder of the toddler Jamie Bulger by two ten-year-olds and the sexual abuse of nine children by their parents" (Sierz, 2012, p.5). The evil in society seems to be embodied in this nine-year-old boy selling drugs which points at what Sierz calls the 'devilish problem' which leaves children vulnerable in a society of dysfunctional families and rampant consumerism perpetuated by the market economy.

Nick finds Helen changed her old socialist values once she so passionately embraced, and now being a local councillor with a steady job, working for the liberal government. At that point, we are assured that Helen has changed through her witness to that slow and painful societal and political change from socialist to capitalist society whereas Nick's transformation is ambivalent. Whether his service at the prison served him to reconsider his values or what kind of change he went through is not very clear at the beginning of the play. Yet he seems to be afraid of the fact that everything has changed, including Helen, but he did not as much. He wants

to stay at Helen's because he wishes to learn and understand how the world works now, but she seems to be reluctant as Nick reminds her once young, angry, and resistant self which she 'took off bit by bit'. Indeed, she was so deeply involved with the class struggle at the time that when his dad's business was put at stake by a rich someone, she requested that this someone should be killed because 'he was a class traitor'. Therefore, Nick, taking such socialist discourse literary kidnapped the class traitor, tortured him and was sent to the prison for attempted murder.

However, when Nick confronts her she refuses to take responsibility by justifying herself that it was a long time ago and she was only twenty then. She validates herself saying "I was twenty. Everyone was a fascist or a scab or a class traitor. 'Eat the rich' We used to chant that, I mean what the fuck did that mean- 'eat the rich' ?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.143).

Helen, despite the case being rather personal- her dad's career- by coating her request in the socialist discourse of 'class traitor', made Nick think that he was performing the act against all class traitors who worked against the socialist values. In that sense, it is using a political cause for the personal benefit which is the contradiction inherent in all grand ideas experienced in the microcosmic world of the individual stories.

Helen, who was once young and full with the excitement of the social and political change defended the values and the rights of the public on the streets. Now though, she became middle-aged, she gave up the fight and as being a part of a grown-up world, she lives a comfortable but boring life with a regular government job which provides no effective political solution to current problems. This means, she abandoned her radical past and moreover become another class-traitor. When Nick asks about her job, he sneers at her having a job as petty as regulating bus schedules to make them run on time.

Nick as a left-wing radical, questions her about their big ideas, 'big targets' which now evaporated into the scene of history. Although his question 'Why are they (shitty estates) there in the first place' is well-grounded yet this goes no further than being the same theoretical dead end. Against Nick's grand revolutionary ideas of the

past contrasted Helen's arguments of 'doing as little as one can' logic which although slow, invokes an action for change. Helen's resentful speech to Nick "What did we ever do? Sure talk, talk, march, march, protest. Ban this, overthrow that, but what did we ever do?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.146) is the justification of her job for making little impact on people's lives rather than vain protest and opposition. Yet although Helen obviously altered her convictions about grand gestures, she is still able to acknowledge Nick's thoughts and feelings.

In scene two, a hedonistic youth with an entirely different set of values are introduced for further contrast between these two generations. Nadia, Victor and Tim are twenty-somethings with no political history, enacting the myth of the 'happy world' in their depressive hedonism, and perpetuating a master-slave relationship in their lives crumbled by the lack of social interaction, and with their cynical worldview that 'nothing changes' which happens as a result of the capitalist emptying of life from meaning.

### **3.4.1 Happy World Myth**

Happy world myth is the psychobabble that Tim and Nadia invented to be protected from the society outside. It functions as their oasis to that entrapment of control outside. Gilles Deleuze in his essay 'Postscript on Societies of Control' explains the disciplinary societies as for individuals being passed from one enclosed space to another 'each having its laws'. These enclosures are prison, hospital, factory, school and family. According to Deleuze, these institutions are constantly reformed but everyone knows they are no longer valid. So the reforming is only serving to "keeping people employed until the installation of new forces knocks at the door" (Deleuze, 1992, p.4). Deleuze informs about a transition from the disciplinary societies of the past into societies of control of the present. The particular character of the '*Control Societies*' is that it operates continuously and without a limit. Nadia, Tim and Victor practice their little temporary space of happiness with no greater function to run away from control to go back to it as quickly as they entered it.

On another level, their perception of the 'happy world' presumes that everything is well and people are happy could be considered as the reflection of the ideology of Cool Britannia. Sean Carney describes such state as;

In other words, in the 'happy world' as they call it, the negative itself has been disavowed from consciousness and the result is what Horkheimer and Adorno call 'positivist decay', which is the end-result of Enlightenment thinking that takes place once the determinate negativity of dialectical thought is yoked to the project of the absolute and totality (Dialectical Enlightenment 18). This positivism is objectified, reified, rationalised thought, living in a state of the perpetual present, without negativity (Carney, 2013, p.253).

In their assertion to have the right to be happy, Tim fills his body with ecstasy tablets and Nadia rejects the negative thoughts in order to be 'allowed' to enter the happy world and insist to be beautiful inside, while Victor just wants to trash himself. Their inert and numb state is only disturbed by Nick who screams at their face "What are you? Nothing's connected, you're not connected with anything and you're not fighting anything" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.181)

Nadia, a lap dancer who has a physically abusive relationship with Simon, her unseen boyfriend, therapies herself through her self-help clichés which only focuses the positive, present moment experiences and consciously forgetting the negative ones as if they are in the 'past tense'. Her vocabulary consists of the terms of the market economy such as 'ambition', 'want', and 'go for it' however she is unable to reflect on the bigger issues in the society.

For Sean Carney, "positivism produces the mechanism of capitalist exchange at the level of thoughts themselves" (Carney, 2013, p.253). Similarly, Nadia's clinging to the positive and her vocabulary which is highly charged with market terms fulfils the capitalist ideology.

### **3.4.2 From Predative Fathers to the Relations of Ownership**

The ambiguous relationship between fathers and sons in which fathers act both as an authoritative figure and as sexual predators is a recurrent theme in *Shopping and Fucking* and also in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. The traditional role of



the paternal figure being authoritative yet protective, and an exemplary figure is subverted and replaced by an abusive one. When it comes to mothers they are either absent or unable to protect their child which is made similar to the way the government functions.

As a consequence, the male characters develop problematic relationships when it comes to finding partners and the nature of that relationships become one of ownership which is settled through a transaction. In their strive to find a protective father figure they fall into the trap of a master-slave relationship.

Victor likewise represents this new world order. He is a Russian sex slave bought by Tim who defines himself over the pleasures of his body object. The relationship between them is an enactment of a master-slave relationship in which any feelings for the other is forbidden. Also, Victor is most likely to have an incestuous relationship with an abusive father and his brother being an accomplice. This can be inferred from the polaroids he shows to Nadia and his comment that when he was fourteen his brother said he could be in porn. Nadia's congratulatory response comes as an insensitive remark since she can not think critically and entrapped in refusing the negative. She says, "I think it's great to have an ambition. Something you want and really go for it" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.148).

The explicit content of these polaroids represents the instantaneity of the desires which is quickly satisfied by the market consumerism that fits into Victor's current ambitions. That is why he describes himself as a 'hungry hole' which stands for being -more than- open to the new experiences and possibilities without inferring any meaning from them or as Victor calls them 'trash' experiences. Nadia is open to experiences too but she is lost and confused about the nature of them. When Victor asks what does she want Nadia replies; "I don't know yet. I'm still trying to find out, you know? Where I really belong in the universe. Nothing's fixed for me, which is cool in a way. Sometimes you just have to let yourself be open to possibilities before you can really choose, you know?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.148).

### **3.4.3 The Idea of Choice**

The idea of choice is problematic in modern societies. Although being offered with choices, there are not many that one can freely choose from since the freedom to choose is determined by the market. When the choices are determined by the market, individuals are swayed to determine their needs based on the market values. That is why Victor defines himself over his 'beautiful' body which everyone should be crazy about. Moreover, being open to possibilities in a way has connotations of excitement, change and hope for the new.

However, the malaise with capitalism is the dissemination of the feeling that 'there is nothing new' which echoes the postmodern state. Fredrick Jameson in his book *Postmodernism* adds the term 'Cultural logic of capitalism' to the title of his book. He argues that "the failure of the future was constitutive of a postmodern cultural scene which, as he correctly prophesied, would become dominated by pastiche and revivalism" (Fisher, 2009, p.7) The characters' cynicism about any possible change for the future flung them into the experiences and possibilities.

Tim is Nadia's best friend and an HIV positive who slides into the denial by taking pills since he was nineteen. Tim and Victor both embrace a relationship based on money transaction, instant and meaningless pleasures that are induced with drugs and trash culture. Alex Sierz notes that "The play's characters exemplify Ravenhill's use of dramatic irony and contradiction: although the twenty-somethings are free of ideology which allows you to be open to new ideas and new experiences, they are also lost and confused" (Sierz, 2001, p.151-152). "In contrast with the younger characters, Helen and Nick are firmly grounded in their ideological beliefs, yet Helen is seen as 'dull' and Nick cannot join in with youth's frantic partying" (Sierz, 2001, p 151-152).

### **3.4.4 Remembering as a Constitutive Part of The Self**

In scene three, Nick meets Nadia, when she was beaten by Simon on the street, where he immediately gets involved and takes her back home. After her quick visit to the kitchen, Nadia is surprised to find Nick still in the apartment because she

'filed him away' in there 'Past Tense'. Although she wants Nick to go, she can not say it directly and instead she utters half-finished sentences while Nick is persistent to know who is the man who beat her up. She can not assert herself to ask Nick to leave but instead, she tucks herself in the frozen food.

The content of Nadia's speech about frozen food is full of metaphors and might be connected to Nick's current state. She says "it has to be good for something. Obviously, I wasn't going to eat it. I mean 'Best before December 1984,' [...] But I thought: Hold onto it. Everything has its value. Everything is of use" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.155). It recalls Nick who is defrosted after his imprisonment and now looking for what he is good at -he has to be good for something- since what he used to value the most are no longer there. Sean Carney comments that "In the absence of socialist politics, the recently defrosted Nick seems largely useless and can only offer abrasive critiques of the world he wakes up in" (Carney, 2013, p.252). Despite Nick's effort to make Nadia acknowledge that she has to make a stand and not let man walk all over her, her careful un-labelling and non-generalising of her relationship with Simon stir anger in Nick. Nick's presence is a necessary part for Nadia's understanding of her relationship with Simon to be able to move on in life. As Christian Schmitt-Kilb pointed out "Her refusal to judge a particular situation in the light of a larger context makes it impossible for her to make a stand. Generalisations don't mean anything for her. Making a stand is a form of self-assertion, and generalizations are a necessary part of it" (Shmitt-Kilb, 2005, p. 253).

Ravenhill portrays two sides of the same coin. On one side there are grown-up adults represented by Nick and Helen and on the other child adults such as Nadia, Tim, Victor and Simon. So, Nick's comment about Simon comes as a confirmation when he says "He's not making much of a go at being an adult" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.156).

Nick's anger and his personality of not being able to look away when he sees injustice comes as a very out-of-fashion attitude in societies with liberal

economies. Nadia interprets his anger due to his fear and distinguishes herself from Nick as being 'a nice person'.

However, the time when she most has to stand up for herself, and in fact has all the right to be angry she refuses and sprouts self-help cliches. Her over-rationalisation of the situation is almost to the point of admitting it is not Simon's fault that she has bruises. But to regain self-value she has to accept both her positive and negative personal qualities together, and refuse to be treated that way. Yet, Nadia by consciously embracing the positive and rejecting the negative is entrapped in wilful forgetting and Nick reminds her the importance of memory, "You must remember" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.161).

Because memory with the action of remembering, synthesis and reflection is the most powerful tool in unwinding the power relations that might entangle one within its web.

Alex Sierz suggests "Ravenhill is less successful at showing the loss of political idealism than at conveying the need for memory and of keeping faith with the past" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.153).

The mytheme of remembering is one that repeats itself throughout the play. At the beginning Helen does not remember influencing Nick to commit the crime, Nadia likewise wilfully forgets everything that is unpleasant, Nick does not want to confront Brian and remember the past, Tim also does not want to remember that his life depends on the pills. So, in this active forgetting of the characters, remembering acquires an important constitutive function for the self. On the personal level, we are shaped by our experiences, ideas and our memories and to deny ourselves of remembering causes moral and spiritual degeneration in our personalities. Moreover remembering the past brings continuity and consistency into our lives.

Nietzsche wrote in the *Genealogy of Morals* "Forgetfulness is not just a vis inertia, as superficial people believe, but is rather an active ability to suppress, positive in the strongest sense of the word" (Nietzsche, 1997, p.35 ) However, he also claims that due to the importance of cultivating a good and effective memory culture should work against the active force of forgetting that serves as an important

physiological function. He further explains that in order to exercise the memory of the will, individuals must be able to make a distinction between what happens by the incident and what happens by intention while “it also presupposes an ability to think causally about an anticipated future” (Nietzsche, 1997, p xxii).

However, such a distinction is not evident at the beginning of the play. The characters repress the negative until they are confronted by other characters. Considered in this light playwright emphasises that although the act of remembering is personal, it is only put into the process collectively, through people with different value judgements. Therefore, society takes an inevitable part in the active memory of individuals.

As the diversity between the morality and existential responsibility which Nick defends and passive acceptance and ignorance which Nadia represents deepens, Nadia breaks into a burst of ironic laughter at the meaningless of Nick’s resistance to the unseen enemies.

Finally, Nick loses control and starts to shake Nadia violently, saying she is sleepwalking and she has to wake up (Ravenhill, 2001, p.162).

### **3.4.5 Body as a Place of Violence and Control**

When Nadia’s cut on her lip splits open and she bleeds, it becomes an ugly reminder of the body as a place of violence. It might also be considered the fact that human beings are not so easily be objectified.

Sean Carney argues that, blood as a sign of trauma can be considered in positive terms of “disrupting the system of transactions and exchange that dominates the social interactions, have the potential of generating more humane and lively forms of human relationship”, and adds immediately ‘those meaningful connections themselves can always be reintroduced into the system of transactional exchange” (Carney, 2013,p.242).

Although disturbing, the blood on Nadia’s face has the potential to bring the positive transformation into her life. This positive could happen in understanding the link between the power and ideology in producing the body and de-subjectivizing it.

Anirban Das explains that the belief of the body as a concrete, immediate presence in three-dimensional space- does not allow us to understand the link between the body and the politics of power and ideology. Moreover, in the culture of liberal capitalist economies, the body is turned into a fetishistic commodity rather than a being with a soul and value. Das deals with this new notion of seeing the body as a fetishised object, by calling it a “death thought” and “a ghost to the body- the other that continues to haunt the body” (Das, 2010, p.29). She further emphasises “The process of ideologization, of fetishisation, presupposes [...] a misconstrual of certain relations between humans as relations between things: a fetishisation of commodities in a process that Derrida calls Capitalization” (Das, 2010, p.29). Thus the commodification of the body and emptying it all the values together with the character’s relation to it stays at the heart of the problem.

In-yer-face theatre which is an experiential theatre uses violence and disturbing images to explore the darker and more complex issues of the psyche. Therefore Sierz explains that the most provocative and thus the best plays of the nineties viewed terrible acts as psychological states and aimed at immunising those from the real threats in life ( Sierz, 2001, p.241-42). Thus seeing a woman being beaten up on stage by her boyfriend and her normalising the situation is far safer than seeing that women being beaten to death in real life every day.

Nadia who advises Nick ‘to do not what he thinks but what he feels’ could also be a motto favoured by consumerism. In such societies, people are encouraged to act based on what they feel rather than questioning what they need. It is because if they think what they need, that hinders the market which is based on perpetual production. They should desire rather than question what to consume and critical thinking is not favoured by the capitalist systems. This is why capitalism is criticised for turning any society into the mindless consumerists which desire is at the heart of it. Gilles Deleuze equals desiring-production with the consumption and explains that:

For the -real truth of the matter-the glaring, sober truth that resides in delirium-is that there is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits: production is immediately consumption and a recording process (enregistrement\*), without any

sort of mediation, and the recording process and consumption directly determine production, though they do so within the production process itself (Deleuze, 1983, p.4).

Thus the sensual pleasure, passion, action, anxiety and pain, which is at once production of productions and a recording process, are also immediately consumed after reproduced.

In scene four we are introduced to Jonathan, a rich multinational and once a class traitor whom Nick tortured and left deep scars on his body. Jonathan's meeting with Helen is important in that he visions there 'the Apocalypse' or 'the End of the World' myth for the future. He announces that there should be a smooth passage to that new world order.

The Apocalypse Myth or in other terms the idea of the end is a recurrent myth in Ravenhill's plays. David Adams Leeming explains that "in common usage, it has come to mean a vision of the catastrophic end of the world" (Leeming, 1991, p.76). The apocalypse myth invokes the idea that an end will occur through catastrophic events and a new world will emerge. Lemmings further adds, "Through their myths of apocalypse human societies express a sense that the high powers of the universe must intervene definitively to put an end to the failure of humanity" (Leeming, 1991, p.76).

Thus the myth invokes a ritual cleansing of the old and degenerate and promises life for some groups after the catastrophe. Therefore although pessimistic with its vision of bringing about destruction, it also has positive connotations of hope of rebirth.

In the case of Jonathan, although the world they live is corrupted and unsustainable his hope for the new world in future does not offer any positive transformation. In fact, their current world is already an apocalyptic one with the calamities affecting the individual lives and we witness them through their micro-narratives. Therefore to expect an apocalypse in the future equals to being ignorant and alienated from a world where the apocalypse has already started.



Also, the problem with the Apocalypse myth is that at first, it feeds on nihilism and inaction which Jonathan's response to Helen generates. He proposes "The big boys have accepted the possibility, then, of course, we've got to ensure that it's all managed as smoothly as possible" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.169). These big boys are more likely to be the officials in the government and the owners of corporations thus the change Jonathan thinks they must ensure is possibly the transformation to capitalism and market economy. However the slow process into the market economy has already taken place and the transformation is inevitable. Therefore, his speech comes as grotesque.

Moreover, his speech implying faith in a better future in times of crises automatically gives way to a culture of inertia.

However contrary to that opinion, Dan Rebellato in his article 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Theatre: British Drama, Violence and Writing' claims that although it is tempting to see this chaotic destruction as "nihilistically apolitical, as a turning away from political engagement in favour of willful destruction, even self-destruction" this is not the case. One should see these images of apocalyptic destruction as a response -and rather a constructive one- "to a key feature of contemporary neoliberal capitalism: its totalizing absorption of realism" (Rebellato, 2017, p.22)

It is harder to imagine to completely abolish capitalism and set up a new political system than imagining an apocalyptic transformation. In fact, after the collapse of ideologies and grand narratives especially after socialism being no longer an alternative, there seems to be no other way but capitalism. Dan Rebellato in his essay refers to Mark Fisher who argues in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative* that "part of capitalism's function has been to produce in the minds of its subjects the sheer unthinkability of a world beyond neoliberal capitalism" and further emphasises, "[...] that the end of capitalism can be contemplated less easily than the end of the world because 'capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable'" (Rebellato, 2017, p.22).

People's Armageddon is also a part of the apocalyptic myth which refers to great moment of decision and confrontation. According to Lemmings "Armageddon becomes a symbolic battlefield where good and evil must finally fight it out at the time of last Judgement" (Lemmings, 1991, p.76).

Jonathan relates the Apocalypse myth to People's Armageddon as he continues "Because this has got to be the People's Armageddon, you see? We want to make sure that everybody has been listened to, that every social and racial grouping is represented in the events of the last few days. Exclusion must be avoided" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.170). Ravenhill's ironical use of meta-narratives such as the Apocalypse myth is evident here when Jonathan is acting out his apocalyptic news as a drug addict and mentally disturbed person. Consequently, Helen does not take him seriously and when he finally gives up on his show, he only asks for money. Beyond the Apocalypse and the Armageddon myth, there is always one thing which is money and Ravenhill mocks the heroic narrative pattern of these myths to demonstrate their inaccessibility to society.

Somewhere between this new governmental reason and the current problems of postmodernity, myths just like any other grand narratives lost its function and their meaning became suspicious. Just like Jonathan's recalling of the myth to save people from the catastrophic Apocalypse, Helen's grand idea that a violent attack might wipe out a thousand of suffering is made ironically invalid and belonging to a distant past. It may be for the fact that there lies at the heart of the capitalist a phenomena that no punctual moment of one catastrophic event that leads to the end the world but several and they are being lived through. Moreover, this process is rather slow and painful where nothing seems to happen for a change. When Helen sees communities disappear, greed and fear everywhere she could not conceive that she was witnessing the 'apocalypse' in the sense that the society is turning into a capitalist and postmodern one. When it finally did happen it was too late and 'it started with society and end up with individuals fighting it out' (Ravenhill, 2001, 188).

Helen explains the process as “Everything is gone. Not all at once. Not some great explosion. Not one day you can see what’s happening and fight back. But so gradually you don’t see it. Long, dull pain. Every now and then thinking: ‘How did we get from there to here? How did we let this happen? It can’t get any worse.’ But it does. On and on” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.189).

Mark Fisher articulates the myth of catastrophe as “the theme of sterility must be read metaphorically, as the displacement of another kind of anxiety.” He explains that the anxiety of “the end has already come” must be read in cultural terms that the future consists of only “re-iterations and re-permutations” without a break and no “shock of the new” to come (Fisher, 2009, p.7).

Thus in a process where no change happens, Helen had to make concessions about her values, what she can tolerate and whatnot, which cost her to make dear sacrifices. She admits that the grand narratives of socialism had died and “too much lost for the grand gestures” too. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.189) She is now trying to make new and moderate possibilities for the humanity that are left after going such change and she is determined to make a difference for people.

On another level, such transformation made different effects on youth who have no notion of society and are free of ideology. They are characterised with confusion, nihilism, pain and search for a meaning where the next big thing is constantly behind the corner.

Fisher connects that anxiety with “bi-polar oscillation which they constantly yearn for something new to happen” that he believes what they possess is ‘weak messianic hope’ and their lapse into the morose conviction that “nothing new can ever happen” (Fisher, 2009, p.7).

In scene five, Nick goes to Nadia’s flat when Tim and Victor are partying. That scene mostly serves to further illustrate the differences between the generations through Tim’s criticism of Nick’s values and the clash between socialism as an ideal and socialism as a lived experience. Tim preaches Nick that the old notions have changed and the old angry, fearful type is passed its sell-by-date and now it is a new society.

Tim expresses “We’ve reached ‘They all lived happily ever after’ and we’ve gone past it and we’re still carrying on. Nobody’s ever written that bit before but we’re doing it. This is the happy world” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.176). In this new ‘post-happy’ society everyone is responsible for their own action, no one blames the other for the misfortunes and doing otherwise is considered very nineteen eighty-four.

According to Sean Carney “As a catalyst to the disruptions of the psyches of other characters, Nick serves as the return of the repressed: not socialism, or activism, or even a politicised sensibility, but emotions. Particularly fear and anger” (Carney, 2013, p. 253) Metaphorically as the ‘ghost of the past’, Carney suggests, Nick’s anger and directionless energy, his very presence disrupts the illusion of ‘the happy world’ myth by thawing the characters' emotions. In the end, fear and anger are very humane feelings rather than desensitised and inert happiness.

Tim in his outburst, criticises Nick’s unseen enemy “Because it’s not out there any more, all right? You can’t look out there and blame, blame, blame. And I can imagine what it was like for you. Everything blocked, everything weighing you down. Communists, apartheid, finger on the nuclear button. It was frightening and you were frightened” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.177).

On the social level, Tim’s protest that there is no one out there points to the mindset that if there is a failure, it is entirely due to the personal weaknesses. Carney observes, “I suggest that in the political environment of the 1980s, human failure was reconfigured as the failure to be human, and human misfortune was dismissed as human weakness: one’s accidents became one’s destiny” (Carney, 2013, p.16 ).

Francois Lyotard in his celebrated book *The Postmodern Condition* describes postmodernism as the incredulity towards metanarratives. However, from the social perspective Saul Newman comments:

The decline of the metanarratives refers to a kind of shift or dislocation in the order of social reality, such that we can no longer rely on firm ontological foundations to provide the grounding for thought and, indeed, for political action. Politics can no

longer be guided by universally understood Truths or rational and moral discourses, or by the shared experience of Society or Community (Newman, 2016, p.26).

Moreover, in the neoliberal societies, 'the operation of power combined with regimes of knowledge and truth' which Foucault called '*the art of governing*', "has the effect of producing different modes of subjectivizing, or different ways we have of seeing ourselves. It is through our identification with and attachment to these forms of subjectivity that we are governed, that our behaviour is conducted" (Newman, 2016, p.47). It is due to that decline of myths and grand narratives and their inaccessibility in the society of market capitalism that characters wander aimlessly striving to make meaning, question the possibility of a new set of values and create their own micro-narratives.

Modern government apparatuses of power no longer repress the individual but rather control their behaviour through "the discursive category of the individual- even though the notions of his apparent right and freedoms- in order to govern him" (Newman, 2016, p.49) This means that the regimes of power operate through identification, passivity, conformist behaviours, and encouraging consumption. This power is infiltrated into the everyday life of the individuals and its nature defined by its formlessness. Newman claims that "this would be what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) called 'micro-fascism: a kind of authoritarianism and desire for one's own repression that permeates the social body, infiltrating everyday habits, behaviours and practices, and inhabiting the politics of both right and the left" (Newman, 2016, p.169).

Thus Tim's conditioned mindset charged with the current ideology that conducted individuals to the passive acceptance that they are responsible for their own failure is not showing the whole truth. Naturally, the continual offering of the youth themselves to the power makes them subjects of that power. Their voluntary servitude is mainly due to their obedience to invest their desire in the capitalist way of life, desire fetishism of commodities, and their psychic economy of guilt that arises with constant indebtedness.

Instead of advocating the positivist individualism and instrumental reason which are the products of the privatisation of social reality as Carney suggested, they need to free themselves by advocating human values and against the capitalist imperative of growth, they need to embrace negativity, slowness and the idea of de-growth.

In fact, throughout the scene six, Nick, Tim and Victor are involved in what Lyotard calls '*Language Games*'. Language games for Lyotard are similar to chess where the rules are determined for each item. He explains that "to speak is to fight" and 'one does not necessarily play to win as a move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention[...]' (Lyotard, 1984, p.10). In that, every utterance is a 'move' in a game. Thus when Tim tries to preach him what it was like in the past and confronts his values Nick responds "You child/ you boy/ don't you fucking tell me[...] what you don't understand" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.178). As a counter move, Nick confronts Tim's values and says "What about you? Inside you, there're chemicals fighting virus fighting your body fighting" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.181). Likewise, Victor as someone who was grown up in a socialist country hates socialists and confronts Nick's values. In his reasoning, he hates socialism for the "buildings are run down and everything is ugly" where 'the people are following rules and mocking and complaining when they think that no one is listening" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.178).

He says "All the time it is rotting, but all the time. Everything is getting better. Everything is for the best. The people are marching forward to the beat of history'. This lie. This deception. This progress. Big fucking lie" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.179). When Nick tries to explain what might be due to the difference between theory and practise Victor, shuts him up by telling him not to preach him about his country and that he knows nothing.

### **3.4.6 Old Generation Against the Young**

Nick feels alienated in this young group who only want to have fun with no memory, passively watch violence and take part in the active forgiving of all

injustices without any political vocabulary. Tim, Victor and Nadia do not appreciate Nick's anger and fear and consider him an obsessive freak in relation to their illusional idea of a happy life. Thus, confrontation becomes inevitable and necessary as the characters in the play question their values with every confrontation. Alex Sierz indicates that their communication results in a positive outcome by pointing out the necessity of confrontation:

Ravenhill's characters interact in a dialectical way, changing with every new confrontation. Nick comes from initial incomprehension to anger, to trying to shake some sense of reality into Nadia, to giving up and drifting into a 'totally fucking meaningless' life, to longing to return to prison ( a clear echo of Toller's play), to a final uneasy truce with the new reality. Nadia finds out through Jonathan that her self delusions are lies; Tim decides that death is preferable to endless uncertainty, and Victor discovers the pain of his love for Tim (Sierz, 2001, p.151-152).

Ravenhill's youth blame no one for their struggles in life which is the intention of the playwright to portray their vulnerability and emotional dilemma. Further to illuminate their existential crisis, their alienation and rootlessness, he lets them confront each other.

It is important because as Alex Sierz pointed out such confrontation enable them to "look again at what they feel, believe and want to do. Conflict is what enables each of them to break out, however briefly, of the prison of loneliness" (Sierz, 2001, p.152-53).

Scene six likewise contrasts Helen, who reconstructed herself anew after going through such change, to Nick who is desperately trying to make meaning of life around him. She explains that reconstructing herself was painful and she is scarred from cutting herself bit by bit and embracing another belief, another dream. Now Helen only wants Nick to face his past and talk to Jonathan so that he will not hinder her career with the past scandals on her path to becoming an MP. Nick refuses at first, gives up on his struggle to make meaning and decides there is no meaning and he will experience the world as meaningless.



In the questioning of his values, he decides “Maybe that’s where I got it wrong. Maybe nothing means anything. Maybe that’s what I was running away from. So fuck, I’ll be meaningless. Yeah, I’m going and I’m gonna be totally fucking meaningless, alright?” (Sierz, 2001, p.190).

### **3.4.7 Body Re-Claimed**

Scene seven takes us to the hospital room where Tim refuses to take his medication and Victor trying to persuade him to take his pills. Victor is upset as he does not want to lose him but Tim quickly reminds him of the only rule that ‘he would be out if he takes this relationship seriously’ and that he downloaded him only because he is trash. Tim treats Victor as his commodity which he paid in cash despite Victor’s affection towards him.

Tim envies people who can not afford to pay for the medicine because he thinks at least they have some degree of control over their life. Now, Tim abandoned the ‘I’m happy’ narrative and he feels angry about life as much as Nick, which might be considered as a positive transformation on his part. His anger reflects itself in “I want communists and apartheid. I want the finger on the nuclear trigger. I want the gay plague” (Sierz, 2001, p.196).

In the book *The Government of Life*, Francesco Paolo Adorno argues about the power over life or the Foucauldian notion of ‘*biopower*’ in modern societies. According to Adorno, Biopower is the management of the government over the body of the individuals which started at the turn of the eighteenth century. Power from then on which is obsessed with knowing the body and thus its manipulation and management, concerned with the physical well-being of the individuals. Moreover, such will at manipulating and governing the body aimed at immortalising the body to serve the market principles.

Adorno mentions that medicine and economics coupled together for enacting this relationship coincides with the Beveridge report which enacted in the middle of World War II and the institutionalising of this relationship between medicine and economics, bringing health ‘into the field of macroeconomics’. He

further comments “In modernity, power is not only concerned with life and rooted in subjects as living bodies and the population as a body of living subjects, but power also work toward specific ends that have been dictated by economics” (Adorno, 2014, p.99).

Foucault looks at the history of this new art of governing in his article *The Subject and Power* and he calls it as ‘*the pastoral power*’ which he basis in the idea of the Christian pastorate. He explains that whereas in the past the power resided in the sovereign’s sword whose ultimate dominion was death, in modern societies the sovereign’s power resides in taking charge of their life and fostering it or disallowing it. Adorno phrases it as “the flip side of the coin of this new art of government is represented by the change in status of death: if sovereign power is a ‘right to let live and put to death,’ modernity’s governmental art is a ‘right to make live and let die” (Adorno, 2014, p.105).

The government who wants to maximise the well-being of some populations, also ensures that it produces ‘the techniques of social hygiene’ (Adorno’s term) where the diseased, malfunctioning populations endangering the society’s existence are terminated.

On the other hand, while putting the large scale populations to death is mobilised, individuals’ own power to put themselves into death is seen as shocking and closely related to radical politics. An individual by committing death and removing his body from economic production comes alarmingly to the power which dedicates itself to the maximisation of the living.

Therefore when Tim stops his medication to put himself to death, his act is affirmative for overthrowing the controlling mechanism of biopower. Paolo Adorno in his article explains the state of a dying man as “individuals are cast off into death, but death itself is also cast off- these two gestures are in some way synchronous. The dying man from now on occupies an asocial position that enables the repression of death on the individual as well as on the societal level” (Adorno, 2014, p.106).

Therefore he comments that the care taken to avoid dying is, for Foucault, more related to the political sphere where the power over life manages to control rather than such control being a personal choice.

The resistance to these controlling devices of power seems futile as they infiltrated into all the aspects of human existence and subjectivised them both internally and externally. Moreover, the role of the medicine is an indispensable part of that power which takes control of the individual moment of death or delay it indefinitely. Adorno views that “therapeutic imperative of medicine seems to coincide with the theological configuration of biopower which manifests itself in the management and optimisation of bare life to the point of its final exhaustion where the body is removed from the political and social realms when it can no longer produce anything” (Adorno, 2014, p.109).

This is how Tim as making his body non-productive at his own will, de-subjectivizes him in the face of such complex web of power relations and annihilation of his body stands as a political act rather than a personal choice against the economic cycle of biopolitics.

When Nadia meets Jonathan in scene eight she was again being attacked by Simon and he helps her. When Nadia thanks him, he declares it is in human nature to help another and he could not have walked away yet with an emphasis that it happens so much today. Jonathan, once a class traitor and now a successful entrepreneur confronts Nadia and her feel-good cliches she tells to herself. From Nadia’s point of view, we see Jonathan as more attractive, stronger and more powerful than Nick. Also, Jonathan whose vocabulary had been defined by the market recalls Brian from Shopping and Fucking. Nadia tries to seduce him because she is terrified to be alone and she responds “Everyone is interested in bodies” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.199)

Jonathan says he is not interested in her and calls Nadia for what she is: lonely, unfocused and powerless.

With such confrontation Nadia reflects on her own values and questioning them makes her realise the truth. She accepts the fact that everything is terrible, there’s nobody out there and she is all alone (Ravenhill, 2001, p.200). Nadia is

confused as to what to do when one feels dead inside and Jonathan explains everyone discovers the ultimate capitalist truth in themselves.

He assures by stating:

You're dead and then you come through that and you embrace the chaos...you see the beauty of... the way money flows, the way it moves around the world faster and faster. Every second a new opportunity, every second a new disaster. The endless beginnings, the infinite endings. And each of us swept along by the great tides and winds of the markets. Is there anything more thrilling, more exhilarating than that (Ravenhill, 2001, p.201).

Thus, though he proposes Nadia to embrace capitalist values, and accept chaos his advice may also be considered to accept the negativity stirring inside and constructing a new self which affirms such negativity. It might also be that it is the playwright's intention to show what is less attractive is closer to the true, authentic life of an individual rather than the one more seducing. Nick is more competent in guiding Nadia with his humanist values than Jonathan although Jonathan is portrayed as more attractive and powerful.

Deleuze observes the three-stages of repetition each involving a different synthesis- active synthesis of memory and passive synthesis of habit-. The first synthesis is that of habit, and it constitutes time as a living present through a passive synthesis on which past and future depended. At this level, one repeats because one does not know or remember or not capable of performing the action. The second synthesis is that of memory and it constitutes time as a pure past, from a ground which causes the passing of one present and the arrival of another. The second time is the present of metamorphosis or becoming equal to the act, the projection of an ideal self in the image of the act thus being capable of the act. Eternal return concerns the third time of that three-stage synthesis. "For eternal return 'causes neither the condition nor the agent to return: on the contrary, it repudiates these and expels them with all its centrifugal force. It constitutes the autonomy of the product, the independence of the work'" (Deleuze, 1994, p.90).

Deleuze further comments:

That is why the eternal return is said only of the theatrical world of the metamorphoses and masks of the Will to power, of the pure intensities of that Will which are like mobile individuating factors unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that individual, this or that Self (Deleuze 1994, p.41).

Nadia might be said to have such a destructive habit of repetition with her relationship with Simon and consequently other men she meets after being beaten on the streets. We are aware that she does not want to be alone, thus have no autonomy of the self and she clings to men from her deep insecurity that she is utterly alone. Naturally, all the men she meets leave her except Simon whom although abusive Nadia keeps in her life as a painful reminder that somebody is there for her. Her encounter with Jonathan helps her to leap into the second stage where she might be capable of the action to be able to save herself from that destructive relationship with Simon.

According to Adorno, in relation to Foucault's theory of the new art of governing, death also lost its meaning with its rites and mourning in modern life. Therefore in scene nine Nadia and Victor stand in front of Tim's body, they do not know what they should do. Since a human reaction to somebody's death is spontaneous and ritualistic, their confusion seems machine-like.

Victor's response "I wish we knew what to do. I think maybe inside us if we were allowed feelings we would know what to do' manifest their utmost alienation to death" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.202).

Adorno compares the archaic societies where "death was not something to be reflected or the occasion for a meaningful ritual rather it was the centre of life, of rites, of society" (Adorno, 2014, p.111). Yet, starting with the biology's connection to economics, the body is reduced to a mere mechanism and when it stopped removed from the economic sphere without any effect on the part of the living. Thus Victor's efforts to connect with his inner world to be able to know what to do reveals their denial of death as an occasion of mourning, rites and solidarity and their inability to grasp the meaning of it through the thought processes.

In the same scene, Tim comes back from the land of death as a ghost and talks to Victor. In his frantic suffering, he beats Tim's body and his ghost responds by 'Even Lazarus didn't respond well to fists' (Ravenhill, 2001, p.203). Tim's identifying of himself with the biblical figure Lazarus in a mocking way emphasise his cynicism towards religion. Lazarus's resurrection symbolises his knowledge of both worlds- living and dead-. On another level, Lazarus' return may also represent the task to be performed. Like Lazarus, Tim comes back from the land of death changed. Tim admits that he does not know what love is and he just needed someone to keep him from being alone. Yet later, he is transformed with this new insight and admits his love for Victor but it is rather late.

On the other hand, before Tim died Victor confessed his love for Tim in the plainest and the most truthful way possible. He claims "All I can think about is you. I think about you all the time. I wish I didn't feel this way but I do. I hope . . . I think. Let the trash music take it away, let the trash . . . the dumdumdum . . . let it fill up your head. Dumdum. But I can't do that any more. And I can't hear the music any more" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.194).

Yet when Tim dies and Victor begs him to say because he loves him, which he refuses, he goes through a change too and in the end, he does not want him. In his desperate longing for the meaning for his existence, Victor speculates "There's got to be more than this. What is there? This is...animals. What makes us better than animals? Revolution never saved us. Money never saved us. No love. I want more than this" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.207).

His insightful comment is notable in its insistence that it is not money or revolution but love unknown to the most, that will save the humankind. However, his quest for love seems only superficial as he later goes back to his old self looking for instant gratifications. While Tim's ghost with his newly acquired knowledge of love dedicates himself to the task of following Victor everywhere for his unrequited love, Victor revels in his hope to have more experiences and ignores Tim's ghost.

In Scene eleven Jonathan confronts Nick in his most despicable state in which he is lost, empty and given up the fight. Jonathan admits that he would rather

have him stronger. He says the world has done the job for him, the world with its curious ways to take revenge and punish people. He feels rather nostalgic for the good old days where there was the fight but Nick says he is tired of being angry all the time and acknowledges that it was easier to hate him before. He confesses “It was much easier. Before. When I hated you. I knew where I stood” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.219).

It was easier as the distinction between classes in the past were clear and one knew what he was fighting against. It was apparent and either bourgeois or the proletariat values. But today, “the neoliberal regime and its multiple, overlapping apparatuses of control is totalizing and is characterised with certain formlessness” (Newman, 2016, p.52). Newman argues that “This is an apparatus of power which is difficult to identify or localise in one place, but whose effects, for that very reason, are felt everywhere” (Newman, 2016, p. 52)

Market logic has penetrated into governmental rationality and its apparatuses are graft into the individual lives and their existence so intensely that through accumulating consumption, communication, spectacle, hyper-visibility, idiotic enjoyment, endless and meaningless work, debt and constant insecurity it is hard to know what to fight in modern societies.

Thus Jonathan concludes:

I think we both miss the struggle. It’s all been rather easy for me these last few years. And I start to feel guilty if things come too easily. But really money, capitalism if you like, is the closest we’ve come to the way that people actually live. And, sure, we can work out all sorts of other schemes, try and plan to make everything better. But ultimately the market is the only thing sensitive enough, flexible enough to actually respond to the way we tick (Ravenhill, 2001, p.219).

In the final scene, there is a reconciliation between Nick and Helen and they both embrace their past. Helen runs for the elections in the Parliament and Nick takes care of Helen.



Helen, still occasionally has the feeling that nothing will come out of her efforts and wants to violently shake everything, but then she quickly realises the impossibility of it. She hopes to be Nick's memory to keep that anger alive in him.

Whereas Nick seems to be tired of being angry all the time and sounds he accepted the fact that in this world there is no place for grand gestures or ideas anymore. He seems content for looking after Helen and when Helen mentions she sometimes wakes up to violently shake everything but then she changes her mind, he comments that she does what grown-ups do.

Some Explicit Polaroids puts the theme of anger, love, violence and memory in its centre to explore the political and social issues of its milieu which the playwright depicted through confrontational characters of old and young generations. In their confrontation with each other, they come to doubt their certainties. Alex Sierz put their interaction the way that:

The militant leftist certainties, the bigger picture' that Nick once believed in, seem simplistic when juxtaposed with Helen's concern with trying to make life more bearable for the poor; the hectic fantasy of Tim, Nadia and Victor's 'happy world' seems factious when confronted with the realities of HIV infection, domestic violence and loveless sex (Sierz, 2001, p.152-53).

Moreover, although Ravenhill admits that his characters are not easy to sympathise with, in Some Explicit Polaroids characters' engagement with politics of the day enables us to emotionally and deeply engage with their loss and dilemmas.

Sierz questions 'Are Ravenhill's characters just walking points of view?' and adds Ravenhill's response is:

It's an optical illusion [...] Some people see completely rounded three-dimensional characters, others see only cardboard cut-outs'. Each of the characters is 'meant to have attractive and unattractive characteristics' and 'the aim is for you to feel torn between liking and disliking the characters.'. But none of his characters is easy to sympathise with (Sierz, 2001, 153).

However, Ravenhill's claim that "Heart is in the eye of the beholder" (Sierz, 2001, p.157) puts a question mark to the conflicting viewpoints questioning the morality, politics and values he is depicting in his plays. "Although his writing is closely

associated with reflecting postmodern philosophy, he much prefers traditionally humanistic values” (Sierz, 2001, p.157).

In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, it is the playwright’s intention that through placing twenty-somethings with their nihilist, happy world myth, next to the politically active, angry old people in the value-ridden contemporary society that reflect badly on both. Ravenhill does not give easy, conventional answers in relation to the problems inherent in societies such as child murder, violence, harassment, masculinity problems, absent fathers, dysfunctional families, drug abuse, consumerism and careless communities but rather he offers ‘food for thought’ (Sierz’s term) through shocking tactics. In particular, explains Sierz, “there are some passages which points at the anger that Ravenhill feels about the alienation of contemporary life and how it affects both the youth and older generations” (2001, p.154-155)

Although there is a lot of anger in the play, Ravenhill’s plays are more complex in its ideas for their exploration of the darker reality that lurks behind the problems of the market economy and capitalism. In the middle of the chaos he defends the human values of those that are affected the most: the homeless, the addicted, the lost and he does it with the utmost sincerity, compassion and vividness.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to bring into light the problems of existence and alienation of the subject located in the postmodern world with liberal economies through the exploration of character representation, their relation to themselves and others in a society that embraced the consumerist culture, and through their reconstruction of the myths. In that light, myths and mythemes in the play became a locus of re-imagining and reconstructing these myths anew through their desacralization, commodification, and demythologization. Myths acquire new perspectives in the world where there is no place for grand narratives and the notions of old certainties, representations and universal objective truths are questioned. Rather than representing these myths traditionally the playwright re-visions them in accordance with his social milieu to point out the socio-political issues inherent in the society. In his revisioning, in a world where there are no religious or cultural values to guide human beings, the sacral quality of the myth is denied and instead it offers the autonomy of the subject in a secular world. Likewise, as a consequence of moral vacuity and degradation of communal feelings due to conformity to economic exchange, and commodification of human beings; myths can not be exempted from becoming another object for satisfying the desire of consumers at will. So while at one instance, myth is used to question the possibility of acquiring a new set of values, at another it loses its validity to offer a hope for change in future, as this hope becomes refuted by the current capitalist system. In that sense, playwright's ambiguous and doubtful attitude toward myths which is reflected also in characters'

presentation of these myths can be considered as their search for making meaning of their existence in a new light that will endow them with certain qualities to get over such cultural upheaval. Ravenhill's deconstruction of myths differs than his contemporaries in his inversion of placing myths in a context of postmodernism where the postmodernist ideas of progression, enlightenment, human rationality, individualism, and society is questioned from another dimension. In his revisioning, he also invents the myths of capitalism such as 'the happy world' myth and 'the shopping myth'. In the play, through playwright's demythologizing, the myths which suppose to regulate the emotions and bring the inexplicable into a meaningful context rather disrupts and invokes more confusion on the side of the characters. Shopping myth, the myth of transaction, happy world myth, all demonstrate a societal fragmentation and consumption at the level of exchange value. Shopping myth is encompassing all three plays in the concept of transaction. In the *Faust is Dead*, Alain exchanges his soul for pleasure and power, in *Shopping and Fucking* Lulu and Robbie is bought by Mark, and in *Some Explicit Polaroids* Victor is bought by Tim as a sex slave.

Mythemes are the smallest thematic units, underlying the different aspects of the play. Politics and power structures which is closely associated with the mythemes become a backbone structuring the play and this association refers to characters' relationship to the larger social context. Moreover, they contribute to the general structure of the play's interpretation. Occasionally, the same mythemes recur in different plays and they are considered in connection to the encompassing issues on individual, social and cultural level. Moreover, in their deconstruction, the mythemes are inverted to reveal the contradiction ingrained in them which functions to provide a space for reflection on the audience's part. It is through that cynicism and irony which the playwright employs to get his message across that the audience is offered 'food for the brain' and this is precisely the political nature of Ravenhill's plays. Such inversion is also necessary to reveal the darkest aspect of the human soul, to portray existence in its most vulnerable state and contemplate on the reversibility of the experience. This reversibility is apparent when the characters are

easily misled to think that they have control over their experiences until the tables are turned and they find themselves swayed by the result of such experiences.

In the course of events, the characters represented in the plays demonstrate alienated personas due to the changing cultural and political atmosphere, the traumatic becomes the norm in a society of consumption, and it is through their transgression that the violence and abuse inherent in the society become apparent.

Consequently, there is the failure of human beings but also the idea that humanity may reborn from their ashes if we can reverse the current system which prioritizes money, perpetual growth and infinite profit over everything else.

In a world which promotes desensitization, and inertness suffering and sacrifice become positive aspects of self-realization for the characters. In the absence of such compassion for another, the value of human life is diminished and they question what they are.

Although the great suffering and damage experienced by the characters in the play are voiced as the failure of the human, it is in fact closely related to the current system that leaves no other option but failure. This dysfunctionality in the system is reflected through absence, lack, inability to change, conflict, repression and flight.

However, Ravenhill's characters do not complain or blame others for their fast spiralling downfall but they carry the burden of their failure as they go along with their search for finding new values to make their existence meaningful. In that respect suffering becomes ennobling and it discloses the deepest human value.

Since with postmodernism the faith in all -isms and grand narratives ended, personal stories the characters tell each other become relevant in making personal political. Thus micro-narratives acquires a new function of finding the possibility of a new set of values in the postmodern world.

Ravenhill also does not seem to be convinced that myths told traditionally would function as a regulating force in a society where the previously accepted human values are lost and new codes of behaviour perpetuated by the capitalist system and market economy integrated itself into the society. His assessment reveals

that the myths although an important part of the culture should be reinterpreted in order to reveal their hidden meanings. The power relations that weaves itself around myths should be demythologized so that subordinate groups would be able to subjectivise themselves from the dominant groups or institutions in society. Yet his characters are too traumatized and entrapped in the system to bring the truth in those myths.

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