Atılım University
Graduate School of Social Sciences
English Culture and Literature

POSTDRAMATIC TENDENCIES ON THE BRITISH STAGE: THE PLAYS OF MARK RAVENHILL

Sibel İzmir

PhD Dissertation

Ankara, 2014

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This is to certify that the thesis titled "Postdramatic Tendencies on the British Stage: The Plays of Mark Ravenhill" prepared by Sibel İzmir satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The jury has [unanimously / by majority of votes] accepted the thesis upon her defense on September, 18th 2014.

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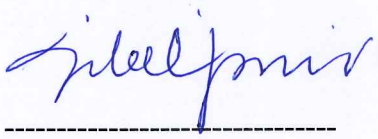

Sibel İzmir

To

all those who have illuminated my path so far...

[my family members, lecturers, friends, all literary and non-literary writers I have admired]

and

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, first and foremost...

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ÖZET

İZMİR, Sibel. *İngiliz Tiyatrosunda Postdramatik Eğilimler: Mark Ravenhill Oyunları,* Doktora Tezi, Ankara. 2014.

Kendine özgü sanat formları olan drama ve tiyatro biricik olma durumlarına bakılmaksızın sıkça birbirinin yerine kullanılan kavramlar arasındadır. Hiç şüphe yok ki bu durum her iki sanat dalının da anlamlı bir varoluşa sahip olabilmek için birbirlerine ihtiyaç duymalarından kaynaklanır. Diğer bir deyişle, oyun metinleri sahnelendikleri zaman daha değerli hale gelirken aynı şekilde metinsiz bir tiyatro düşünmek neredeyse imkânsızdır. Alman bilim adamı ve kuramcı Hans-Thies Lehmann, drama ve tiyatro arasındaki bu ilişkiyi bir bağlama oturtmak ve yeniden değerlendirmek amacıyla ses getiren çalışması *Postdramatik Tiyatro* adlı kitabında yeni bir yapılandırmaya gitmektedir. Lehmann kitabında 1960'lı yıllara kadar batı tiyatrosunun dramanın boyunduruğu altında kaldığını öne sürer. Bu durum da kaçınılmaz olarak dramatik metnin ve oyun yazarının en son ortaya çıkan üründe otoriter bir pozisyon edinmesiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Lehmann, bu kökleşmiş hiyerarşik düzeni bozmak için, 1960'lardan bu yana batı tiyatrosunun tiyatro metnine, oyun yazarına, oyunculara, kostümlere, dekora vb. eşit yaklaşan tiyatro ürünleri üretme çabası içinde olduğuna inanır. Lehmann, kitabının tarihsel

avangartlardan 20. yüzyılın sonlarına kadarki dönemi ele aldığı kısmında oyun yazarlarının özellikle gerçekçi ve doğalcı tiyatronun estetik kurallarından nasıl uzaklaşıp postdramatik tiyatronun ortaya çıkmasını nasıl hızlandırdıklarını anlatmaktadır. Lehmann, İngiliz suratına tiyatro yazarlarının da sahnede olan olaylardan ve şok taktiklerden dolayı kendini adeta saldırıya uğramış gibi hisseden seyirciyi ele geçirme yöntemleriyle Alman asıllı postdramatik tiyatronun ortaya çıkmasında etkili olduklarını söyler. İngiliz oyun yazarı Mark Ravenhill bu tarz yazarlardan biridir. Oyunlarında aşırı boyutlarda kullandığı fiziksel ve sözel şiddetten dolayı Ravenhill suratına tiyatronun öncülerinden biri olarak görülmektedir ve oyunları sıkça bu sanatsal hareketin ışığı altında incelenmiştir. Bu tez Ravenhill'in oyunlarına sadece içerik açısından bakmaya engel olmak ve oyunlarda hem içeriğe hem de forma eşit yaklaşabilmek için Lehmann'ın postdramatik tiyatro teorisinin kullanmaktadır. Çalışma, Ravenhill'in oyunlarında suratına tiyatronun sınırlarını aşarak dramatik ve postdramatik tiyatronun özelliklerini sergilediğini iddia eder. Tez, analizini Ravenhill'in *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* ve *Pool (No Water)* isimli oyunları üzerinden yürütmektedir. Bu yaklaşım oyun yazarının yapıtlarına sadece metin açısından değil, seyirci/sahne, oyun yazarı/yönetmen ilişkilerinin yanı sıra oyunlarda kullanılan sözel ve fiziksel şiddet, olay örgüsü, reji vb. gibi kavramları düşünerek teatral açıdan bakmamızı da sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dramatik tiyatro, postdramatik tiyatro, Hans-Thies Lehmann, suratına tiyatro, Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead*, *Pool (No Water)*.

ABSTRACT

İZMİR, Sibel. *Postdramatic Tendencies on the British Stage: The Plays of Mark Ravenhill,* PhD Dissertation, Ankara. 2014.

Drama and theatre, which are distinctive forms of art, stand among those concepts which are often used interchangeably regardless of their uniqueness. There is no doubt that this interchangeable use is caused by the fact that both artistic forms have needed each other to have a meaningful existence. In other words, playtexts would have a more valuable existence when they are staged while it would be almost impossible to imagine a stage production without a text. In order to contextualize and reassess this relationship between drama and theatre, Professor Hans-Thies Lehmann, a German scholar and theoretician, has made a configuration in his ground-breaking study *Postdramatic Theatre*. In his book, Lehmann claims that theatre has been subordinated by drama particularly in western cultures until 1960s. This has naturally resulted in a domineering position of the dramatic text and the playwright in the final production. Lehmann is of the opinion that since 1960s western theatre has demonstrated an interest in creating theatrical productions which have an equal treatment of the playtext, playwright, director, performers, costumes, décor, etc in order to subvert the rooted hierarchal order. In his book, he makes a historical

overview of theatrical productions covering the historical avant-gardes to the late 20th century with an attempt to show how playwrights have broken away with the traditional dramatic structure – particularly with the aesthetic norms fostered by realistic and naturalistic theatre and accelerated the emergence of postdramatic theatre. In this historical overview, he does not forget to mention that British in-yer-face dramatists are also among those who have affected the emergence of German-based postdramatic productions with their shock tactics to capture the audience who feel as if they are attacked by the events happening on the stage. The British playwright, Mark Ravenhill, is one of such dramatists. Due to his use of extreme forms of physical and verbal violence in his plays, he has been labelled as one of the pioneers of in-yer-face theatre and his plays have been explored in the light of this artistic movement. In order to avoid a solely content-based analysis of his plays and have an equal treatment of form and content, this dissertation explores Ravenhill's plays in the light of Lehmann's theory of the postdramatic theatre. The study puts forward that the plays of Ravenhill go beyond the confines of in-yer-face sensibility and exhibit a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre. The study bases its analysis on the three plays of Ravenhill: *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* and *Pool (No Water)*. This approach enables us to analyse his plays not only for its text value but also with regards to the audience/stage, playwright/director relationship as well as

from a theatrical angle taking verbal and physical violence, plot structure, stage directions, etc. into consideration.

Key words: Dramatic theatre, postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann, in-yer-face theatre, Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead*, *Pool (No Water)*.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If we still consider that all the world is a stage in which we, the human beings, are merely players acting out the roles assigned to us, firstly we should accept the fact that not only the world but also the plays and the roles have gone through an enormous change since the times of this well-known analogy by Shakespeare. This dissertation will humbly explore these changes since it is on theatre – an ever-changing art form. The evolutionary nature of theatre is undoubtedly affected by our so-called "postmodern" world which will be remembered for such predominant characteristics as change, speed, globalization, consumption, mass media, technologically-driven societies and neo-liberal global economies, to mention but a few. These "great" changes surely find their expression in theatre as well although haunted by the presence of the past. One of these novel expressions is postdramatic theatre. Postdramatic theatre, which is relatively a "postmodern" artistic expression, therefore, entails an investigation on the relationship between the "post" and the "dramatic" in order to construe postdramatic theatre as an independent phenomenon. Before an analysis of the bond between the two, however, postdramatic theatre should be conceptualized and this will be possible by an

understanding of key concepts like drama and theatre as well as the relationship between the two.

Drama and theatre[1] are art forms that are *dialectically, paradoxically and mutually* in relationship with one another: While drama refers to the literary text written in order to be read by readers and to be staged by directors, theatre contains not only the performance (as well as lightning, costumes, make-up, décor, etc.) but also the theatre building and every single thing in it. In this respect, the analogy that drama is full of holes to be filled by another text during the performance, which is the staging, the mise-en-scène, is remarkable and meaningful (Ubersfeld qtd. in Carlson 498). This binary yet inseparable relationship between drama and theatre has led critics, scholars and theatre practitioners to question the value and superiority of each concept. Some assume that there can be no staged play without a text while others believe that a play text has no value if not staged. Although drama as a literary genre has lost its popularity in our media-driven age, it is important in its own merit just like theatre since both of them are art forms that are fundamentally about life. From the ancient times to the present, drama and theatre which have changed society and spectators have, in turn, been affected and shaped by society and the audience. The strength of this reciprocal bond between theatre and society

[1] Drama is a Greek-originated word meaning to “act” while theatre comes from the word “theatron” which means the place where the audience sit.

primarily stems from the fact that theatre is about human existence. It is a re-presentation of life. Yet, it is not life. As it is explained by Richard Courtney:

> However similar life and drama may be, they are not the same. Drama is a fiction. It is the mirror of existence, the reflection of human life so re-created as to be meaningful and significant to the audience … it raises the key questions being asked within the community for which it is written (2).

This contradictory and collaborative co-existence of drama and theatre is one of the reasons why Professor Hans-Thies Lehmann, an eminent German theatre scholar, has preferred to use the term postdramatic theatre in his book titled *Postdramatic Theatre* (published in German in 1999 and translated into English in 2006). Lehmann deploys this term as a "refinement of the more commonly used 'postmodern'" by proposing a definition based on oppositions (Sierz, "Form" 379). For Lehmann, while dramatic theatre is characterized by plot, dramatic action, dramatis personae, dialogues, a definable setting offering a "fictive cosmos" (22), postdramatic theatre is generally marked by, or may include, "states (instead of a plot), anonymous speakers, fragmented or juxtaposed speeches, indefinite time and place" (Sierz, "Form" 379). These traits of postdramatic theatre, naturally, put the power of such definitive traits of dramatic theatre as representation, mimesis, character, dialogue, time and place as well as the Western text-based theatre into question.

Lehmann asserts that in order to understand postdramatic theatre, there is a need to comprehend to what extent there should be a “mutual emancipation and division between drama and theatre” (46). Since the theatre in Europe has been dominated by drama, Lehmann advises to use the term “postdramatic” to refer to the newer developments and relate them to the older ones. As he explains: “In postdramatic forms of *theatre*, staged text (*if* text is staged) is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition” (46, original emphasis). This explanation constitutes one of the core assumptions of the postdramatic theatre, which is equally important for this study. However, if text is only one component in theatre or if it has no importance at all, one may ask, how would it be possible to evaluate plays from the point of view of postdramatic theatre? As it is the case with all studies written in the field of literature, this dissertation too will inevitably and naturally approach plays as text-based products. Studying playtexts in the light of postdramatic aesthetics, however, does not solely point to an examination of them for their performance value. Aspects like the plot structure (or the existence of it), the idea of representation, character development, physicality and the thin line between fact and fiction are all relevant in postdramatic theatre and this dissertation will concentrate more on the dramatic/postdramatic world represented/presented in the script than the enactment of each play on the stage. As stated by Peter Campbell, “postdramatic theatre is not necessarily

non- or even antidramatic, but is a theatre that does not valorize drama above all other elements of the theatrical experience" (55) and the current study will question the "dramacity" of each play considering that the text is not valorized above other theatrical components.

In order to achieve a juxtaposed assessment of the dramatic and postdramatic theatre, this study will analyse the plays of Mark Ravenhill (1966), who is one of the most controversial playwrights of Britain. Considered to be the "rude boy" of contemporary English theatre, Ravenhill was born in 1966 in England. As Aleks Sierz informs, Ravenhill discovered theatre at an early age. When he was between ten and sixteen, he frequented after-school drama classes (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 122). To no one's surprise, Ravenhill studied Drama and English at Bristol University. His groundbreaking play *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) has attracted the attention of spectators, directors and reviewers not only by its provoking title but also "offensively" extraordinary content. Admitting to have been inspired by American novels of the late eighties and early nineties[2], Ravenhill added that he had also watched the plays of Martin Crimp, David Mamet, Caryl Churchill and Anthony Neilson, by whom he seems to have been greatly influenced as well. However, in the course of an interview with Aleks Sierz, Ravenhill acknowledges that although he had not seen Sarah Kane's *Blasted* when he was writing *Shopping and Fucking*, he later considers this play

[2] Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*, Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* and Tama Janowitz's *Slaves of New York* are among them.

as one of the best contemporary plays (Ravenhill in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 124) and Kane's influence on him has been immense. Though Sierz believes that at that time Ravenhill did not feel he was belonging to part of a movement (*In-Yer-Face* 124), his stylistic similarity with the so-called in-yer-face playwrights was already apparent.

His acclaimed success was strengthened by other plays, some of which include: *Faust is Dead* (1997); *Sleeping Around* (1998); *Handbag* (Evening Standard Award - Most Promising Playwright, 1998); *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999); *Mother Clap's Molly House* (2000); *Feed Me* (2000); *Totally Over You* (2003) and *Citizenship* (2006); *The Cut* (2006); *Pool (No Water)* (2006); *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008); *The Experiment* (2009) and *Ten Plagues* (2011). Verbal and physical violence as well as topical and controversial themes such as people's addiction to consumerism, shopping, drugs and commodification of culture mark many of his plays (Buse). However, the controversy in his plays stems not only from the "brutal" content, but it is, more importantly, the result of the form or "aesthetic norms" employed in his plays. Experimentation with content and particularly, with form, urges one to question the value and scope of the deviations and novelties brought about by Ravenhill who has been extensively analysed as an in-yer-face[3] playwright with the

[3] A term coined by Aleks Sierz to refer to the plays in Great Britain in 1990s. Common characteristics of plays include the use of graphic violence, vulgar language, shocking and brutal content. Leading playwrights in this vein are Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson,

outcome that the content of his plays has gained importance while the form has often attracted less attention. In addition to the unsettling violence and brutal content of his plays, like many other in-yer-face dramatists such as Sarah Kane or Martin Crimp, the form of Ravenhill's plays is as noteworthy as the content.

What is relevant and of vital importance for the current study is Lehmann's positioning of the in-yer-face theatre within the postdramatic paradigm and his questioning of the "postdramaticity" of in-yer-face plays in his book. He argues that German theatre during 1990s seems to have been inspired by British in-yer-face theatre. Since postdramatic theatre, both in practice and theory, is initiatively a German-based phenomenon, Lehmann's attempt to establish a bridge and similarity between German and British theatres is noteworthy for the current study. Although British theatre is generally considered to be a text-based theatre in which the playwright occupies a substantial place, Lehmann's argument that German plays have been inspired by British in-yer-face plays strengthens the claim of this study. He explains this inspirational interaction particularly with regard to the relationship between the spectator and stage:

> It should be mentioned that a (roughly speaking) neo-realist wave in the new German theatre of the 1990s has frequently been considered as having been inspired by the British movement of 'in-

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Philip Ridley, to name but a few. Characteristics of in-yer-face theatre will be explored both in the theoretical background and throughout the body chapters of this study.

> yer-face' theatre. Indeed the 'attack' on the spectator in such plays is a trait that would have to be theorized as a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre (Lehmann ix).

From a similar point of departure as Lehmann's, this dissertation primarily argues that Mark Ravenhill goes beyond the confines of in-yer-face sensibility and his plays demonstrate a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre. By approaching the theatre of Ravenhill holistically, this study will equally focus on the form and content of the playtexts with an attempt to question the value of the form with respect to dramatic and postdramatic theatre. The plays selected for this study are *Shopping and Fucking*, *Faust is Dead* and *Pool (No Water)*. The reason for the preference of these plays is not complicated: *Shopping and Fucking* is Ravenhill's first full-length play which is noteworthy as the first product by the playwright. *Faust is Dead*, as the second play by the playwright, gains importance in terms of its depiction of the differences between fact and reality and its presentation of the idea of simulation and it is therefore relevant with postdramatic theatre aesthetics. *Pool (No Water)* is remarkable in which events are recounted by nameless characters and therefore it deserves a postdramatic analysis. These plays, written in 1995, 1996 and 2006, respectively, will also offer a chance to see the artistic development of the playwright and question whether he conforms more to the dramatic or postdramatic norms.

In the light of Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of the postdramatic theatre, this study will argue that Ravenhill makes use of the aesthetic norms of the postdramatic theatre while, at the same time, utilizing the conventions of dramatic theatre, which challenges the notion that contemporary theatre is postdramatic theatre. Assuming that drama, playtext and dramatic theatre are no longer in tune with people's lives since 1970s and therefore fails to reflect reality, as Lehmann does, would incorrectly result in criticizing playtexts either from a single point of view under the absolute "authority" of postdramatic theatre or ignoring plays that contain multifarious aesthetic norms other than postdramatic tendencies. "To what extent are the plays dramatic and postdramatic?" will be the guiding question throughout this study in order to remain at an objective distance to both artistic forms.

This dissertation will be composed of five chapters. After the Introduction (Chapter 1) in which the aim and scope of the study are given, Chapter 2 will provide the theoretical background of the study. In this chapter, the definition and historical evolution of dramatic theatre, from the times of Aristotle until the 20th century, including the historical avant-gardes and in-yer-face theatre will be given in order to demonstrate the structural evolution of dramatic theatre. Following this historical account, postdramatic theatre will be explored in the same chapter. Chapter 3 will analyse Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* and exhibit how the play is more akin to dramatic qualities although postdramatic

features also exist. In Chapter 4, Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* will be examined to illustrate that in this play Ravenhill makes use of both dramatic and postdramatic techniques almost equally. Chapter 5 will scrutinize Ravenhill's *Pool (No Water)* and it will be illustrated that in this play Ravenhill goes far beyond dramatic practices and is almost fully postdramatic in terms of its form. After such an analysis of the plays with regard to their closeness to and distance from the norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre, Chapter 6 will reveal the conclusion of the study. This concluding chapter will colligate the results of the previous chapters and demonstrate the fact that Ravenhill is a playwright who formulates and enriches his plays using various theatrical strategies rather than following one dramatic path. Labelling Ravenhill as an in-yer-face, postmodern or new realist dramatist would mean to ignore his interest in the inseparable relationship between the text and stage. Examining his plays in relation to their distance to the dramatic and postdramatic aesthetics will enrich the dimension of his plays/ theatre. Besides, it will provide a basis to clarify that Ravenhill, in the three plays selected for this study, seems to follow a path from the dramatic to the postdramatic.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 The Definition and Historical Evolution of Dramatic Theatre

There is no doubt that in order to fully understand the meaning and principles of postdramatic theatre, dramatic theatre as a phenomenon should be examined before delving into the postdramatic theatre itself. At this point, it is essential to make an overall evaluation of Aristotle's *Poetics* not only because of the general acceptance that Western dramatic theory fundamentally begins with Aristotle but also due to the fact that Lehmann initially bases his theory of postdramatic theatre in relation and as opposed to Aristotelian dramatic theory and hence names it as "postdramatic". Also, Aristotelian theatre and dramatic theatre have been used interchangeably for a long time by scholars, academics and critics. Therefore, a diachronic approach to the idea of postdramatic theatre would necessitate exploring the historical background of the evolutionary aspects of the theatre.

Aristotle's worldwide definition of drama as being a "mimesis/imitation of an action" is still used as the point of departure even when a counter-argument is offered as in the case of postdramatic theatre. His *Poetics*, written probably around 355 B.C.E. as lecture notes on poetry and little known during his lifetime, is the first seminal work that focuses on the dramatic theory and its influence

has been vital throughout the centuries since Renaissance. It has been accepted that Aristotle formed his thoughts and arguments about poetry in opposition to his teacher, Plato, who believed that drama was to be banished since it contained mimesis or imitation and all poets told corrupting lies about both men and gods. Being the first philosopher who used the term “mimesis”, Plato thought that everyone had a single role but drama encouraged the enactment of multiple roles in the course of imitation, which may problematize a person’s acceptance of his/her life conditions (Wiles 93).

Unlike Plato, “Aristotle celebrated mimesis on the educational grounds that children learn through imitation” (Wiles 96). However, mimesis is an obscure term for both of them. This obscurity is also apparent in critics’ translation of the word “mimesis” into English varying from imitation to copying, reproduction and representation. Gerald Else claims that this ambiguity stems from Aristotle’s borrowing the term from Plato and then giving it “a 180-degree turn so that it ends up meaning almost exactly the opposite of what Plato had meant by it” (74). Actually, this discrepancy between Platonic and Aristotelian view of mimesis is an outcome of the difference between their views of reality.

Plato disregards mimesis considering that it causes twice removal from the reality while Aristotle praises it in *Poetics* in terms of its aim in poetry. He claims that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy as well as musical art are all imitations. However, what makes these types of arts differ from each other is their “media

of imitation, or different objects or a different mode" (Aristotle 3). Aristotle asserts that while some people use the medium of colour and shape to produce imitations of objects in order to create visual images, others do this via their voice. The medium of imitation in an art form may be the rhythm, language and melody which may be used separately or in combination. Tragedy and comedy, for him, employ rhythm, melody and verse as the media of imitation. As for the object of imitation, Aristotle claims that art imitates agents which are either admirable or inferior. This difference in the object of imitation also distinguishes "tragedy and comedy from each other; the latter aims to imitate people worse than our contemporaries; the former better" (Aristotle 5). Lastly, the mode in which each of these objects is imitated makes a difference. It is possible to make an imitation of the same object in the same medium either through narration, by becoming someone else as Homer does, or by being oneself and not changing, or through representing characters doing things; hence the term "drama" : "the poets imitate people doing things" (Aristotle 6). Thus, Aristotle means that the medium of tragedy is drama, not narrative since tragedy aims to "demonstrate" things rather than "telling" them. Therefore, Aristotle finds tragedy higher and more philosophical than history since history tells what has happened and talks about particulars while tragedy shows what may happen and expresses universals in accordance with "probability and necessity" (16).

Aristotle proposes a formula as a set of rules that enable a mimetic action to become a tragic action. For Aristotle, there are six elements that make up a tragedy and these elements are ordered according to their hierarchal importance: story (plot), character, intellectual argument (reasoning), language (diction), song and visuals (spectacle). In Aristotle's words: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable; each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors; not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions" (10). As Malcolm Heath explains in his introduction to *Poetics*, what Aristotle means is that "tragedy aims to excite fear and pity; these emotions are responses to success and failure; success and failure depend on action; hence action is the most essential thing in tragedy; therefore plot is the most important element" (xxi).

As it is crystal clear, the plot, by which Aristotle means the arrangement or organization of the incidents, is the most significant ingredient in a dramatic work thanks to which characters develop. The difference between a tragic event in real life and a tragic drama is explained by Amélie Rorty:

> While there is sorrow, grief, loss, and pain in life, there is tragedy only when the actions and events that compose a life are organized into a story, a structured representation of that life. A drama is not only the *mimesis* of an action, the enactment of a

> story that represents actions by actions and in actions … Like all representation, drama selectively condenses and structures what it presents. It reveals the inner logic and causal organization of an apparently disconnected series of events, encompassing them to form a single extended, self-contained and completed activity (3-4).

Aristotle argues that the proper dramatic structure is made up of a single and "whole" action which has a definable beginning, middle and end. In this structure, the events are tied up by a cause-and- effect chain. The middle or climax is caused by earlier events just like the end, or resolution. The end, however, should not suggest other events outside the scope of the play since the unity of action is of vital importance in a play.

As it has been mentioned earlier, character has the second place in hierarchical importance. Since the plot is the core of a play, a tragedy is an imitation of an action rather than of character. Moreover, in a good tragedy a character should be good, appropriate, like us and consistent. By good he refers to the moral purpose and class while being an appropriate character means being true to life. Likeness most probably refers to the fact that characters should be like everyone who are also consistent in their actions. At this point, what gains importance is Aristotle's idea of "hamartia", often translated as flaw in character, "a sort of waywardness that arises from [his] character" mostly because of not knowing the true self or identity (Rorty 11). As it is well known,

"In the best plots, the *peripeteia* of action – the moment that reverses the protogonist's fortunes – coincides with insightful recognition (*anagnōrisis).* Significantly, this recognition typically fulfils the ancient command to know oneself" (Rorty 12). The purpose or ending in a tragedy, after all, is to have *catharsis*, a medical term that means cleansing or purgation. In religious terms, it means purification. (Rorty 12). The reader or the audience thus experience a feeling of purgation after all the events end in resolution.

Reasoning or thought, language, music/song and other theatrical devices like spectacle serve only to make a play attractive. Thought refers to how speeches reveal a character's personality while language shows the stylistic elements of a tragedy. As for song, Aristotle believes that the Chorus should have an equal importance in the play as a character. Spectacle has the least importance for Aristotle since performance has no value for him. He maintains that it is the text which should be considered. As Wiles argues: "What Aristotle developed was a theory of drama-as-literature rather than drama-as performance" (94). Since dramatic texts did not remain as "drama-as-literature", Aristotelian dramatic theory began to structurally change during the following centuries. Thus, while dramatic theory clearly connotes to Aristotelian idea of drama, dramatic theatre refers to, as Patrice Pavis maintains:

> a principle of construction of text and performance which accounts for the tension in the scenes and episodes of the fabula toward a

> denouement (catastrophe or comic resolution) and suggests that the spectator is captivated by action. Dramatic theatre … is the theatre of classical dramaturgy, of realism and naturalism and the well-made play: it has been the conventional form of Western theatre since the famous definition of tragedy in Aristotle's *Poetics*" (*Dictionary* 112).

At this point, it is particularly necessary to pinpoint the divergences of dramatic theatre from Aristotelian dramatic theory and set a working definition for dramatic theatre since juxtaposition of the dramatic with the postdramatic is one of the methods to prove the claim of this dissertation as stated at the beginning. By doing so, the study will also attempt to define the boundaries of dramatic theatre.

Dramatic theatre, regardless of the century it has been produced in or of its generic qualities, is characterized by the following features in general: a fictional world, a coherent "fictive cosmos" (Lehmann 99) which renders representation possible and therefore encouraging identification, events tied up by a plot (even if the plot is a fragmented one) and creating an illusion of reality or portraying just "a slice of life" in a complete and unified whole, definable characters communicating through dialogues or monologues (by way of showing rather than telling) and a definable beginning, middle and end (even if the ending is an open one) in a definable spatial-temporal setting. Thus, what mainly

and generically differentiates drama from other genres is that “a drama is a story without a story-teller [since] in it characters act out directly what Aristotle called an ‘imitation’ of such action as we find in life” (Scholes & Kellogg 63). Moreover, as Dr. Barnett clarifies: “In crude terms, drama is defined by two key processes: it represents and it structures time. … Actors represent characters, props represent objects, sets represent locations and so forth” (“When” 14). When considered in detail, all the afore-mentioned dramatic qualities can be seen on the page even if the play is not staged. In dramatic theatre, we (as reader or the audience) know that we are in a fictional world. As we read or watch the play (even if the events do not point to a coherent unity till the end), we feel somehow that although the particular is portrayed, the universality is achieved. We are no kings or queens in our real lives but we are able to establish an emphatic bond with King Lear since the feelings depicted are universal. Therefore, even if we are not represented in parallel to our true class, our feelings are there on the page or stage. This leads us to experience a sort of identification with the characters, even with King Lear or Prince Hamlet. This fictional universe where we are represented takes us to another world different from yet similar to ours. Regardless of the plot structure, we read or watch events which are casually related and tied up. While Aristotelian rule of three unities or the avoidance of the mixture of the comic and tragic lost their primacy over the centuries, dramatic theatre has been generally and is still characterized by Aristotelian

concepts such as conflict, climax, resolution, hamartia, recognition and catharsis although they may not appear in the same order or importance in a play written, for example, in the twentieth century. These general characteristics of dramatic theatre and any deviation from the norm will be examined historically in order to present an overall picture of dramatic theatre. If we consider plays that were produced from the Ancient Greek times till the historical avant-gardes of the late 19th century to be representatives of dramatic theatre, it becomes clearer that there are great differences among the plays by, for example, Sophocles, William Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov or George B. Shaw although all of them are assessed and criticized under the umbrella of dramatic theatre. This creates an urge to delve into the evolutionary aspects of theatrical history with a special emphasis on the changes in dramatic structure.

Since the scope of this study is limited to an investigation on British theatre, the changes in dramatic structure will mainly focus on the plays of British playwrights. However, many other European playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht, Luigi Pirandello and Antoin Artaud will also be mentioned when necessary due to the inevitable fact that European countries have always affected one another in their artistic movements and traditions.

Although dramatic theatre in Britain fundamentally begins with Shakespeare, before him, medieval theatre should be briefly mentioned in relation to Aristotelian norms. Early medieval drama was more religious than

artistic because of the Church's dislike of it. However, ironically, it was the Church that encouraged the flowering of theatre. The world was considered as a theatre where "mortal man acted out his brief life before the audience of God, His Angels, the Saints, and Martyrs" (Courtney 15). With such a religious impetus behind, medieval age is marked by liturgical drama, mystery plays, miracle plays and morality plays, which were "forms of dramatic communication but …did not have a plot in the Aristotelian sense" (Lawson 159). The church began using dramatized episodes to visualize its "lessons" in a clearer way. Another reason was that the language of the Church was Latin which could not be understood by a vast majority (Brockett 102). The mystery plays were based on the Bible and were enacted in great cycles while the miracle plays encompassed the lives of saints. From the liturgical enactments of the Church to the mystery cycles, miracles and moralities, which were mostly religious, medieval drama had much in common with the Elizabethan drama rather than the Greek in terms of shifts in time and place (Murray 44).

After the medieval age is over, with the arrival of the Renaissance, Britain has also reached a point of renaissance in drama: William Shakespeare has been the most influential dramatist of all times not only in Britain but also throughout the world. He was one of the first significant dramatists who wrote plays that did not follow the Aristotelian norms. Many of his plays, regardless of their genre, are marked and enriched by their violation of three unities of time,

space and action as well as a fusion of the tragic with the comic. In Shakespearean drama, multiple plots are a common feature. As Lawrance Danson points out, the three unities are largely irrelevant to his plays in any of the genres. In a Shakespearean tragedy, we may find ourselves "in a plot which asks us to imagine ourselves in Venice in one scene and on Cyprus the next ..." (25). It is true that Shakespeare's tragic heroes or heroines are always of high rank, but a tragic king can be seen side by side with a clown or maid. Formally and structurally speaking, it can be said that in his plays:

> situations and characters are clearly established in the opening scene, and the action develops logically out of this exposition. A number of plots are usually interwoven, at first proceeding somewhat independently of each other but eventually coming together as the denouement approaches, so that the resolution of one leads to that of the others; in this way apparent diversity is given unity (Brockett, *History* 109).

Multiple sub-plots, violation of the three unities, the appearance of the tragic with the comic and characters coming from various ranks are features that make a Shakespearean play deviate from Aristotelian norms. Nevertheless, Shakespearean theatre, although it made use of metatheatrical devices like play-within-the-play and soliloquies and experimented with particularly the form in addition to the afore-mentioned divergences form Aristotelian drama, was fully

"dramatic" portraying a unified world of illusion. The same was true for Shakespeare's contemporaries such as Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Heywood and John Ford, to name but a few. Whereas Ben Jonson, for instance, maintained generic decorum in some plays (like *Catiline*), Christopher Marlowe mixed genres in his plays (like *Doctor Faustus*). As for Thomas Heywood and John Ford, they rejected to use high-ranking protagonists in their plays (Lennard & Luckhurst 62-63). Actually, it would be proper to assert that an established dramatic theatre began with Shakespeare and his contemporaries in Britain and their plays served as models for the dramatists till the end of the nineteenth century though there were some tendencies to return to the classical ideals at times.

One of such times was the Restoration period. The theatres in England were kept closed from 1642 to 1660 because of Puritan opposition to them. When they were reopened, they "bore little resemblance to the theatre of Shakespeare" (Brockett 147) since they embraced the neoclassical mode which championed Aristotelian rules of dramatic structure. This period is especially noted for heroic tragedy (which did not last long, though), comedy of manners and sentimental drama. Heroic tragedy was written in rhymed couplets which "usually concerned the necessity of choosing between love and honour … and abounded in violent action and startling reversals" (Brockett 194). John Dryden was the key dramatist who wrote heroic tragedies (such as *The Indian Queen,*

The Indian Emperor and *The Conquest of Granada*). Since the heroic mode began to lose its popularity, it was replaced by tragedy which utilized blank verse and neoclassical rules. Characterized by simple plots and adherence to the three unities, this form gained popularity through Dryden's *All for Love*, which was a reworking of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. However:

> English neoclassicism was always more liberal than the version that prevailed on the continent. Unity of action was interpreted to permit a number of related subplots, and the unity of place was thought to have been adequately observed if the characters could move easily between the various locales without violating the 24-hour time limit (Brockett 206).

Comedy of manners is another dominant form in Restoration period. It was again John Dryden who contributed much to its formation with such plays as *The Mock Astrologer* and *Marriage à la Mode* and reached its peak in the plays of William Congreve. In comedy of manners, it is implied that man is corruptible which should be accepted with tolerance. The plays satirize people "who are either self-deceived or who are attempting to deceive others…the rewards and punishments are meted out in accordance with how well the characters have been able to live up to the ideal of self-knowledge" (Brockett 195).

In spite of the popularity of heroic tragedy and comedy of manners, the eighteenth century is remembered more for the prevalence of sentimental

drama. The term sentimental indicates an “overemphasis upon arousing response to the misfortunes of others” (Brockett 196) with an exaggerated depiction of human nature. Yet, at those times, such a depiction was considered to be a true representation of human nature. Eighteenth century philosophers believed that human beings were good by nature although some unfortunate events befell on them. Human beings who experience such evils may be reformed. The same was true for domestic tragedy of the same age. In a domestic tragedy, the horrible results of giving in to sin were depicted. As Oscar Brockett points out: “Sentimental comedy and domestic tragedy are indicative of the weakening of neoclassical standards. Each represents a considerable departure from the ‘pure’ dramatic forms, mingling elements formerly reserved solely for either comedy or tragedy” (198). The departure from the neoclassical ideals in drama reached its peak in the following age, though, with the nineteenth century romanticism.

The advocacy of romanticism became prominent with a distrust of reason which had been considered as the main tool for achieving man’s highest goals in the Restoration era. Romantic art is generally characterized by “the prizing of subjective vision above objectively verifiable truths; the elevation of feeling above reason; the worship of nature; and the understanding of the individual human soul as the site of universal conflicts” (Williams 517). In England, it was the romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, Lord Byron and John Keats

who initiated the writing of romantic plays though with minor success because romanticism did not have the same revolutionary effects in drama as it did in poetry. As a matter of fact, it was melodrama that had the utmost influence in theatre. Melodrama emerged almost at the same time romantic drama was developing and it became the predominant and most popular form especially in the nineteenth century with an on-going effect throughout the twentieth century. As its name suggests, melodrama refers to a combination of drama and music in which the play is accompanied by music in order to "achieve the desired response from the audience" (Brockett 234). Besides, speaking text-wise, it can be seen that a melodramatic play is famous for its "vice is punished, virtue is rewarded" attitude. Thus, a focus on emotional appeal and the manipulation of feelings gained importance with an attempt to achieve poetic justice and comic relief in the end. Moreover, a melodramatic play is, when considered generally, "fast-paced, episodic and [has] sensational action. After a short expository scene, the story progresses quickly…The plays incorporated numerous instances of fortunate coincidence, concealed identity, startling discoveries, reversals, and other devices. Each act ends with a strong climax…" (Brockett, *History* 280). There is no doubt that many plays, TV serials and movies have utilized melodramatic techniques abundantly to capture the audience fully. Although with the advent of realism, melodramatic structure was condemned,

some playwrights, such as George Bernard Shaw and Henrik Ibsen, the founders of realism, made use of melodrama in their plays.

After such a diachronic approach to theatre history with an attempt to figure out the evolution of dramatic structure in relation to Aristotelian rules, it is time to continue with historical avant-gardes since as it is generally agreed by most critics and particularly by Peter Szondi and Hans-Thies Lehmann, dramatic theatre has its initial and vital shattering towards the end of the 19th century with historical avant-gardes. However, in order to internalize the dramatic changes in historical avant-gardes, it will be proper to remember the emergence of the realistic and naturalistic trends since historical avant-gardes were born as a reaction to them. Realism as a philosophical phenomenon came into being due to the appearance of two thinkers: August Comte (1798-1857) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882). Comte's advocacy of scientific knowledge based on cause-and-effect relationship, observation and experimentation affected various forms of art. Comte's positivism was soon enhanced by Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution. That an individual is shaped by heredity and environment was a revolutionary idea that places high importance on the society. All these revolutionary changes in seeking truth inevitably had their reflections in theatre with the belief that "the playwright should strive for a truthful depiction of the real world; since he may know the real only through direct observation, he should write about the society around him; he should strive to be

as objective as possible" (Brockett 288). The playwrights came to show the contemporary life as much detailed and objective as possible. Actually, the dramatic structure that realists took up was the well-made play with a "clear exposition of situation; careful preparation for future events; unexpected but logical reversals; continuous and mounting suspense; an obligatory scene; and a logical and believable resolution" (Brockett 289) and according to Brockett, it is because of the availability of a careful exposition and cause-effect chain that the well-made play was adopted by the realists.

The term naturalism is usually used interchangeably with realism although many critics assume that it is an extreme form of realism. As in realism, naturalism is characterized by a "realistic representation of contemporary life, in acting, writing and mise-en-scène, with an emphasis on revealing the darker corners of social experience not usually acknowledged in bourgeois society" (Panikkar 418). Naturalism as a movement started with the novels of Emile Zola and it was introduced into the theatre by him. Soon naturalism became associated with the Théâtre Libre founded by André Antoine who advocated a "more natural style of acting and general presentation" (Morgan 84). However, as Margery Morgan maintains, it is August Strindberg's manifesto in his preface to *Miss Julie* that theatrical and dramatic naturalism is best known. Playwrights in this vein attempted to be "scientific" in their representation which led their characters to be governed by heredity and environment. In such a context, the

Darwinian idea of survival of the fittest appeared as a dramatic conflict with an attempt to test the “relative strength of the participants” (Morgan 85), that is, the characters. In addition, with regards to the stage presentation, illusionistic scene-painting was to be replaced by real stage furnishings (real pots, for instance) in order to maintain “the audience’s acceptance of the illusion throughout the performance of the play” (Morgan 85). Thus, it is doubtless that the illusionary aspect of dramatic theatre reaches its peak with naturalism. The dramatic structure contains the similar features that have been discussed before.

As it is known, what is now being called as modern drama is the culmination of trends in realism initiated by the Norwegian talent, Henrik Ibsen, who is considered to be the father of. He contributed much to realism by avoiding asides and soliloquies as well as by setting scenes that are related to the denouement in a casual and logical way. Thus, although he used many techniques of the well-made play, he was able to “overcome the sense of artificiality by avoiding asides, concealed hiding places, overheard conversations, the fortuitous arrival of letters, and similar devices” (Brockett 294). Ibsen achieved to create a sense of reality by the careful selection and arrangement of details (Brockett 294). One name to be considered as influential as Ibsen in realistic taste was undoubtedly the Russian Anton Chekhov. As Brockett informs: “Chekhov’s realism is further seen in his dramatic form, for the

plays have an air of aimlessness which matches that of the characters' lives. There is no sense of hurry, of theatrical trickery, or even of normal dramatic structure." (298). The novelties brought by Ibsen and Chekhov undoubtedly had a great impact on the commencement of avant-garde theatre. For instance, Ibsenian structure in which the climax arrives towards the end of the play and Chekhovian pauses or concentration on the psychological depths of the characters in a plot in which nothing much happens paved the way to the historical avant-garde vein.

2.2 Historical Avant-Gardes

In order to discuss the roots of the postdramatic theatre, there is a need to make an account of the historical avant-gardes to show their relationship with the new theatrical forms beginning with 1970s and how they disrupted the conventions of dramatic structure. As a matter of fact, no sooner had realism and naturalism became popular than the revolts against them began. Each protest bears both similarities to and differences from each other. Without doubt, realism has been modified by each of them. Symbolism, expressionism, epic, surrealism, Dadaism, existentialism and theatre of the absurd will be briefly explored in order to see to what extent dramatic theatre has deviated from the conventional norms.

Symbolism is the first revolutionary reaction against realism and naturalism. It emerged in France in the late 19th century. As a movement, it denies realism's claim that ultimate reality can be found through five senses and rational thought process. Thus, it is antirealistic because of "disdaining everyday reality and the realism that reflected it" (Cohn 1049) and it advocates that truth is to be understood intuitively (Brockett 310). As Brockett informs:

> Since it cannot be logically understood, ultimate truth cannot be expressed directly. It can only be suggested through symbols which evoke feelings and states of mind, corresponding, though imprecisely, to the dramatist's intuitions. The surface dialogue and action in a Symbolist play, therefore, are not of primary importance (310).

All these show that the aim of a symbolist play is, through symbols, to convey intuitions about a higher truth although symbolists did not think that truth can be expressed logically or rationally. Therefore, symbolist drama is characterized by being "vague, mysterious and puzzling" style (Brockett 311)[4]. Therefore, the so called deviations in symbolic theatre are more ostensible in the perception of reality than in form. As a matter of fact, symbolist theatre is no different from

[4] The French poets Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarme are considered as the precursors of symbolic theatre. The influence of Richard Wagner, who believed that the greatest truths cannot be acquired through realism, is also noteworthy in the emergence of symbolism. The Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) is among the most famous symbolic dramatists. William Butler Yeats and Garcia Lorca also showed many attributes of symbolism (Brockett 316-317).

realist theatre in terms of its plot structure. Whatever a symbol signifies, what is represented is still an illusion of reality as in realist theatre.

The other concept that paves the way for postdramatic theatre and the second revolt against realism is expressionism which aims to “go beyond drama as interpersonal dramaturgy of conflict and beyond motifs inherent to it” (Lehmann 65). As a movement expressionism emerged in Germany around 1910. Michael Patterson clarifies and formulates this movement as follows:

> Reacting against the limited and untheatrical nature of naturalism, the defining characteristics of expressionist theatre are, in addition to the depiction of powerful emotions: the rejection of individual psychology in order to penetrate to the essence of humanity; a concern with the contemporary social situation; episodic structures; generalized, often nameless characters; strongly visual incidents in place of scenes dependent on linguistic exchange; a highly charged, often abrupt language (telegraphese); symbolic scenography, lighting, and costumes; and powerfully theatrical performances (195).

Oscar Brockett is of the opinion that expressionism as a movement is difficult to describe because soon after its emergence, any departure from realism was defined as expressionism especially in Germany. He explains that its emergence is related to the fabric of society which is industrial and

scientifically-driven. Man has been degraded to a machinelike position in such a society. This new position of man fosters the view of subjectivity and is reflected in theatre:

> Realism accepts this machinelike state as fixed truth and seeks to understand man through a study of external details … Since to the Expressionists truth was primarily subjective, it had to be expressed through new artistic means. Distorted line, exaggerated shape, abnormal coloring, mechanical movement, and telegraphic speech were devices commonly used to lead the audience beyond surface appearances (Brockett 324).

Actually, there were two different approaches in the depiction of man's changed position in an industrialised and mechanical society: Much of the drama focusses on how man has been transformed into a machine-like creature. Also, although smaller in number, some plays attempt to imagine the transformation of society and man's coming to terms with his environment. Thus, most expressionist plays are "structurally episodic, their unity deriving from a central idea or argument rather than from a casually related action" (Brockett 324)[5] and it is this unity which makes expressionist plays to be categorized under the rubric of dramatic theatre.

[5] The Swedish playwright August Strindberg and the German dramatist Franz Wedekind are thought to be the forerunners of expressionism.

The forms of monologue and choir and a more lyrically than dramatically formed scenes are emphasized. “Expressionism seeks ways of representing the unconscious whose nightmares and images of desire are not bound to any dramatic logic” (Lehmann 65). Yet and still, it is categorized under the umbrella of dramatic theatre. J. L. Styan, in his comparison of realism and expressionism, points out that: “In realism … actors sit about on chairs and talk about the weather, but in expressionism they stand on them and shout about the world. …” (V3, 1). In other words, although expressionistic theatre still carries realistic traits, it is characterized by a dreamlike/nightmarish mood, unrealistic depiction, disjointed plot structure, nameless characters and poetical monologues or dialogues.

Without doubt, it is impossible to investigate historical avant-gardes without a detailed analysis of epic theatre. As it is well known, it was Bertolt Brecht who used the term “dramatic theatre” to demonstrate the tradition to which his epic theatre aimed to put an end by creating a non-dramatic, anti-Aristotelian one. Epic theatre is marked by a rejection of following a structure of acts and scenes since “Brecht attempted to destroy continuity by dividing his fables into series of episodes, each of which is self-contained” (Morgan 77). Thus, the audience would be prevented from being captured by the fictional illusion since for Brecht the audience should be kept alien, strange to and distant

from what he is watching. That is the famous “Verfremdungseffekt”, translated variously as V-effect, A-effect, estrangement, alienation or distancing effect.

All these are related to the fact that Brecht totally disagrees with the conception of Aristotelian drama which aims at creating terror and pity in the audience as well as purging their emotions to obtain relief and refreshment which are achieved by creating an illusion of real events and by causing spectators’ or readers’ full identification with the characters. Brecht wholeheartedly argues that the audience should not be made to feel, he should be made to think. Identification with the characters, however, prevents him from thinking due to the “horrors” of illusion of reality. Therefore, the spectators should be constantly made aware of the fact that they are not watching a real event, on the contrary, they are “sitting in a theatre, listening to an account of things which have happened in the past at a certain time in a certain place” (Esslin 110). However, in spite of all the anti-Aristotelian claims of epic theatre, it is still dramatic since it “clings to the presentation of a fictive and simulated text-cosmos as a dominant[6], while postdramatic theatre no longer does so” (Lehmann 55).

Following epic theatre, theatre of the absurd gained prominence although it had its roots in late 19th century. Alfred Jarry, with his *Ubu Roi* (1896) is usually considered to be the first absurdist playwright. “While this play, with its

[6] The word “dominant” is used as a noun here by Lehmann’s translator, Karen Jürs-Munby. Although, when used as a noun, it is a musical term meaning the fifth tone of a diatonic scale, here it is almost equivalent to “norm, rule or style”.

inversion of conventional values and its determinedly non-realistic techniques, certainly anticipates many later works, it had no immediate successors" (Brockett 362). At this point, before delving into absurd theatre, it would be proper to focus on dadaism, surrealism and existentialism since they are all considered as the forerunners of the absurdist school. Dadaism was first initiated by the Romanian Tristan Tzara in 1917. "The term was meant to signify everything and nothing, or total freedom, anti rules, ideals and traditions" (Cuddon 203). Works of art with a dadaistic aesthetic contain collage effects, the arrangement of unrelated objects and words chosen randomly (Cuddon 204). It is not surprising that such works were satirical, illogical and irrational. As Brockett informs, dadaist artists "championed automatic writing (that is, setting down thoughts as they came into the mind regardless of connection or relevance), the formless nature of which was said to be a truthful expression of the writer's subconscious mind" (362).

Dadaism, however, did not live long and was succeeded by surrealism. Just like expressionism, surrealism privileges collage and montage which develop the speed and intelligence capacity of the recipient. The surrealists hardly produced any remarkable theatre but their ideas influenced the newer theatre to a great extent. For the surrealists "the principal source of truth lies in the subconscious mind, at its freest (that is, least subject to control by the conscious mind) when man is dreaming" (Brockett 363). In other words, truth

can be attainable in the dreamlike state in which the subconscious recreates everyday reality by avoiding the monotonous process of thought. Thus, the mind is freed from rationality and the subconscious mind is activated. Just like Dadaism, surrealism "drew from a similar rejection of bourgeois norms" (Causey 583). It began in Paris with a group of poets and theatre practitioners such as Antonin Artaud, André Breton and Tristan Tzara. In a surrealist staging practice, masks and costumes were used to change the performer's body with caricatured and cartoonish emblems. "The stage was likewise distorted in fantastic imagery, bold colours, and a general sense of play" (Causey 584). The twentieth century theatre was affected by the surrealist experiments to a great extent. However, both Dadaism and surrealism became important movements not because they produced a substantial body of drama but because they were the precursors of other schools like theatre of the absurd (Brockett 363).

One of such precursors is undoubtedly Luigi Pirandello who is sometimes labelled as a surrealist and sometimes as a pioneer of absurd theatre. As a playwright who was majorly influenced by Sigmund Freud, Pirandello was amazed at the "complexity of human psyche and the split nature of personality" (McMillan & Kennedy 465). This attraction naturally was reflected in his plays like *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921). Considered to be an epitome of metatheatre and theatre-within-theatre questioning the truth of performance and the performance of truth, the play "dramatizes the discrepancy between

illusion and reality" (McMillan & Kennedy 465). In almost all the plays by Pirandello, such as *Right You are, if You Think You Are, Henry IV* and *As You Desire Me*, truth is depicted as a relative phenomenon since for him there is no objective truth. Therefore, characters in his plays recounts the same events and experiences totally different from each other, each believing that his version is the true one as if to suggest the impossibility of objective truth. What is more, "[a]lthough his plays do not depart markedly from traditional structural patterns, Pirandello's view of reality is clearly similar to that of the Absurdists" (Brockett 364). In other words, Pirandello, by following an anti-illusionistic mode or theatre-within-theatre technique, creates plays which question the idea of objective reality. However, like the symbolist or expressionistic theatre, which display similar tendencies, the theatre of Pirandello is still dramatic theatre since his plays make an audience "experience the pathos and humour of human self-deception and the relativity of truth" (Styan V2, 81).

Another forerunner of the absurdist school is existentialism. Actually, a majority of plays which are now labelled as absurdist were originally called existentialist. Existentialist philosophy, as its name suggests, questions the meaning of "existence". It is not surprising that "with its concern for moral values in a civilization which had engendered two world wars and produced the atomic and hydrogen bombs, existentialism seemed particularly relevant after 1945" (Brockett 364). Among the representatives of this school, Jean-Paul Sartre and

Albert Camus are the best known dramatists. As far as Sartre is concerned, man is born into a sort of void, a mud. He may either choose to remain in this mud and lead a passive, inert existence in a semi-conscious state or by coming out of this passive, paralysed situation, he may

> become increasingly aware of himself and, conceivably, experience *angoisse* (a species of metaphysical and moral anguish). If so, he would then have a sense of absurdity of his predicament and suffer despair. The energy deriving from this awareness would enable him to 'drag himself out of the mud', and begin to exist (Cuddon 295).

Both Sartre and Camus see man as possessing the potential to determine his own fate rather than being at the mercy of heredity and environment. "In their plays, both dramatists adhere rather closely to traditional structural patterns" (Brockett 365). However, content-wise, the existential anxiety felt and verbalized by these playwrights has affected the playwrights to come, especially, those in the absurdist vein.

Absurdism as a term was coined by Martin Esslin in 1961 to describe the plays produced by playwrights such as Arthur Adomov, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus and Eugene Ionesco which "tend to reflect the influence of contemporary existential philosophy as well as a post war nihilism" (White 1). With such a worldview, theatre of the absurd produced plays in which "accepted stage

conventions were largely abandoned in order to present a view of the world as meaningless and incomprehensible" (Law et al 2). The absurdists differ from the existentialists in their negligence to bring any order to absurdity as done by the existentialists and in their similar attempt to "embody their chaotic subject matter in equally chaotic dramatic form" (Brocket 365). Moreover and similarly, as Brian Singleton points out:

> The historical connective between existentialist philosophy and absurd theatre is the Second World War, which provided ample evidence of atrocity on a mass scale. Hitler's industrialization of murder, and the atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, revealed that during the war language was used as an instrument of death, like any other weapon of destruction The existentialist theatre of Camus and Sartre, despite its attention to parallel issues, was conventional in its drawing-room settings and articulation of a philosophy in dialogue form. The theatre of the absurd, on the other hand, has been called the theatricalization of existentialism. No character discusses the philosophy; characters exist within it and embody it (3).

As Kerry White clarifies, "Art, and especially dramatic and theatrical art, therefore tends to present itself self-consciously as a metaphor of human existence in a world without absolutes" (2). Thus, absurdist plays "lack a formal

logic and conventional structure, so that both form and content support (while emphasizing the difficulty of communicating) the representation of what may be called the absurd predicament" (Cuddon 912). As seen in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which is the epitome of theatre of the absurd, plays in this school use an unsettling form as a reflection and symptom of a society which has lost value and meaning because

> [s]tories cannot be told within traditional or recognizable forms; a play's action is in the image or the word; character motivations are, at best, opaque; there is no dramatic conflict. The world of the absurd has lost the unifying factors of logic, reason and rationality … which is why the stage cannot maintain the qualities of realism" (Singleton 3).

In the absurdist view, therefore, "everything is possible, and the dramaturgical mechanics of traditional theatre are exposed as false" (Singleton 3). Yet, when compared with a play by Shakespeare or Ibsen, *Waiting for Godot* is

> [a]stonishing: no plot, barely any character and certainly no moral or emotional character development, no revelation, and no climax: but the facts remain that on stage and page alike it can be wholly compelling, and that its structural, cyclical, rhythmical, and philosophical means of being so are available to the attentive reader of its densely woven text (Lennard & Luckhurst 46).

In this respect, it is not surprising that Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov and other practitioners of theatre of the absurd are linked to the classical tradition because of the dominance of speech in their plays. Theatre was still a world of representation in the form of an absurd game since “the absurd theatre remains pledged to the hierarchy that in dramatic theatre ultimately subordinates the theatrical means to the text” (Lehmann 54).

It should not be gone unnoticed that although absurdist movement emerged in France, its influences were seen in other countries as well. In England, the early plays of Harold Pinter, such as *The Room, The Dumb Waiter* and *The Birthday Party*, display many absurdist features. Similarly, absurdist drama popularised new approaches which were inspired by Antonin Artaud and his *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938) (Brockett 371). Artaud’s theatre of cruelty is “a kind of theatre that would subject the spectators to an emotional shock treatment, in order to free them from the grip of discursive and logical thought processes …” (Pavis, *Dictionary* 402). Thus, the aim in his theatre is to set the spectators’ unconscious free from any repressions and enable them to embrace their true self. In theatre of cruelty, “mime, gesture and scenery are more important than words, and the director is a kind of maker of magic, ‘a master of sacred ceremonies’. Much depends on spectacle, lightening effects and the exploitation of the full range of the ‘theatrical’” (Cuddon 910).

It must be borne in mind that the disruption of dramatic norms is not limited with the afore-mentioned movements or playwrights. There have been numerous playwrights in the pre and post Beckettian period who experimented with both form and content such as John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Sean O'Casey, John Arden, Robert Bolt, Edward Bond, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard and Caryl Churhill, to name but a few. As a matter of fact, it is assumed that British new writing (in theatre) begins in 1956 with John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger.* However, to keep this study within bounds, these playwrights will be referred to if and when necessary. A sense of awareness that postdramatic theatre has its root in the historical avant-gardes would suffice to make a sound assessment of that theatre.

2.3 In-Yer-Face Theatre

Before an investigation of postdramatic theatre, there is a need to investigate in-yer-face theatre for two primary reasons: Firstly, as it was mentioned in the Introduction, Mark Ravenhill is assumed to be a pioneer and practitioner of in-yer-face theatre which makes this theatre relevant in this study. Secondly and equally importantly, as explained in the Introduction, Lehmann in his book admits the fact that German theatre in the 1990s was inspired by the British in-yer-face theatre and this is what he considers as a tension between

dramatic and postdramatic theatre. In order to figure out this tension, in-yer-face theatre is worth dwelling upon in this chapter.

Professor Aleks Sierz, who is a British theatre critic, coined the term "in-yer-face" with his 2001 book titled *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* to refer to a group of British playwrights in 1990s whose common denominator was their use of sheer violence, physical and verbal, as well as shocking and brutal content of their plays. In his thought-provoking book, Sierz claims that Mark Ravenhill is one of the most promising British in-yer-face playwrights[7]. What made him labelled as an in-yer-face playwright was the common characteristics he shared with many of his contemporaries: shocking plays abundant with graphic violence and sex. As defined by Sierz himself, plays that could be categorized as examples of in-yer-face theatre are those that take "the audience by the scruff of the neck" and shake it "until it gets the message ... In other words, it is experiential, not speculative" (*In-Yer-Face* 4). Employing shock tactics is a strategy to disturb both actors and spectators and rid them of the conventional responses since such plays present a more courageous and experimental world than the one audiences are used to (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 4). In

[7] Other playwrights who were examined as in-yer-face British dramatists in the book include Philip Ridley, Philip Nagy, Tracy Lett, Harry Gibson, Anthony Neilson, Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Naomi Wallace, Jez Butterworth, Simon Block, David Elridge, Nick Grosso, Patrick Marber, Che Walker, Richard Zajdlic, Joe Penhall, Judy Upton, Martin McDonagh and Rebecca Prichard.

this respect, the characteristic traits of in-yer-face theatre are explained by Sierz as follows:

> the language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each other, experience unpleasant emotions, become suddenly violent. … Writers who provoke audiences or try to confront them are usually trying to push the boundaries of what is acceptable – often because they want to question current ideas of what is normal, what it means to be human, what is natural or what is real. … The most successful plays are often those that seduce the audience with a naturalistic mood and then hit it with intense emotional material, or those where an experiment in form encourages people to question their assumptions. In such cases, what is being renegotiated is the relationship between audience and performers – shock disturbs the spectator's habitual gaze (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 5).

After such a recount, it is not surprising that in-yer-face theatre subverts the binary oppositions we use to define ourselves such as human/animal, clean/dirty, good/evil, real/unreal, etc (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 6). Any subversion is undoubtedly a painful experience. That is one of the reasons why Sierz is of the opinion that in-yer-face theatre is experiential, not speculative. As an audience,

you are experiencing the same feelings presented on the stage rather than speculating about how it would be if the things you are watching befall on you one day.

Sierz also handles the issue of form in in-yer-face theatre as he believes that a play's strength as drama relies upon form, too. As he puts forth: "The further a play departs from the conventions of naturalism, especially those of the well-made three-act drama, the more difficult it is for many audiences to accept" (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 6). In this respect, forcing the audience to accept what they see on the stage (whether they accept or not) means radicalising the form, too. In *Rewriting the Nation. British Theatre Today*, Sierz enthusiastically approves the fact that meaning in theatre comes across by means of not only the content but also the form. He even gives a direct quotation by Tim Etchells, a British playwright and director, who declares that in theatre "The meaning of what you do *is* the aesthetic and *is* the form" (qtd. in Sierz, *Rewriting* 7, original emphasis). In spite of all these attributed importance of form in in-yer-face theatre, it has been the content which attracts the attention of most critics and spectators, mainly because of the graphic violence and sexuality. However, the impossibility and impracticality of separating the content from the form manifests itself particularly by the language. As Sierz emphasises, as a set of theatrical techniques, in-yer-face theatre "involved a stage language that emphasised rawness, intensity, swearing … a ninety-minute structure that dispensed with the

relief of an interval. … in-yer-face theatre describes not just the content of a play but rather the relationship between the stage and the audience" (*Modern* 57-58).

This relationship as well as the interaction between the stage and the audience and the tension between the dramatic and postdramatic features in the plays of Mark Ravenhill act as a common denominator of in-yer-face and postdramatic theatre. Therefore, dramatic and postdramatic qualities in his plays are also common to some of the characteristics of in-yer-face theatre, which will be explored in the following chapters that analyse his plays.

2.4 Postdramatic Theatre

Hans-Thies Lehmann's pivotal study *Postdramatic Theatre* was translated into English in 2006 with a substantial introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby. As Karen Jürs-Munby puts forth in the Introduction, Lehmann's book offers a new paradigm in theatre since it demonstrates the relationship between drama and new forms of theatre that have emerged since 1970s and are claimed to be no longer dramatic in the Aristotelian sense.

As Jürs-Munby points out, "post" in postdramatic should be considered "neither as an epochal category, nor as a chronological 'after' drama, a 'forgetting' of the dramatic 'past', but rather as a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and are in many ways an analysis and 'anamnesis' of drama" (2). This affirmation of Jürs-Munby regarding the

prefix –post is elaborated further by Dr. David Barnett, too. In his article titled "When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Texts", he asserts that the term postdramatic "can imply a reflection on the dramatic without necessarily presenting a complete break" (14).

In a most recent study titled *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political* by Karen Jürs-Munby, Jerome Carroll and Steve Giles, Lehmann's use of the term is re-evaluated: "Lehmann had deployed the term as an alternative to the then ubiquitous term 'postmodern theatre' in order to describe how a vast variety of contemporary forms of theatre and performance had departed not so much from the 'modern' as from 'drama'" (1). The assumption that contemporary theatre does not contain "a dramatic conflict in the form of a story (fable) and dialogue spoken by characters in a fictional universe" (Carroll et al 1) any more is another dimension of this theatre.

Lehmann himself points to the difference between the terms postmodern and postdramatic. The term "postmodern theatre" has been widely used in order to talk about "the theatre of deconstruction, multimedia theatre, restoratively traditionalist theatre, theatre of gestures and movement" (Lehmann 25). Defining and describing a field in respect to the epoch is a difficult task according to Lehmann. He believes that keywords such as:

> ambiguity, celebrating art as fiction; celebrating theatre as process; discontinuity; heterogeneity; non-textuality; pluralism; multiple

> codes; subversion; all sites; perversion; performer as theme; and protagonist; deformation; text as basic material only; deconstruction; considering text to be authoritarian and archaic; performance as a third term between drama and theatre; anti-mimetic; resisting interpretation (25)

function only to generalize; they are not persuasive. At this point, Lehmann explains why he has chosen “postdramatic” as a term to use. As he explains:

> The adjective ‘postdramatic’ denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time ‘after’ the authority of the dramatic paradigm in theatre. What it does not mean is an abstract negation and mere looking away from the tradition of drama. ‘After’ drama means that it lives on as a structure – however weakened and exhausted – of the ‘normal’ theatre: as an expectation of large parts of its audience, as a foundation for many of its means of representation, as a quasi automatically working norm of its dramaturgy … . Even in the term ‘postmodern’, wherever it is used in more than a token sense, the prefix ‘post’ indicates that a culture or artistic practice has stepped out of the previously unquestioned horizon of modernity but still exists with some kind of reference to it (Lehmann 27).

As constantly put forth by Lehmann, although experimental forms of theatre that emerged since 1970s have models in historical avant-gardes, historical avant-gardes actually demonstrated the features of dramatic theatre despite their innovations. The new theatre forms, although modernized, were still dependent on the text. They only “sought to save the text and its truth from disfigurement through a theatre practice that had become conventional” (Lehmann 22). Though theatre revolutionaries broke with a substantial body of conventions even in their abstract and alienating means of staging, they still conformed to the norms of mimesis of action. Lehmann points out that playwrights such as Shakespeare, Racine, Schiller, Lenz, Büchner, Hebbel, Ibsen and Strindberg could be seen as variants of one and the same discursiveness in spite of their differences. In this respect, it should be noted that the development of discursive formation towards the postdramatic can be considered to have a series of stages like “self-reflection, decomposition and separation of the elements of dramatic theatre” (Lehmann 48).

Lehmann’s theory of postdramatic theatre is partly a response to and reassessment of Peter Szondi’s influential book titled *Theory of the Modern Drama*, which criticizes and reads plays from Ibsen and Strindberg to O’Neill and Miller and considers them as a ‘crisis of drama’. For Szondi, the tension between the conventions of Aristotelian drama and the requirements of epic themes is a major cause of this crisis. According to him, Brechtian epic theatre

came as a breakdown of dramatic theatre. Lehmann, however, believes that Brecht's innovative theatre is also a part of the dramatic tradition. The discrepancy between Lehmann's view of dramatic theatre and that of Szondi's is what urged Lehmann to form his theory of the postdramatic theatre. At this point, one would definitely feel that epic theatre, which also inserted technology into the stage, can be categorized under the postdramatic. Lehmann explains that epic drama was a renewal but it was the renewal and completion of classical dramaturgy. He even suggests that for Brecht, the fable (story) was a prerequisite. However, it is impossible to understand the new theatre of the 1960s to the 1990s from such a point of view in terms of particularly the decisive elements and the textual forms of that theatre literature. Therefore and in this respect, Lehmann asserts that "Postdramatic theatre is a *post-Brechtian theatre*. It situates itself in a space opened up by the Brechtian inquiries into the presence and consciousness of the process of representation within the represented and the inquiry into a new 'art of spectating' …" (33, original emphasis).

Lehmann considers the crisis of drama to have begun from about 1880 onwards when the unquestioned ingredients of drama were questioned: "the textual form of a dialogue charged with suspense and pregnant with decisions; the subject whose reality can essentially be expressed in interpersonal speech; the action that unfolds primarily in an absolute present" (49). In new forms of

texts, narration and references to reality are in distorted shape. Lehmann gives the plays of Gertrude Stein, Antonin Artaud and Stanislaw Ignacy Witkievicz as examples which anticipate literary elements of postdramatic theatre aesthetics. During the crisis of drama around 1900s when traditional forms of theatre were being rejected, a new autonomy of theatre as an artistic practice began to develop. This, Lehmann calls, “the entry of theatre into the age of experimentation” (50). This “theatricalization” of theatre liberates theatre from its dependence on drama.

Lehmann’s primary argument against Szondi’s is that for Lehmann new technologies have caused the written text to be questioned since “the mode of perception is shifting” (16), which has not been taken into consideration by Szondi. The linear mode of perception has been replaced by a “simultaneous and multi-perspectival form” which has caused literature and theatre losing their popularity. “For both theatre and literature are textures which are especially dependent on the release of active energies of imagination, energies that are becoming weaker in a civilization of the primarily passive consumption of images and data” (Lehmann 16). Lehmann maintains that in theatre there is an aesthetic act, that is, the performance, and the act of reception, that is, the theatre going. In other words, theatre going means the collectively spent time and collectively breathed air in which the performing and reception coexist. In that respect, Lehmann contends that “the emission and reception of signs and signals take

place simultaneously. The theatre performance turns the behaviour onstage and in the auditorium into a *joint text*, a 'text' even if there is no spoken dialogue on stage or between actors and audience" (17, original emphasis). Because of the tendencies of profoundly changed mode of theatrical sign usage, Lehmann believes that there is a need to describe a significant sector of the new theatre as "postdramatic" since, for him, the new theatre text is 'no longer dramatic' to a great extent and stands in opposition to drama which, according to him, means "a flow of time, controlled and surveyable" (40). This manageability and linearity of time in drama is at odds with the modes of perception

> where a particular and singular representation of events may contradict a plenitude of experiences. Dramatic action is the representation of moments, and when these are ordered, tensions, developments, and climaxes arise. The postdramatic, on the other hand, looks to the paradigm of the dream as a formal means of suspending the thematic flow of time. Dreams are episodic and non-linear: meaning is dispersed throughout their structures… (Barnett, "When" 15).

One should always bear in mind that in Lehmann's study, the text is only one component, one layer of theatre, "as a material of the scenic creation, not as its master" (Lehmann 17). As emphasised by Markus Wessendorf in his article, "The notion of postdramatic theatre … does not imply that theatre no

longer uses texts or that writing plays would no longer be possible (or relevant), it only implies that the other components of the mise en scène are no longer subservient to the text" .

In order to clarify and illustrate his argument, Lehmann formulates his theory of postdramatic theatre as recounted below:

1 Parataxis/non-hierarchy

In postdramatic theatre, theatrical means are in a relationship of de-hierarchization. Such a non-hierarchical structure is in opposition with the tradition which has preferred subordination of elements to avoid confusion and to produce harmony and comprehension. As Lehmann clarifies:

> …in postdramatic theatrical practice: different genres are combined in a performance (dance, narrative theatre, performance, etc.); all means are employed with equal weighting; play, object and language point simultaneously in different directions of meaning and thus encourage a contemplation that is at once relaxed and rapid. The consequence is a changed attitude on the part of the spectator (87).

This changed attitude actually paves the way to enable the spectator of postdramatic theatre to postpone the meaning. In other words, the spectator, after contemplating on the details, can get the meaning.

2 Simultaneity

The simultaneity of signs is related with the idea of parataxis and non-hierarchy. “While dramatic theatre proceeds in such a way that of all the signals communicated at any one moment of the performance only a particular one is usually emphasized and placed at the centre, the paratactical valency and ordering of postdramatic theatre lead to the experience of simultaneity” (Lehmann 87). Likewise, language sounds are simultaneously presented on stage; thus, they are only partially understood particularly when different languages are being spoken.

3 Play with the density of signs

Violating the established norm of sign density is like a rule in postdramatic theatre. Signs are either too much or too little with regards to time, space or the importance of the matter. An aesthetic intention to provide a dialectic of plenitude or emptiness can be seen. In this situation, all levels of signification as well as presence, absence and density of signs become important. Lehmann states that in this respect theatre reacts to media culture and gives McLuhan’s world as an example which increased the number of stimuli. Such a world with abundant images causes the “disappearance of the naturally, physically perceived world” (Lehmann 89). As he explains:

> In the face of our everyday bombardment with signs, postdramatic theatre works with a strategy of refusal. It practises an economy in its use of signs that can be seen as asceticism; it emphasizes a *formalism* that reduces the plethora of signs through repetition and duration; and it demonstrates a tendency to *graphism* and writing that seems to defend itself against optical opulence and redundancy. … The play with the low density of signs aims to provoke the spectator's own imagination to become active on the basis of little raw material to work with. Absence, reduction and emptiness are not indebted to a minimalist ideology but to a basic motif of activating theatre (89-90).

4 Plethora

As opposed to minimum use of signs stands the idea of plethora, which refers to excessiveness in sign usage. Lehmann points out that exceeding the norm leads to a deforming figuration. In other words, rejecting conventionalized form and the normalized form of the image is usually done by a turning to extremes. The proliferation of signs disturbs the order of images. "The division of stage time into minimal sequences, quasi-filmic 'takes', already indirectly multiplies the data for perception, because, in terms of perception psychology, a

mass of unconnected elements is estimated to be larger than the same number of elements arranged in a coherent order" (Lehmann 90).

5 Musicalization

As Lehmann clarifies, musicalization is an important part of the sign usage in postdramatic theatre. By an independent *auditory semiotics,* directors apply their sense of music and rhythm, which is influenced by pop music, to classical texts. Moreover, "in the course of the dissolution of dramatic coherence the actor's speech becomes musically overdetermined through ethnic and cultural peculiarities (91).

Lehmann further adds Eleni Varopoulou's claims that since 1970s important directors have brought together actors from totally different cultural or ethnic backgrounds in an attempt to witness "diverse speech melodies, cadences, accents, and in general the different cultural habitus in the act of speaking. Through the different auditory peculiarities the enunciation of the text thus becomes the source of an independent musicality" (Varopoulou qtd. in Lehmann 91). Lehmann concludes this part by stating that musicalization is not merely an extension of dramatic theatre but rather it is the language of no longer dramatic theatre.

6 Scenography, visual dramaturgy

As a natural consequence of de-hierarchized use of signs and since logocentric hierarchy is dissolved in postdramatic theatre, there occurs the possibility of assigning the dominant role to “elements other than dramatic logos and language” (Lehmann 93). Visual dimension is thus more emphasized than the auditory dimension. Visual dramaturgy does not solely mean a visually organized dramaturgy. It is the one which has not been subordinated to the text. Thus it becomes free to develop its own logic. In Lehmann’s words “*a theatre of scenography”* develops (93). He explains this theatre: “Scenography, naming a theatre of complex visuality, presents itself to the contemplating gaze like a text, a scenic poem, in which the human body is a metaphor, its flow of movement in a complex metaphorical sense an inscription, a ‘writing’ and not ‘dancing’ ” (94).

7 Warmth and coldness

Lehmann explains these two concepts in postdramatic theatre by stating that the “dethroning” of signs problematizes the situation of the audience who is used to the tradition of text-based theatre. As he clarifies, the participation of living human beings leads to a certain warmth in the theatrical event. However, for the audience who are familiar with such warmth, it would be difficult to accept a theatre which is devoid of the representation of a human. This can come as a

coldness for them and equally difficult is the toleration of such coldness (Lehmann 95).

8 Physicality

Lehmann openly puts forth that theatre conveys meaning and it is a difficult task to name this meaning. The body is not a carrier of meaning anymore; it is rather conceived in terms of its physicality. He explains this with regards to the postdramatic theatre:

> Postdramatic theatre often presents itself as an *auto-sufficient physicality*, which is exhibited in its intensity, gestic potential, auratic 'presence' and internally, as well as externally, transmitted tensions. (95).

9 'Concrete theatre'

A theatre without action/plot or theatrical theatre has been called 'abstract' theatre. Lehmann is of the opinion that at this point *concrete theatre* should also be mentioned due to the fact that abstract theatre lacks any reference to reality. He believes that "the non-mimetic but formal structure or formalist aspects of postdramatic theatre are to be interpreted as 'concrete theatre'" (98).

10 Irruption of the real

Traditional theatre has been produced by means of mimesis in a closed fictive cosmos. Although there are a number of disruptive elements in theatre such as asides and direct audience address, the play on stage is perceived as a reality shaped by its own laws. Such disruptions were considered as an insignificant aspect of theatre. Characters in Shakespeare's plays, for example, communicated with the audience. However, all these disruptions were integrated into the cosmic world and therefore addressing the real audience would not be considered as a disturbing attitude. For Lehmann, in postdramatic theatre, "the main point is not the assertion of the real as such … but the unsettling that occurs through the *indecidability* whether one is dealing with reality or fiction. The theatrical effect and the effect on consciousness both emanate from this ambiguity" (101).

Lehmann gives an example to clarify his point. When an actor is being tortured on the stage with electric shocks, the audience reacts to it as he would react to a real incident of a similar kind. In this case, Lehmann asks about the limits of the border between theatre and reality:

> The question of where exactly the moveable border between 'theatre' and everyday reality runs in the course of a performance appears often enough as a *problem* and thus an object of theatrical design in postdramatic theatre – it is far from being a known factor

> secured by the definition of theatre. The aesthetic distance of the spectator is a phenomenon of dramatic theatre; in the new forms of theatre that are closer to performance this distance is structurally shaken in a more or less noticeable and provocative way. Wherever this unsettling blurring of boundaries happens in postdramatic theatre, it is invaded by the qualities of a *situation* (in the emphatic sense of the term), even in cases where all in all it seems to belong to the genre of classical theatre with its strict division of stage and theatron (auditorium) (104).

When the afore-mentioned characteristics of postdramatic theatre are taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that postdramatic theatre is particularly marked by its liberation from the printed script and avoidance or minimization of a representative unified world. In Lehmann's exclusive study, the clear-cut yet inseparable division between the dramatic and postdramatic as well as the blurred boundaries between mimesis and presence, between text and performance and "self-reflection, decomposition and separation of the elements of dramatic theatre" will all serve as an illuminating guide in the analysis of Ravenhill's plays since "the new constellations currently mapping out today's English stages definitely help us understand how post-dramatic is not only

concerned with the downfall of logocentricity [of the text] but with the deconstruction of the frontier between fiction and reality" (Angel-Pérez).

CHAPTER 3

SHOPPING and FUCKING

Being the first full-length play of Ravenhill, *Shopping and Fucking* was first performed in 1996 at the Royal Court, produced by Out of Joint and directed by Max Stafford-Clark and its scandalous title, let alone the content, was enough to shock the public. It is not surprising at all that the title not only in the first posters of the play but also in the printed version was written with asterisks as *Shopping and F***ing*. Initially, while writing the first draft in 1995, Ravenhill imagined to create "characters whose whole vocabulary had been defined by the market, who had been brought up in a decade when all that mattered was buying and selling" and these characters would be those who were driven to extreme situations since "the market had filtered into every aspect of their lives" and they were leading lives in which "sex, which should have been private, had become a public transaction" (Ravenhill in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 123). What he conjured up in his mind regarding buying, selling, sex and addiction turned out to be a real coup de théâtre and became one of the canonical works of 1990s.

The emergence of in-yer-face playwrights producing plays similar in style and content is considered to be a reflection of or reaction to the cultural and political zeitgeist of the 1990s Britannia and the new world order which are characterized by the following: fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), decline of

communism, neo-liberal economies, globalization, consumerism, rising popularity of media and digitalized technologies, to name but a few. Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* was no exception and it is this play which caused him to be labelled as a theatrical "enfant terrible". Dan Rebellato in his Introduction to Ravenhill's *Plays 1* agrees with this label but reminds the readers that in addition to this, "Ravenhill is profoundly moral in his portraiture of contemporary society. His vision is elliptically but recognisably social, even socialist" (x). Ravenhill himself explains his moralist attitude:

> I've always written against moral relativism. I want audiences to make moral choices: to decide moment by moment – intellectually and emotionally – whether what the characters are doing and the choices they are making are right or wrong. I find this dramatic. It makes good theatre . . . To write against our ironic, easygoing times, where any hierarchy of values has melted away, to stage something that makes an audience say, 'That is wrong' – that is definitely something I've delighted in doing . . . . . The permission to say, 'This is wrong' – without qualification – takes us a step closer to 'This is right'. And to change ("A Tear" 313).

However, Ravenhill's determination to have a say in changing "things" around is not direct. He is of the opinion that a playwright's task is not to give definite answers to the audience but to ask the right questions:

> One of the major shifts in audience attitudes is that now people don't expect someone to give them a neat answer after two hours in the theatre . . . they feel rather insulted if you do. The thing is to more urgently and more cogently ask the right questions. I want to shake up the audience (Ravenhill in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 149).

Shopping and Fucking is the first play by which Ravenhill literally shook up the theatre. The play, like the other plays of Ravenhill, has been extensively examined as an example of in-yer-face theatre or in terms of its affinity with postmodern aesthetics. Some critics such as Clare Wallace argue that although Ravenhill seems to be criticizing the postmodern condition, he does not employ postmodern techniques in his critique of postmodernity:

> Ravenhill's drama is less involved with theatrical postmodernism as practice, than with postmodernity as a subject. In fact, although the plays flaunt references to pop culture blended with allusions to and borrowings of ideas from critical texts on postmodernism, and are structured around rapid sequences of scenes and visceral images, a relatively coherent narrative usually unfolds in a manner structurally indebted (at least superficially) to television or cinema. Rather than being formally innovative, Ravenhill does not significantly break with the conventions of plot, character and

> narrative. Instead, the hub of provocation tends to be the thematic and visual content of the work (Wallace 270).

However, critics like Aleks Sierz believe that Ravenhill is playfully making use of postmodern techniques. To illustrate, Sierz exemplifies the way Ravenhill employs these techniques in *Shopping and Fucking* by fusing the postmodern with the dramatic: “On one level, the play is a very postmodern mix of savage critique and playful entertainment; on another, the evident longing of its characters for something more than postmodern irony, for narratives that make sense of the world, links the play with an older tradition of committed drama” (133).

If Ravenhill does not break with the conventions, what makes his plays be regarded as provocative and noteworthy? If he breaks with the conventions, how does he achieve this? Innovation and tradition surely exist side by side in his plays. Instead of investigating his plays under one rubric such as in-yer-face or postmodern, this chapter offers a holistic approach. In other words, the play’s relation to in-yer-face and postmodern theatre will help to demonstrate the play’s oscillation between dramatic and postdramatic aesthetics. Exploring *Shopping and Fucking* with regard to its dramatic and postdramatic qualities will enable us to figure out the tension between innovation and tradition to see the overall picture in his plays.

When a play is to be read in terms of its dramatic qualities, it is undoubtedly examined with regard to its plot structure, characters and dialogues/monologues as well as its mimetic potential. According to Ravenhill, the first-hand critic, "[*S*]*hopping and Fucking* has a dramatic climax in the traditional place – in terms of its structure, it's quite an old-fashioned play" (in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 125). The play thus has a plot structure that deserves analysing under the rubric of dramatic theatre.

Composed of fourteen scenes "in a series of sequential but disconnected episodes to explore the lives of a group of young people" (Kritzer 39), *Shopping and Fucking* contains five definable (in the dramatic sense) characters: Lulu (the only female), Robbie, Mark, Gary and Brian. Actually, they are "sketched with the minimum detail; their identities are delineated primarily by their roles in a system of commodities and commodification" (Wallace 270). Although the characters are dramatically definable, they are, as Ravenhill confesses, named after the members of the boy band Take That. At this point, it is important to note that, as Rebellato points out, by naming everyone after members of the then very famous boy band, "*Shopping and Fucking* perhaps draws attention to the artificiality of the very idea of character" ("Exit" 29). By the artificiality of the idea of character, Rebellato clearly refers to the postmodern idea of the fluidity of identity and characters whose moral values are subject to change at any moment just like their identities. The characters in this play will demonstrate

similar tendencies. In addition to Rebellato's comments, Aleks Sierz, who is definitely an ardent lover of Ravenhill's plays, criticizes the playwright for his "unrealistic idea of character" which he considers as the most problematic side of *Shopping and Fucking*. Ravenhill responds to this criticism by saying that his characters are "the sum of their actions" and that he is a type of playwright who would allow "the actor to add to them [characters] and the audience to project onto them" (in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 131). It is precisely his stance as a playwright that his plays, while they carry the features of dramatic theatre, also refer to a postdramatic aesthetics. Giving the actor the opportunity to add to the characters they are playing and similarly giving the audience the chance to project onto the characters mirror Lehmann's desire that the text and the playwright do not have the supreme power in the theatrical event.

Structurally, the play revolves around the lives of five characters. As Caridad Svich points out, the play "presents snapshots of increasingly disconnected moments of human behavior … revolving around work and sex in which every moment can be reduced to a transaction" (82). The setting in Scene One is a flat - "once rather stylish, now entirely stripped bare" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 3). Such a setting would come as a hindrance to the audience's habit of using up their imagination when they first see the décor. In this sense, the play is in parallel to what Lehmann calls "non-hierarchical use of signs" (86). In a fully dramatic play, we find an "established hierarchy, at the top of which we find

language, diction and gesture and in which visual qualities such as the experience of an architectonic space – if they come into play at all – figure as subordinated aspects" (Lehmann 86). In *Shopping and Fucking*, the space and setting are intentionally designed bare and filthy with minimum décor which deconstruct the notion of the established hierarchy Lehmann refers to. Instead of a rich décor that completes the picture of the living space of the characters on behalf of the audience, other technological means such as neon signs are applied. As Amelia Howe Kritzer relates, in the first production of the play, the characters "move in a fast-paced and brightly lit urban landscape evoked in Max Stafford Clark's production through neon signs, video, and rhythm-driven techno music" (Kritzer 39). Moreover, it is known that the so called in-yer-face plays were produced in intimate, small spaces which were "generally ordinary places with a sense of familiarity if not comfort" (Kritzer 30), which is also valid for *Shopping and Fucking*. Ravenhill already confirms that he wrote the play for "a close-up audience of 65 people" (in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 127). Without doubt, staging the play in an intimate space carries an anti-dramatic quality. As Lehmann remarks: "In general it can be said that dramatic theatre has to prefer a 'medium' space. Tendentially dangerous to drama are the huge space and the very intimate space. In both cases, the structure of the *mirroring* is jeopardized" (150). In this respect, the play valorises the text equally with the décor, setting, music and technology, a technique seen in postdramatic productions.

Content-wise, the play begins with the appearance of Lulu and Robbie trying to get Mark to eat from a carton of takeaway food, which will gain importance throughout the play. At the very beginning of this scene, Mark vomits. Mark does not utter a word till this point and his vomiting is not pretentious since in most productions[8] he has this "vomiting material" already put into his mouth. Although vomiting may be a part of everyday life and although the audience may be prepared for such scenes because of the provocative title of the play, it is likely that they are surprised to watch this scene very early in the play. It is understood from Lulu's reaction that Mark has been vomiting recently: "Why does that alw …? / Darling – could you? Let's clean this mess up. Why does this happen?" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 3). In realistic theatre, this scene would most probably take place by Mark saying that he has nausea again and that he would vomit as he had done the day before since it may hinder the identification of the audience with the character. However, in-yer-face theatre shares a similar view with postdramatic theatre in that there should be a sort of "attack" on the spectator. As Lehmann points out: "While the dramatic body was the carrier of the agon, the postdramatic body offers the image of its *agony*. This prevents all representation, illustration and interpretation with the help of the body as a mere medium. The actor has to offer himself" (163, original emphasis). In this play and in the two other plays that will be examined in this

[8] The Process Theatre Co.'s version directed by DeWayne Morgan and another production directed by Sebastián Cruz Prieto on YouTube are among them.

study, most of the time the actor/actress will go beyond the confines of playing a role and offer his/her body as a medium by which agony is presented. However, vomiting is only a soft beginning in this play. As the play proceeds, more "physical" conditions will be seen.

In a dramatic work, it is by way of dialogues, monologues or soliloquies that the audience gets to know about the characters and their past. Traditionally speaking, "all explanations and digressions which hinder the flow of the dramatic action are to be abolished; drama is by definition a strict organisation of time in linear sequence" (Karschnia 2). In this play, most of the time, we learn the characters' past experiences by way of long narrative texts that remind short stories and that digress the flow of the dramatic action. In the middle of the characters' interaction with each other through dialogues, there comes a story-like narration which definitely causes a sort of deconcentration on the part of the audience and fragmentation on the part of the text. As Lehmann argues: "The principle of *narration* is an essential trait of postdramatic theatre; the theatre becomes the site of a narrative act. … One often feels as though one is witnessing not a scenic representation but a narration of the play presented" (109). In *Shopping and Fucking*, there are four main narratives related by Mark, Robbie, Lulu and Gary and these narratives ostensibly subvert the traditional plot structure which Ravenhill claims the play has.

The relationship between the three characters is revealed through the narration of Mark at the beginning of the play. Although Lulu and Robbie are adults; Mark says to them “Look … you two go to bed.” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 3), in a manner normally used while speaking with children. These are the clues at the very beginning of the play which make the audience question the relationship among the three. When Lulu and Robbie want Mark to tell them the “shopping story” , the use of present tense to refer to the past is interesting: “Robbie: We have good times don’t we? / Mark: Of course we have. I’m not saying that. / Robbie: Good times. The three of us. Parties. Falling into taxis, out of taxis. Bed. / Mark: That was years ago. That was the past” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 4). It is apparent that the two are speaking about the past in the present tense, at least till the point Mark reminds Robbie of the time. Although we can follow the plot in the traditional sense so far, this does not seem to be in parallel to the theatre of illusion which “ ‘mirrors’ a world in which language is reliable, in which the ‘real’ may lie buried but can be unearthed, in which the “self” is more or less at one with itself” (Hollinger 184). Language, the self and reality are the concepts that are put into question from the very second page on and their logocentricity will be questioned throughout the play.

Reality is constantly juxtaposed with fiction in this play and consumerism is one of the central themes that allows the playwright to question the blurring

boundaries between fact and fiction. Lehmann juxtaposes the idea of real and fictive and gives a clear-cut account on the subject:

> Without the real there is no staging. Representation and presence, mimetic play and performance, the represented realities and the process of representation itself: from this structural split the contemporary theatre has extracted a central element of the postdramatic paradigm – by radically thematizing it and by putting the real on equal footing with the fictive. It is not the occurrence of anything 'real' as such but its *self-reflexive* use that characterizes the aesthetic of postdramatic theatre. (103).

The "shopping story", for which Lulu and Robbie beg Mark to tell, is one of the accounts that puts the real on equal grounds with the fictive. Mark narrates how he has "bought" Lulu and Robbie from a fat guy in a supermarket: "It's summer. I'm in a supermarket. It's hot and I'm sweaty. Damp. And I'm watching this couple shopping. I'm watching you. And you're both smiling. You see me and you know you don't have a choice. No control…" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 5). Thus, Mark "buys" Lulu and Robbie for twenty pounds, by way of transaction. From that time on, Mark has been keeping a room for them: "And I've been keeping a room for you and I take you into this room. And there's food. And it's warm. And we live out our days fat and content and happy" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 5). This shopping story is significant in the play for two reasons. First,

it creates a “fictive cosmos”, though not a coherent one as Lehmann refers to, and this makes the audience feel that they are in a world of illusions. Secondly, however, since buying a couple from a supermarket is not an ordinary action, the audience once again questions the validity of this weird story. As Clare Wallace points out: “This embedded narrative functions as an abstract synopsis of all relationships in the play, and introduces a sense of self-conscious performativity at the outset, where identity is considered in terms of ownership of oneself or others” (Wallace 271). This “self-conscious performativity” is one of the points that problematizes the issue of representation and mimesis. The audience rightly thinks whether the characters on the stage are really representative of what they seem to represent and possess because, as Wallace maintains, “while the shopping story expresses a fantasy of objectification, it is significantly the means by which Lulu Robbie and Mark negotiate and perform identities in the alternative family unit as is emphasised by its revision and retelling at the end of the play as a type of coda” (271).

In addition to the theme of consumerism, addiction is another topic that is put into question. At the outset of the play, Ravenhill manages to raise the tension by making Mark say that he will soon leave Lulu and Robbie, against which Robbie reacts fervently. Robbie accuses Mark of being a heroin addict, which is true, and Mark explains that he has to go to a centre for treatment. Through these dialogues, we are also informed that Mark and Robbie have had

a relationship, that Mark has sold everything and he is now penniless. Lulu and Robbie react to Mark as if he is going to a holiday resort, not to a treatment centre. Lulu even exclaims that Mark should not come back and they will be fine without him: “You don’t own us. We exist. We’re people. We can get by. Go. Fuck right off. Go. GO” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 7). Although their relationship has been based on a transaction, at least on the appearance, Lulu makes such an exclamation since Mark has no money now. Saying that they exist and they are people, not goods taken from the supermarket, seems to be an existential discourse. However, as the play moves on, it is seen that such sentences do not signify their meaning. They are there just to be uttered.

In this play the setting is constantly shifting from one place to another. In this respect, the play shows an anti-Aristotelian structure. After Mark’s farewell scene, the setting shifts to an interview room with a man named Brian showing an illustrated plastic plate to Lulu. While he is showing the plate, he makes a speech about the Disney film, *The Lion King*, and relates how The Lion King was crushed by wild cows intentionally and how it was arranged by the uncle. Brian obviously wants Lulu to internalize this story “while Lulu anticipates its incidents by drawing from a cultural reservoir of which Brian seem completely ignorant” (Kritzer 42). The inclusion of such intertextual materials is also significant in terms of postdramatic theatre since for Lehmann “the postdramatic both embraces and challenges the fundamental differences (even

contradictions) between reality and art" (Woolf 40) and in this play by putting reality and art side by side, Ravenhill points to a similar tendency.

The audience and its responses are constantly challenged in the play. For example, the setting is ostensibly an interview room; Brian is the interviewer and Lulu is the interviewee. However, for a period of time that could be said long, there is no reference to the job being applied for. It is after some time that Brian gives the plastic plate to Lulu, who, as a "trained actress", is going to promote it in an advertisement – again a commercial activity. What Brian says to Lulu about the product summarizes the policy of global trademarks: "Our viewers, they have to believe that what we hold up to them is special. For the right sum – life is easier, richer, more fulfilling. And you have to believe that too" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 10). Consuming a product and believing that you are a "whole" special person when you do it is how the postmodern individual gets entrapped in the contemporary world. Brian seems to be the one who is one of the "experts" of capitalism and his relationship with Lulu is a "master-slave" type for the time being. Thus, Brian does not hesitate to force Lulu to take her jacket and blouse off to "assess [her] talents" and "do some acting", any acting speech will be acceptable (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 13). Lulu, with a clear reference to Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, says: "One day people will know what all this was for. All this suffering. There'll be no more mysteries. But until then we have to carry on living. We must work. That's all we can do. I'm leaving by myself

tomorrow …" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 13). This is the second intertextual reference after *The Lion King*. Ravenhill has a point here. As Alexander Karschnia states: "Postdramatic theatre is polylogical, intertextual and transgressive" (10). Certainly, such references make the play transgressive since they go beyond their literal meaning at the end of the play. The interview of Lulu by Brian ends in Brian's giving three hundred *E*, i.e. ecstasy pills as a pre-trial to see whether she has the ability to sell anything or not. Her acceptance of the offer will change the course of the action in the rest of the play.

While Ravenhill points to the reality versus illusion binary in the play, at the same time, he questions the value of the reality. Stabbing a person with a plastic fork is both satirical and refers to a virtual condition. Robbie is seen "wearing the uniform of a leading burger chain" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 14) and he has just been dismissed from the work because of a customer who could not make his mind regarding his hamburger choice. The customer stabs Robbie with a plastic fork, which is ironical in terms of the fraudulence of the fork. Once more, this story is related by way of narration. We do not see Robbie on the stage while being stabbed. Since there is no wound on his body, it remains a secret whether he tells the truth or not. However, upon Robbie's dismissal from the job without any wound, Lulu's answer is even more interesting: "So … no wound? So. Where's the money going to come from? Who's gonna pay for everything?" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 15).

Addiction in this play is not confined solely to drug abuse; it also contains personal relationships too. Mark has been released from the treatment centre on the condition that he will not form personal relationships and avoid using heroine since people "get dependent on people. Like … emotional dependencies. Which are just as addictive …" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 17). Although Mark and Robbie kiss each other twice, the third attempt of Robbie is rejected by Mark. In the treatment centre, he had a sexual intercourse with a boy based on a deal: "We did a deal. I paid him. We confined ourselves to the lavatory. It didn't mean anything … It wasn't a personal relation" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 19). He informs that he can have sexual relationship only if it becomes a transaction. In other words, sex should become "commercialized" for him because, then, he would learn to get rid of his emotional dependencies. This is a very pivotal point in the play due to the fact that from this moment on, the boundaries between reality and fiction will be blurred even more. When Robbie hands one ecstasy pill to Mark who does not believe that it is real, Robbie answers back: "Listen, if you, if this, this … planet is real …" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 17). Although he does not complete his sentence, he obviously means that if the pill is real, everything is real. Undoubtedly, Ravenhill is being ironical here by putting the reality of ecstasy pills and life on the same scale and thus destabilises the basic grounds of cultural ways of thinking (Carroll et al 5). While an *E* is there to be taken in order to avoid reality, it is here equalized with the real life.

Another important motif in the play is the ready-made meals. While at the beginning, Lulu insists Mark to eat them, later in Scene 3, she finds it hard to share them with Mark since “they’re done individually”. Although Mark is already relentless to eat and changes the subject, she insists on making the same explanation again and again: “I’ve only got enough for two … We’ve got really into the little boxes with the whole thing in it. One each. … They’re really not made for sharing. It’s difficult” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 20-21) are repetitive sentences that are used as foreshadowing ideas for the ending.

The use of slang words in the play is another technique that shocks the audience. Up to this point in the play, slang words such as “fuck, cunt, shit” or graphic sexual scenes like Robbie’s dropping his trousers to be kissed by Mark (and rejected) have been already shocking. However, it is from this scene on that both verbal and sexual “indecency”, increasing in number, gets even more shocking. Gary, who is a rent boy, has a role that is considerable in terms of two points: his perceptions about reality and sex. As he appears for the first time, he talks about virtual reality: “Course, any day now it’ll be virtual. … Couple of years’ time and we’ll not even meet. We’ll be like holograph things. We could look like whatever we wanted. And then we wouldn’t want to meet □cos we might not look like our holographs” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 22). This presupposition of Gary about a virtual future is supported by Mark’s finding him on the phone by way of liking his voice. Again, Mark wants sex based on

transaction so that “it won’t mean anything” and what he demands from Gary is “to lick your [Gary’s] arse” and then pay for it (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 25). In such a commercialized sexual environment, the distant sounds of coins clattering in the casino downstairs surely complete the picture. While this graphic scene of sexual intercourse is taking place with every single detail, Gary talks about a “big bloke”, a rich man with a big house, who wants to live with him. However, “when Mark emerges from rimming Gary, his mouth is covered in blood from the unhealed wounds inflicted on Gary previously” (Alderson 865). Gary’s outcry that he is not infected, his giving Mark champagne to rinse the blood out from his mouth, Mark’s claiming his money back because of the incomplete sexual attempt all are scandalizing enough for the audience. These really come as an “attack” on the spectator because such sexually graphic scenes pose problems in terms of the issue of representation. In other words, the audience, rather than establishing identification with the characters or with their assumed roles, is likely to begin questioning the representationality of the characters on the stage. As Sierz relates his experience of the play, Mark’s “rising with his mouth bloody after rimming Gary provoked groans” among the audience (*In-Yer-Face* 127). This, no doubt, shows Ravenhill’s skill to create a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre aesthetics by simultaneously conforming to a traditional plot structure on the one hand, and calling representation into question on the other hand. Such scenes should also be considered in terms of the text’s

hierarchical place within the production. The possibility of staging the play by remaining loyal to the text does not seem possible, at least culturally, for such scenes. At this point, the interpretation of these scenes will depend on the imagination of directors which calls the supremacy of the text into question. For example, during the first production by Max Stafford-Clark, the play opens with the song "Life's a bitch" (by Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones known as Nas) whose lyrics[9] ostensibly reflect the content of the play and ends with the song "Love is the sweetest thing" (by Ray Noble) and its lyrics point to the end[10].

The recurring scenes with blood also signify the juxtaposition of reality with fiction. In Scene 5, Lulu is seen to have blood on her face which has splashed her before. "What kind of planet is this when you can't even buy a bar of chocolate?" is the answer of Lulu to Robbie's questioning of the blood on her face. There is again the narration of a story: "Walking past and I think: I'd like a bar of chocolate. So I go in but I can't decide which one. There's so much choice. Too much. Which I think they do deliberately. I'm only partly aware … that an argument is forming at the counter. A bloke" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 28). As she goes on, it is understood that Lulu has witnessed the man killing the student girl behind the counter because of a frivolous matter and she did nothing but watched them. The thing is that while all this was happening, Lulu stole a bar

[9] Visualizing the realism of life in actuality / Fuck who's the baddest, a person's status depends on salary / And my mentality is money-oriented…Life's a bitch and then you die / That's why we get high … (http://rap.genius.com/Nas-lifes-a-bitch-lyrics)

[10] Love is the sweetest thing / What else on earth could ever bring / Such happiness to ev'rything / As Love's old story (http://www.songlyrics.com/ray-noble/love-is-the-sweetest-thing-lyrics/)

of chocolate: “She’s being attacked and I picked this up” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 30). Since she is now suffering from pangs of conscience, it will be Robbie who will sell the ecstasy pills that night promising to obey the rule that “he who sells shall not use” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 31).

Another narration will be related by Gary. He cannot stop himself from telling his past to Mark, who actually does not want to hear it. He makes an explanation as to why he is trying to stop him:

> 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 to 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. … (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 32-33).

However, in spite of all his tries to stop him, Gary narrates his past in order to explain his bleeding. It is his stepfather who forces him into a “violent” sexual relationship and causes his bleeding. He suddenly bursts into cry and explains how he desperately needs a true dad: “I want a dad. I want to be watched. All the time, someone watching me …” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 33). Although in this scene Gary and Mark seem to stand as oppositional figures, the former desiring to be “owned” by a father while the latter trying to get rid of all his addiction including his attachments to other people, actually they are in the same

condition since all these feelings and idealizations have been somehow induced to them leaving them unable to know what they are feeling. As Mark contemplates: “I used to know what I felt. I traded. I made money. Tic Tac. And when I made money I was happy, when I lost money I was unhappy. The things got complicated. But for so many years everything I’ve felt has been … chemically induced….” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 33). The heroin, coffee, cigarettes, microwaves and cathode rays, according to Mark, have been induced to them and now they cannot feel anything.

Bruises and bleeding go on acting the major role in Scene Seven which takes place in an acting and emergency room. Robbie sits bruised and bleeding in the face. In order to learn what has happened to Robbie, Lulu tries to sexually arouse him since she knows that in this world where sex regulates everything, he would not answer her questions under normal conditions. Thus, the narration of a new story starts. It is understood that in the bar, Robbie, after using ecstasy pills himself, has given the pills, the three hundred ecstasy pills, to the guys who have had no money at all. When he has only two pills left, the last guy demands more and begins hitting him. For the first time in the play, Robbie seems to decode the message of the world since he has felt amazing for his action. As a matter of fact, Robbie is likely to act as the authorial mouthpiece of Ravenhill:

> I was looking down on this planet. Spaceman over this earth. And 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 the suffering. And the wars. And the grab, grab, grab.
>
> And I think: Fuck Money. Fuck it. This selling. This buying. This system. Fuck the bitching world and let's be … beautiful. Beautiful. And happy … (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 39).

Outraged, Lulu does not hesitate to call Robbie "fucking fucker arsehole … shitsstabber…" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 33).

The narration of Gary's past follows Robbie's narration. Vulgar language and the sexual assaults of Gary by his stepfather told in every single detail mark the scene. Gary has informed the council about his stepfather and asked to "put him away". The woman's asking if the man is using a condom or not and Gary's answer that the only thing he uses is a bit of spit on his penis are both shocking and irritating for the audience. The woman seems to be concerned with only the infection side of the issue without thinking about Gary's psychology, which is actually not shocking any more in such a play. Gary is determined to be "protected" by the man with the big house that he has mentioned. He offers Mark to stay and help him with the household matters. Also, he, as the winner in the casino downstairs, asks Mark to go shopping with the money he has won so far. Thus, the shopping in this play does not finish with the shopping story but it is actualized.

In the relatively longer Scene Nine, Lulu and Robbie are seen with Brian in a rather suspenseful atmosphere. This scene is particularly marked by the glorification of art – a phenomenon which will be observed in the other two plays to be studied. It is very interesting to see Brian weeping while the three watch a video of a schoolboy, who is soon revealed to be Brian's son, playing a cello. Brian, who has been a rigid man forcing Lulu to take off her clothes and giving her the ecstasy pills to sell at the beginning of the play, is now crying since he is affected by the beauty of the music. Brian is even outraged by Robbie who brings him a toilet roll to wipe his nose after crying: "It is a tear. Little drop of pure emotion. Which requires a – ? … Handkerchief" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 45). Later, Robbie brings a handkerchief, a used one and he is scolded one more time. Soon, it becomes apparent that Brian actually has a handkerchief. In this scene, Brian is portrayed like the God trying to teach Lulu and Robbie their lessons. With many other religious connotations in his speech, Brain lets them, unsurprisingly, seven days to collect the money that equals the three hundred ecstasy pills. Thus, Brian at the outset of this very same scene, who has cried, now becomes the Brian similar to the one at the beginning of the play. As pointed out by Amelia Howe Kritzer, Brian's "ultimate transformation from tough gangster to avuncular preacher contributes to the disorientation and lazily anarchic quality of their environment rather than countering it with the cause-and-effect certainty he first seemed to represent" (40-41). His transformation is

likely to cause the audience suspect the other characters in the forthcoming scene.

Technology plays a major part in the play and this is also one of the points that indicates the play's affinity with a postdramatic aesthetics. Lulu and Robbie try to make money by telephone sex. Their talks, full of mechanical sexual details, overlap. Sex is not only commercialized but also made virtual in this scene. Lulu's question "Why are there so many sad people in the world?" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 52) reflects the atmosphere of this scene. Moreover, it is ironical that while Robbie seemed to achieve a sort of self-liberation while he was distributing the ecstasy pills free of charge, it is now seen that he actually caused the characters (himself, Lulu and Mark) "to become even more bound to the 'system' of buying and selling which will lead to Mark's sexual mutilation of Gary. The point surely is that 'freedom' is elusive; … there can be no individual escape, since individualism is a product of the system in the first place" (Alderson 866).

Global consumerism is touched upon when Gary and Mark are seen in a changing room at Harvey Nichols, one of the most expensive global trademarks. Gary "holds out a handful of credit cards as if they were playing cards" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 53) and asks Mark to pick any of them. Meanwhile, Mark gets erected and confesses that he has fallen in love with Gary. After kissing each other twice, Gary refuses further kisses saying that: "I'm not after love. I

want to be owned. I want someone to look after me. And I want him to fuck me. Really fuck me. Not like that, not like him. And, yeah, it'll hurt. But a good hurt" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 54), which is obviously impossible to get realized by Mark. It is at the end of this scene that Gary admits his age: he is only fourteen. At this age, he possesses various credit cards and what he needs is not the cards but love.

Similar to the effort made by Robbie to attain a sort of self-liberation, Lulu tries to react against the situation she has been put into. When the rings just stop, it is understood that Lulu, exhausted, has disconnected the telephone line to find peace at least for a few minutes. Soon it is clarified that one of the callers, while speaking on the phone with Lulu, is watching a video "of a woman, a student girl who's in the Seven-Eleven, working behind the counter" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 61). Lulu tries to get disconnected from this issue of phone sex by eating ready-made food which she insists Gary to eat too. However, Gary expresses how he hates such food: "it doesn't taste of anything … This is shit. / This? I wouldn't feed a fuckng paraplegic with cancer this shit" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 61-62). This scene brings Mark, Gary, Robbie and Lulu together. Envious of Gary, Robbie tries to irritate him. Soon they quarrel over if Mark loves Gary or not. In the meantime, Lulu's only effort is to protect the ready meals. Gary explains that actually Mark is not his type since he is too soft. As he talks about the firm guy he is imagining, Robbie interrupts him:

> 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 Enlightenments. The March of Socialism. But they all died ... we're all making up our own stories. Little stories. It comes out in different ways. But we've each got one (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 66).

Now, all the stories narrated so far in the play find a meaning by the intertextual reference of Robbie to François Lyotard's thoughts on the idea of postmodernity. As David Lane clarifies:

> In 1979 the postmodern philosopher François Lyotard articulated in *The Postmodern Condition* the inadequacies of such grand narratives as religion, the Enlightenment and a knowable history; Freeman argues that in a postmodern world, the result is the birth of a multiplicity of narratives. Our thirst for story is now quenched through the day-to-day narratisation of life through the media, television, film and a technological world that offers audiences the ability to narrate, engage and even live their own virtual performances (9-10).

Robbie will be quick to make up their stories and thus enhance a more virtual reality. He offers Gary to play a game for which he will pay. When Gary

changes his mind and retreats from playing, the four begin playing the game of "truth or dare". The first question goes to Mark by Lulu: "Who is the most famous person you've ever fucked?" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 69). He starts narrating the story: It was about 1984 or 85. Mark is in Tramps or Annabel's; he does not remember the place exactly. He goes to the toilet where he sees a woman, in a police uniform, watching him. While he is telling the story, he is careful about attracting the attention of his listeners; therefore he tries hard to conceal the name of the woman until the end to keep the others' curiosity. After telling all the details of this sexual intercourse in the toilet, at the end it is revealed that the woman is Fergie. Following this account, the turn is Gary's. He is going to tell the story, the pictures "in his head" and Robbie assures him that he will help him. As Robbie verbalizes the story in Gary's head, it becomes exactly the same shopping story of the trio; Mark, Robbie and Lulu. Just like Lulu and Robbie who have been sold, it is being imagined that Gary is sold from the fat man to Lulu and Robbie. Thus, we hear the same story for the second time in the play. However, when they arrive home, Gary, according to the story, is blindfolded. Although Mark tries to stop this game, Gary fervently rejects the idea. He is blindfolded and takes up the imagined stairs. His trousers are pulled down by Robbie. The hardcore sexuality is initiated. First, Gary "spits on his hand. Slowly he works the spit up Gary's arse … Robbie unzips his fly. Works spit on his penis. He penetrates. … He starts to fuck him. … Robbie pulls away. Mark goes

through the same routine" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 83). Mark soon hits Gary repeatedly because Gary wants Mark to pretend that he is his father, which Mark rejects. Robbie continues the attempts while Gary tells that his stepdad has always used knife instead of his penis. Although even Robbie tries to disagree with this violent offer, Gary is determined to finish this game: "When someone's paying, someone wants something and they're paying, then you do it Nothing right. Nothing wrong. It's a deal. So then you do it. I thought you were for real. Pretending, isn't it? Just a story" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 85). Mark requests Robbie and Lulu to leave them alone. When they exit, Gary begs Mark to finish what he desperately needs, sex by knife: "I'm sick and I'm never going to be well. … He's got no face in the story. But I want to put a face to him. Your face. … Do it and I'll say 'I love you'" (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 85). Gary's desperate desire for this experience undoubtedly reflects his quest for reality since "in an age in which reality tends to become more and more virtual, young people try to recover 'reality', above all the 'reality' of the body, by extreme forms of sex, violence and self-harm" (Broich 207). The scene ends with the implications that Mark has accepted the offer and taken the risk of killing Gary who has already wounded anal bleeding. As Ulrich Broich puts forth: "Apparently he is given this experience after the end of this scene, and we must assume that he dies from it – death as the ultimate experience of one's own body, of reality. (Fortunately, this was not shown on stage.)" (218). Actually, Gary's story is thus left open to

interpretation since “the play does not reveal its conclusion. The gap in dramatic action exposes an awkward desire for traditional resolution but an inability to represent such closure” (Kritzer 43). When this scene is considered from the viewpoint of the audience and its reaction, one should remember that, this play, as an example of “experiential” theatre, offers a sort of live experience in which “anything can happen. The paradox is that while the audience is watching in perfect safety, it feels as if it is in danger (Sierz, “Still In-Yer-Face?” 19). It is definitely the paradoxically presented body of Gary which offers a staging that goes beyond the limitations of dramatic theatre reminding us of Lehmann’s claim that “The dramatic process occurred *between* the bodies; the postdramatic process occurs *with/on/to* the body” (163, original emphasis).

The last scene opens with Brian the God preaching again. Undoubtedly, Brian “serves also as a kind of choral figure in the text, commenting on the play’s themes and actions in each of his appearances” (Svich 83). This time the lesson he is giving to Lulu and Robbie is about money: “Civilisation is money. Money is civilisation. And civilisation – how did we get here? By war, by struggle, kill or to be killed. And money – it’s the same thing, you understand? The getting is cruel, is hard, the having is civilisation. Then we are civilised” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 87). He makes Lulu and Robbie repeat “money is civilisation”. After being ensured that they have understood the message, he returns the money that they have earned through great hardships. His

explanation is simple: “And now I can answer you. I answer. Because you have learnt. The lesson has been learnt you see. You understand this (*Indicates the money*.) and you are civilised. And so – I return it” (Ravenhill, *Shopping* 88, original emphasis).

The scene proceeds to the ending with a dreamlike story narrated by Mark. It is 3000 AD, the future. The Earth has died because of the ozone, the bombs and a meteorite. Thanks to a group of people who have jumped ship, humanity has survived. Mark is in the market and he is looking at a mutant. Some of the mutants are very ugly and twisted in shape because of the radiation but the one Mark is looking at is pretty with tanned skin, blond hair and “three-foot long penis”. The same shopping story is narrated for the third time in the play. He buys the mutant by transaction but he hates him and will kill him. He takes the mutant home and says that he is freeing the mutant. The reaction of the mutant is crucial: “he starts to cry. … He says – well, he telepathises into my mind – he doesn’t speak our language – he tells me: Please. I’ll die. … 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, *Shopping* 90).

The play ends with the three friends’ feeding each other with the ready-made meal. Now Lulu shares the meal and even feeds Mark. Love seems to be the victorious part in its war with consumerism and addiction. The ending

suggests that “Ravenhill at heart seems to be making a plea for a world in which love can transcend the violence and hatred of a society that has been run into the ground by the consumerist values of a wayward class” (Svich 82). As Ravenhill himself expresses: “There is a little bit of optimism at the end. … I just wanted to suggest that they [Mark, Lulu and Robbie] might be able to sort things out” (in Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 134).

Dramatically speaking, the play is a manifestation of Ravenhill’s talent to create tension and resolve it. As Caridad Svich very well summarizes:

> Ravenhill’s skill in creating moments of dramatic tension and sustaining them for long periods of time is admirable …. Each scene effectively ‘tops’ the other, as we see: a) Lulu undress to get her job; b) Robbie drop his trousers to get Mark’s attention; c) Mark lick Gary’s ass only to find blood on his mouth; d) Lulu blood-stained from witnessing a violent drug-store burglary, Robbie bruised and bleeding from a club altercation; e) Robbie attacks Gary only to have Mark attack him, etc. … *Shopping and Fucking* places the audience as voyeur to the *outré* actions presented in the piece. In an intimate space, there is no question as to the power of the graphic nature of the physical interactions presented by Ravenhill on stage (83).

In this respect, when the plot of *Shopping and Fucking* is taken into consideration, Ravenhill has a traditional style though with fragmentary narrations. The play has a climax towards the very end (the scene when Gary is blindfolded) and each scene, though disconnected, has their own climax, which are brought together and resolved at the end. Although this is not the plot structure Aristotle advocates for, it is still marked by belonging to dramatic theatre as discussed in the theoretical background chapter. The question that must be asked at this point is that how does Ravenhill succeed in portraying this postmodern world with a plot structure that contains a climax and resolution? Why does Ravenhill write in traditional style while he is exploiting the boundaries of content? Can it be claimed that the form and content of *Shopping and Fucking* have an ambivalent relationship?

All these questions have their answers when they are replied in terms of the aesthetics and rubric of postdramatic theatre. It is true that *Shopping and Fucking* has a well-structured plot, definable characters, structured time and space as well as understandable dialogues and monologues, all of which characterize dramatic theatre. However, the play certainly problematizes such major points as its potential to render mimesis possible, the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, text's place/validity in the theatrical production and the "attack" on the spectator. David Lane's ideas on the place of text in contemporary theatre indicate a similarity with the theatre of Ravenhill:

> Even across many diverse European forms of theatre, the use of paradigmatic dramatic features such as plot, imitative action, characters facing dilemmas and the resolution of conflicts to reach some sort of goal or super-objective has persisted. These elements remain present even in theatre that has moved increasingly away from a text-based culture; German academic Hans-Thies Lehmann's influential study *Postdramatic Theatre* … finds evidence of theatre's literary legacy even through 'new' forms of theatre which have rejected text as the dominant mode of discourse (Lane 8).

In conclusion, in *Shopping and Fucking*, Ravenhill does employ strategies which give him the opportunity to enrich his theatrical "space" as a playwright. While he is fully interested in plot structure and characterization, the play, nevertheless, seems to be lacking "a naturalistic plot and well-rounded characters, but its strength is density of metaphor and theatrical flair" (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 130). The play is also marked by a juxtapositional approach to fact and illusion, de-hierarchal setting, sexual and violent scenes that problematize mimetic representation, the reduced centrality of the text within the theatrical production and the "experiential" atmosphere that forces the audience question the validity of the play, all of which suffice to claim that Ravenhill in this play demonstrates a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre aesthetics.

CHAPTER 4

FAUST IS DEAD

Faust is Dead is Ravenhill's second play written in 1996 and first produced by Actors' Touring Company for a national tour in the same year. The play was an outcome of a week's workshop and as Ravenhill informs, it continued to develop during rehearsals and a further workshop (*Plays: 1* 95). The revised version was printed in 1998. Directed firstly by Nick Philippou in 1997 and by Allan Hendrick in 1998, *Faust is Dead* can be regarded as a play which takes the theme of reality versus illusion in *Shopping and Fucking* and develops and comments on it further.

Although the title of the play may not gain a similar attention like the previous play, the content is surely as provoking as *Shopping and Fucking*. The title is nevertheless successful in capturing the audience who is already knowledgeable about the Faust[11] myth by suggesting that the protagonist of that myth is dead. Those who know Ravenhill and the Faust myth would immediately deduce that the play will be concerned with the theme of knowledge, which is equalized to technology in our times. As Inez Hedges elaborates, "the story of Faust has played the role of a constitutive myth, one that prescribes, as well as

[11] Originally, Faust is a medieval German myth in which Faust, the protagonist, is a scholar and makes a pact with the Devil's agent, Mephistopheles, to acquire unlimited knowledge and magic powers. In return, he sacrifices his soul. The legend has been an inspiratory source in literature (Ousby 262). Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604) and Goethe's *Faust* (1808) are the most popular ones which are directly based on the Faust legend.

describes, a particular kind of experience and a way of relating to the world … the Faust myth still has the power to shape our reality rather than just to explain it" (7). Utilizing the technique of rewriting, Ravenhill surely adapts the well-known European myth into the contemporary times. "Using his characteristic mix of postmodern ideas and traditional morality, Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* is a good example of the decade's freedom in turning old myths into new sources of meaning" (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 138). However it should be pointed out that while Ravenhill is exploring this old myth, he does not primarily aim at deconstructing the original plot by turning his attention solely on the plot; he rather concentrates on the Faust and Mephistopheles binaries as an inspirational point of departure and creates his two central characters on this basis.

While Ravenhill attempts to create a new meaning out of a well-known story, he maintains his sensitivity towards the subject of globalisation and consumerism and continues to shed light on what happens to countries and societies when they turn from "a nation of shopkeepers into a nation of shoppers" (Rebellato, Introduction x). Undoubtedly, his tone in this play is ironical as well. As Rebellato remarks: "Ravenhill is, both in the plays and in interviews, attracted by the playfulness of paradoxes, and he frequently employs the ironies that they engender. … Ravenhill's irony is pointed, angry. … he offers us ways of experiencing an alternative" (Introduction xvi-xvii). While Ravenhill is providing an alternative, he does this with the aim of attaining the

truth. In order to achieve this, Ravenhill focusses his attention on the idea of virtuality versus reality: “I want […] to capture the truth of this new world we live in […]. To write about the virtual markets of images and information spinning around us and threatening to drag us into perpetual postmodern giddiness. To write about the hypocrisy of our calls for universal freedom and democracy as we destroy the world for profit” (“A Touch”). Although the alternative Ravenhill is proposing is a bleak one, he attempts to urge the audience not only to philosophize upon this bleakness itself but also to seek ways for a radical change. As might be expected, such a dark ironical presentation does not appeal to everyone. Not surprisingly, at the end of the first production, there were spectators who were not prepared to contemplate on any change or those who found the play too dark or controversial as well as those who said that “That’s like no *Faust* I’ve ever seen” (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 138). Nevertheless, the play attracted the attention it deserves from the audience of various age groups.

As a playwright who is granted to possess “the natural power to shock and connect with an audience” (Svich 83), Ravenhill in *Faust is Dead* employs similar strategies as in *Shopping and Fucking* in order to establish a connection with the audience. It should be remembered that just like *Shopping and Fucking,* this play has been investigated as an illustrative example of in-yer-face theatre. Undoubtedly, the play is in tune with the characteristics of in-yer-face theatre which is:

> experiential theatre, and it works because it exploits two of the special characteristics of the medium: first, because it's a live experience, anything can happen. The paradox is that while the audience is watching in perfect safety, it feels as if it is in danger. Second, theatre in Britain is technically uncensored, so everything is allowed. You can stage things that would be impossible to show on television or in the cinema – this gives writers the chance to explore the darkest sides of the human psyche without compromise (Sierz, "Still In-Yer-Face?" 19).

Faust is Dead undeniably presents us an experience which seems to be a live one since it demonstrates extreme forms of violence and sexuality. As in the previous play examined in this study, Ravenhill, in Lehmann's term, "attacks on" (ix) the spectators by graphic scenes of sexual interaction and violence which are constantly juxtaposed with the idea of hyperreality. In this respect, when considered in terms of its plot, the play carries dramatic qualities within its limitations of in-yer-face norms. Although Aleks Sierz claims that in-yer-face playwrights were in rebellion against "the classic well-made play, and against more recent literary traditions" and they "preferred to write work which doesn't finish with a climax in the 'right' place, doesn't have a clear message, and doesn't obey the dictates of naturalism" and that these writers "both use naturalism and aim to go beyond its confines" (Sierz, "Still In-Yer-Face?" 19-20),

nevertheless, these characteristics still encapsulate what Lehmann claims about the “dramatic cosmos” (22) such plays are likely to maintain. Ravenhill surely follows a similar structure in this play. However, when elaborated with regard to its portrayal of the virtual reality and its techniques to stage the hyperreal, the play goes beyond the confines of dramatic theatre and entails postdramatic qualities. As David Barnett clarifies in his article:

> if a dramatist represents a simulation as a material reality without due dramaturgical scepticism, then the theatre is merely restating conditions it might be better minded to question. The postdramatic proposes a theatre beyond representation, in which the limitations of representation are held in check by dramaturgies and performance practices that seek to present material rather than to posit a direct, representational relationship between the stage and the outside world (“When” 15).

Without doubt, the primary concern of Ravenhill in *Faust is Dead* is to present and question the idea of virtual reality. By putting the real on the same plane with the fictive by way of equalization and self-reflection of them both (Lehmann 103), Ravenhill questions concepts like simulation, virtual reality and hyperreality which inevitably contradict the idea of mimesis. As Bernd Stegemann verifies:

> The driving force of life becomes simulation — one lives in quotes, borrowed identities, coincidental arrangements, and random self-attributions. The master narratives — which came in the form of a superstructure, an ideology, paradigm, or worldview, and which ordered arbitrariness into describable and assessable events – are gone. Mimesis is no longer necessary, since the world is already a hall of mirrors full of potential interpretation of itself. Simulation takes the place of narration (13-14).

It is an undeniable fact that the issue of hyperreality in the play poses a challenge to a mimetic representation and this removes the play from the dramatic aesthetics. When it is remembered that "Lehmann's notion of hypernaturalism as a characteristic of many postdramatic theatre productions is heavily indebted to Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal" (Wessendorf), the play's playful presentation of the hyperreal becomes even more crucial. Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre undoubtedly owes much to Baudrillard in terms of its treatment of the issue of mimesis and hyperreality. Therefore it would be proper to dwell briefly upon Baudrillard's ideas on the real and hyperreal. Baudrillard has focussed his attention on the cultural and sociological conditions of the contemporary era including the "consumer, media and high tech society, the mutating roles of art and aesthetics, fundamental changes in politics, culture and human beings; and the impact of media,

information and cybernetic technologies in the creation of a qualitatively different social order...” (Kellner). Impressed by what Marx and the Frankfurt School thinkers talked about capitalism and cultural impositions, Baudrillard further claims that “commodities, media and technologies provide a universe of illusion and fantasy in which individuals become overpowered by consumer values, media ideologies and role models and seductive technologies like computers which provide world of cyberspace” (Kellner). According to Baudrillard, there are three orders of simulation: In the first order, the representation of the real is obviously an artificial representation such as a novel or painting. In the second-order, simulation blurs the boundaries between reality and representation; the thing becomes as real as the real. However, in the third order, no blurring between reality and representation goes on. On the contrary, there is a detachment from reality and representation which Baudrillard calls the hyperreal. It is actually free from the notions of mimesis and representation like the virtual reality computer code. Thus, in the first and second order of simulation, the real still exists. Baudrillard is actually concerned with the third order of simulation since it generates hyperreality, that is, a world without a real origin (Lane R. 86-89). He gives Disneyland as an example. He contends that Disneyland manages “to conceal the fact that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America, which is Disneyland...Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding

it are no longer real, but the order of the hyperreal and of simulation" (Baudrillard 25).

Ravenhill's incorporation of Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreal into the play carries a relevant point with postdramatic theatre. It is interesting to note that "Lehmann uses Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal to explain the paradoxical return of naturalistic elements in postdramatic theatre" (Wessendorf). Yet, in spite of this paradox, the play's use of new media as well as its scenes of graphic violence and sex problematize the dramatic qualities and mimetic representation. As Campbell clarifies:

> In fact, drama is of great significance to many postdramatic works as they struggle with the efficacy, validity, and necessity of representation and narrative as it relates to contemporary culture and art. … The postdramatic reflects and expresses the diminishing ability of the unified narrative form of drama to compel an audience into an illusion of a world (55).

The co-emergence of the dramatic and the postdramatic in *Faust is Dead* is also in line with what Brandon Woolf claims about the (im)possibility of representing the real in the globalised world:

> Postdramatic theatre … 'obliquely' engages the political *real*ities of our 'mediatised and globalised' world by refusing to 'represent' a *real*ity which is no longer *real*ly representable as drama.

> Simultaneously, the postdramatic is a theatre that ensures it 'is in no way translatable or re-translatable into the logic, syntax, and terminology' of the 'real' world by embracing, foregrounding, insisting on its 'aesthetic' or 'representational' status… (43-44, original emphasis).

This paradoxical stance to the issue of representation in postdramatic theatre "which brings us closer to the 'real' … no longer by means of 'dramatic' representation, but by mediated 'reflection'" (Woolf 40) is of paramount importance in explaining the blending of the dramatic and postdramatic in *Faust is Dead.* The fusion of the dramatic and postdramatic makes the play contain a plot structure on the one hand and a theatrical technique which makes use of new media to present a virtual reality and blur the boundaries between fact and fiction on the other hand. In this respect, in this play, rather than destroying the dramatic plot, Ravenhill manages to reduce its centrality. As Karen Jürs-Munby maintains in her recent article regarding the plot: "It should be obvious by now that theatre 'beyond drama', i.e., beyond the imitation of a dramatic plot in a fictional world, is not by definition theatre beyond the use of text. Rather, if text is used, postdramatic theatre indicates new possible relationships between written texts and 'performance texts'" (*The Resistant* 47). Therefore, while surveying the plot structure, it will be proper to demonstrate how Ravenhill creates a tension

between the dramatic and postdramatic aesthetics as well as the text's position in the overall mise-en-scène.

Composed of nineteen scenes, *Faust is Dead* has a definite setting: It takes place in the West Coast of America in the present day. In this respect, it has a setting that may help the audience to get engaged in a fictive cosmos. Yet, in the playtext, there is hardly any stage direction. By this way, the play allows directors (even the readers who would solely read the play) the freedom to create the mise-en-scène they have imagined. Thus, Ravenhill seems to be deconstructing the firmly-rooted dominance of British playwrights and their text over the stage production. In other words, text is not the "regulating principle but [it is] merely one possible variant of theatrical art" (Lehmann 22) which is a considerable matter with regard to postdramatic paradigm. The play consists of three definable characters named Alain, Pete and Donny and a Chorus. As Clare Wallace, like many other critics such as Aleks Sierz, interprets: "the figure of Alain is an all too obvious a reanimated version of Michel Foucault using ideas adapted, primarily, from Jean Baudrillard's work" (274). Apart from Foucault and Baudrillard, the play also "breaths Fukuyama's ideas" (De Vos 652) as well due to an obvious connection between Alain's lectures on the death of man and history and Fukuyama's book titled *The End of History and the Last Man*.

Just like in *Shopping and Fucking, Faust is Dead* encompasses story-like narratives. The Chorus is one of those who relates stories. The function of the Chorus in the play is significant. With its appearance for six times, the Chorus narrates six stories which both provide background information about the events and comment on them and in this way helps the audience follow the play easily. Although it appears only for six times, it has almost equal weight with the other characters in the play. In this respect, the function of the Chorus in this play supports Aristotle who believes that "one should handle the chorus as one of the actors; it should be part of the whole and should contribute to the performance" (30). However, the Chorus in this playtext does not make use of music[12]; it functions as an outer narrator which fragments the flow of events. When considered in terms of postdramatic theatre, the Chorus in this play serves to enable the audience to hear voices other than that of the central characters, a point elaborated by Lehmann, too: "[O]ften postdramatic theatre does not so much aim to make us hear the one voice of the one subject but rather realizes a *dissemination* of voices, which incidentally is by no means exclusively tied to electronically or otherwise 'technically' arranged fragmentations" (148). The Chorus in this play surely functions as a technically and theatrically arranged fragmentation.

[12] Unlike Ravenhill's other plays, *Faust is Dead* has no staged version issued on the Internet or in You Tube.

The play begins with the Chorus declaring that it could not sleep a few years ago (during its childhood) because of all the bad things going on all over the world. After its mother's soothing and promising that the world would be a better place, the Chorus pretended that it slept. Following such an introduction, the Chorus told the audience how terrible the state of the current world was in a manner reminiscent of Blake's poetry.

Apart from cross-references to Foucault and Baudrillard, *Faust is Dead* also refers to the names of some celebrities, alive or dead. For instance, after the exit of the Chorus, the second scene brings us to a TV show. Alain, a famous philosopher and the author of the book titled *The Death of Man and the End of History,* is presented by David Letterman, an American TV comedian who really exists. At this very beginning of the play, a comic effect is created by Letterman who, in an attempt to refute Alain's views about the death of man, says that he feels pretty alive. He repeats it by saying that Alain seems pretty much alive, too. In the same show also appears Madonna. Madonna is asked if she has read the recent book by Alain and clearly she has not read the book but she has read his previous book on sexuality, to no one's surprise. The book on sexuality verifies that Ravenhill has been inspired by the French thinker Michel Foucault in creating the character Alain and the book is clearly a reference to Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. At this point in the play, in addition to the references to the live celebrities, what is striking is the incorporation of digital

media on the stage. If a director prefers staging this scene via televised screen instead of live performers (and that is the implication in the playtext), then the scene will carry a postdramatic attitude in reflecting the audience's changed mode of perception caused by a flux of digital technologies in contemporary times. As Lehmann incessantly highlights in his book: "the mode of perception in theatre cannot be separated from the existence of theatre in a world of media which massively shapes all perception" (185) and in *Faust is Dead*, Ravenhill seems to be fully aware of the fact that the audience can be made to think not only via traditional methods of dramaturgy but also by using new technologies.

As it has been mentioned, the play is also marked by its fragmentary narrations which are in tune with what Lehmann says about the popularity of narration in postdramatic theatre: "Lost in the world of media, narration finds a new site in theatre" (109). Following the Chorus, the play presents Alain speaking alone on the stage and telling a narrative just like the Chorus. Alain tells the reasons why he has left France for USA. Since there is no stage direction or a theatrical hint, we cannot know whether he establishes a direct eye contact with spectators and is speaking to them or not. In this respect, the audience is left to choose whether to believe Alain or not, which is in parallel to what Lehmann says about the choice left to the spectators:

> If the principle of the one dramatic action is abandoned, this is done in the name of the attempt to create events in which there

> remains a sphere of choice and decision for the spectators; they decide which of the simultaneously presented events they want to engage with but at the same time feel the frustration of realizing the exclusive and *limiting character of this freedom* (88, original emphasis).

Just like in *Shopping and Fucking* in which characters narrate their past, Alain narrates his background: He has quitted his job at university upon receiving a warning. One day, he attended a meeting with the head of the department and a potential Japanese sponsor for the department. The sponsor asked him what he had been thinking about the world recently and Alain said that he was thinking about an example considering a Japanese businessman. At this point, a new narrative story, in other words, narration-within-narration, is related by Alain as follows: “In 1981 a Dutch woman was on business in Tokyo, when she met a Japanese businessman. He invited her to join him for a meal. She read him some of her poetry. While she was reading he shot her. Several times. He then chopped her up, put her in his bowl and ate her” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 99). This story irritated the sponsor and after receiving a warning from the university, Alain decided to quit his job “to live a little” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 99). This narrative story in the form of a monologue followed by the introduction of the Chorus and the TV show deconstructs the dramatic structure and signifies the fact that “a

simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving is replacing the linear-successive" (Lehmann 16).

The scarcity of details about the setting and stage directions is in line with what Lehmann calls "playing with the density of signs". As explicated by Lehmann, in postdramatic theatre, density of signs is of crucial importance and "it becomes a rule to violate the conventionalized rule and the more or less established *norm of sign density*. There is either too much or too little. In relation to the time, to the space or to the importance of the matter, the viewer perceives a repletion or conversely a noticeable dilution of signs" (89). In this play, by minimum use of stage directions, signs are diluted in number. When Pete enters the stage in Scene 4, he is seen with Alain in a "tatty apartment", which is the only detail about the place the scene is set. Although Pete has brought Alain to his house, he is not knowledgeable about him. He believes that Alain has arrived there because he is a producer and will soon arrange an agreement between a singer named Stevie and a band. Soon Pete begins singing a song which contains technological terms: "Got a killer in my VCR / Killer in my ROM / Killer on the cable news / Killer in the floss I use / Killer in the floss / Killer in the floss / Killer in the floss"[13] (Ravenhill, *Faust* 100). The lyrics and function of the song is crucial since, for Lehmann "The consistent tendency towards a musicalization (not only of language) is an important chapter of the sign usage in

[13] VCR is the abbreviation of Video Cassette Recorder while ROM of Read Only Memory. As for floss, it means free, open software.

postdramatic theatre" (91). In the midst of such explicit references to technology, Pete kisses Alain all of a sudden. He offers Alain to stay at his home and expresses that he likes his company because Alain is different. As a matter of fact, Pete wants him to stay since he believes him to be a remarkable producer. So far, there is no dialogue between the two except for the kissing. Then Alain begins to speak in French and explains to Pete why he is in America now: "Because in America / and only in / America, am I truly at home. / For me, and for so many children of this twentieth century, / it is only in America that we really believe that we are alive, / that we are living within in our own century" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 101). Although these sentences are written in English in the play script, it is most probable that they are uttered in French on the stage since in the script, it is written that he is speaking in French. Alain's speaking in French is crucial with regard to postdramatic aesthetics since the audience is dazzled by the "simultaneity of signs" when "language sounds are simultaneously presented on stage so that one can only partially understand them, especially when different languages are being used" (Lehmann 87). The use of a foreign language also points to the fact that "the textual basis of postdramatic theatre is only a small part of the phenomenon. The words themselves, one of the dominant elements of the dramatic theatre, become just another element in a theatrical mode that militates against hierarchies in performance" (Barnett, "When" 16).

The de-hierarchization of theatrical signs is also manifest by the use of technological means, particularly the constant use of a camcorder by Pete, because of which the plot is decentred and the attention is focussed on the camcorder. Pete is a boy who is addicted to his camcorder and is living his life according to the third order of simulation. When Alain begins speaking, Pete, excited, interrupts him to fetch his camcorder and record what Alain is saying. Alain goes on talking in French: “In Europe, we are ghosts, trapped in a museum, with the lights out and the last visitor long gone. / And so I am going to America” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 101). By this confession, it becomes clear that Alain has been feeling somehow confined in Europe, “trapped in a museum”. Whether Alain finds freedom in America is left unanswered at the moment. More importantly, Alain’s philosophical declarations about how he feels free in America can be felt and understood only via a camcorder by Pete. As observed by Clare Wallace:

> Similar to Mark in *Shopping and Fucking*, Pete is happy only when experience can be mediated and consumed under restricted conditions, and preferably filtered through convenient commodities. In the world of consumer hyperreality, the word ‘real’ has lost its meaning (272).

Actually, throughout the play, Pete records almost everything because he cannot figure out the events unless they are recorded. This reflects the

individual's overdependence on the idea of the hyperreal. In this scene, if the things that are recorded by Pete's camcorder are also reflected on the stage via a televised screen (most probably such would be the preference of many directors), the stage will be removed from a dramatic mise-en-scène and come closer to a postdramatic aesthetic due to an inevitable turn, on the part of the audience, from flowing the narration to construction of meaning out of visual material. As Lehmann clarifies:

> [T]he perception of theatre no longer simply prepares for a 'bombardment' of the sensory apparatus with moving images but … activates the dynamic capacity of the gaze to produce processes, combinations and rhythms on the basis of the data provided by the stage. … In this way, postdramatic theatre effects a displacement of theatrical perception – for many provocative, incomprehensible, or boring – turning from abandoning oneself to the flow of a narration towards a constructing and constructive coproducing of the total audio-visual complex of the theatre (157).

Giving direct references to living or dead celebrities is, as it has been mentioned, another notable strategy that does away with the idea of illusion of reality. When the Chorus arrives for the second time it relates a shorter narrative compared to the first one. This time, it talks about Stevie who, according to the

Chorus, resembles Kurt, an ostensible reference to the singer Kurt Cobain[14]. The Chorus believes that the spirit of Kurt is coming back through Stevie. Although it is soon realized that Alain has nothing to do with Stevie and that he is no producer, the reference to Kurt here is likely to stand as a foreshadowing idea pointing to a potential suicide in the play.

That the play has a structured and definite time is another characteristics showing that Ravenhill also makes use of techniques of dramatic theatre. Till this point in the play, it is known that one day has passed as Scene 6 opens in "the next morning". Pete offers Alain to eat junkfood breakfast, typical in a Ravenhill play. They are now speaking in English. Being a philosopher, Alain asks Pete to contemplate on an example which resembles the story he has told to the Japanese sponsor: A man meets a woman and takes her to home and they make love. She asks him which part of her he finds the most arousing. He replies he finds her eyes the most attractive part of her. Next morning, the man gets up by the ringing of the doorbell. A mailman comes with a parcel. He takes the parcel which has the woman's smell. The man opens the box which contains, to his great surprise, the woman's eyes. The woman had cut out her eyes and sent them to the man. This is the story Alain wants Pete to consider with a question: "Who was the seducer and who was the seduced?" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 105). This example and question will also gain meaning at the end of the

[14] Kurt Cobain was an American musician, song composer and the singer in the group Nirvana during 1980s. Because of heroin addiction and severe depression, he committed suicide in 1994 at the age of twenty-seven.

play. Before deciding on the answer, Alain wants to kiss Pete which is rejected. Pete confesses that he would have sex with a man only to improve his own career and Alain is clearly not that sort of man to further Pete's career. Yet, soon Pete wants Alain to stay but there will be a deal: no kissing. Just like in *Shopping and Fucking,* the relationship between the two is now based on a transaction. Furthermore, the deal can also be taken as a direct allusion to the Faust myth in which the story of Faust and Mephistopheles is based on a deal[15]. However, the deal between Alain and Pete, just like in the myth, will be soon broken.

Various allusions to the filth of technology in the contemporary world function to emphasize the way the characters in this play lead their lives. In a dystopian way, the Chorus visualises that the city is blowing apart. The window of a store is smashed by a man. The Chorus steals a latest model VCR from the store. Its mother gets angry not because it has stolen something but because it has stolen a VCR instead of food. Its reply to the mother is of vital importance within the play: "Momma, what is the point of having food in the house when you have nothing to watch while you are eating?" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 107). As a matter of fact, this question constitutes the core idea about how our lives are shaped,

[15] As it has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Faust is Dead is based on the Faust myth. In this respect, one should come up with this question: Who is the devil and who is Faust in this story? Out of many interpretations, the soundest one seems to belong to Laurens De Vos who believes that neither Alain nor Pete stand for Faust or Mephistopheles. She argues that "With his software programs, Bill (Gates) has sneaked in every home, organising and directing other people's lives. Both Alain, Pete, and other characters, after all, are under the spell of the virtualisation of reality and media-propagated icons. … the devil has been stripped of his metaphysical allures, disguised and tempting us with his virtual presence" (De Vos 653-654).

manipulated and even governed by simulation. In the same manner, it will be seen that Alain, Pete and Donny seem to lead their lives conforming to the hegemonic rules of technology.

The Chorus, as an outer narrator, is affirmed by Pete who repeats what the Chorus has just told regarding the boy stealing a VCR. Thus, just like Alain who has spoken by himself at the beginning of the play, Pete informs the audience that he has recorded all the words spoken by the Chorus. Whether he is telling this directly to the audience or not is unknown. This, naturally, interrupts the concentration of the audience who has just begun to focus his attention on the plot. As the play proceeds, more details are revealed about Pete. Alain is seen with blood on his face speaking again in French and telling the same story about the Dutch woman who has been eaten up. Pete tries to interrupt him to understand who has attacked him: “Please. I don’t get it. I’m not good at the whole metaphor thing. / So you have to … the blood is real” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 108). Alain has been attacked by a guy working for a man named Bill, who is revealed to be Pete’s father. Bill is the head of a worldwide computer company, an apparent reference to Bill Gates. It becomes clear that Pete has destroyed his father’s computer software and Bill is after his son because he will definitely earn millions and the real copy of the disc of that computer programme is in Pete’s hands. However, the man has mistakenly attacked Alain saying “This one is for Bill” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 109). Pete, in a panic, says that they are going to

leave this place since Bill will again attack them. Showing the disc to Alain, he explains the computer programme named chaos:

> Guy who attacked you was looking for this.
>
> This is chaos. Only copy in the world.
>
> See, my dad's seen the future and he knows how to give his product the lead for like centuries into the new millennium.
>
> Chaos is the answer.
>
> My dad sets up his team. Hundreds of guys looking for that nudge into chaos.
>
> And one day, they are there. It's ready to be released on to the market.
>
> Except I hate my dad so bad and I download a virus in the chaos programme.
>
> Total meltdown.
>
> ...
>
> Because my dead wants to be everywhere. His software in every home, on every desk. Bill, Bill, Bill. Like God, God, God. (Ravenhill, *Faust* 110-111).

In an attempt to escape from Bill, Alain and Pete drive through the city and arrive in a desert. Pete wants to learn about Alain's background. After a long pause, Alain replies: "I want to fuck you. … I need to fuck you. Or you fuck

me" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 111). Pete accepts the offer and takes it as a deal. Believing that Alain is attracted to him, Pete makes a speech about the disc:

> I'm gonna be rich. Is that what you're thinking?
>
> See, time will pass and my dad will need this [*disc*] so bad
>
> and then I'm gonna offer it back for a sum so vast.
>
> And I'm gonna buy so many totally real experiences.
>
> I'm gonna keep the peace in Bosnia. I'm gonna take
>
> Saddam Hussein out for a pizza. I'm gonna shoot pool with
>
> the Pope and have Boris Yeltsin show me his collection of
>
> baseball stickers (Ravenhill, *Faust* 112).

The disc Pete possesses leads him to imagine that he is going to "buy" experiences which he has desired. As put forth by Laurens De Vos:

> The experiences with world celebrities that Pete wants to buy should give him the illusion of being somebody in a world of sliding identities. In a world in which it is no longer clear who is Faust and who is the devil, where good and evil have virtually merged, a world that is increasingly governed by simulacra and in which nothing seems to be real anymore, paradoxically, he initially turns to the glowing icons that fictionalize reality to ascertain his identity (656).

Addiction to technological means presented on the stage through Pete's overuse of his camcorder is repeated when the two appear in desert at night in the next scene. Alain likes the place very much. Pete cannot help himself recording the place via his camcorder. He expresses his obsession with the camcorder: "I prefer it with a frame around it … /Like you know, it stretches out, there it goes, on and on – you get the point from the TV – but when you actually see it, you know… it's a little scary. … *He takes the camcorder, looks through it.* … This always works for me. Some guys it's Prozac but with me…" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 113, original emphasis). As implicated by Laurens De Vos in her article on *Faust is Dead*: "Just as Fukuyama broaches his concerns about the increasing use of Prozac and Ritalin to numb people's feelings …, Pete takes pills in order to control and contain the experiences he has to cope with. His apathy can only be sustained by shaping these experiences for them to be bearable…" (655) due to the fact that "without shape, without rhythm, the experience can be too much, it can be too painful. So we shape the experience" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 116).

As it has been mentioned earlier, in *Faust is Dead*, mimetic representation is problematized which is a point that shows the play's tendency to a postdramatic aesthetics. As elaborated by David Barnett:

> postdramatic theatre seeks to go beyond the limitations of representation. … representation as a synecdochic process of embodying the particular from the general: the one stands for

> many. Such an understanding of character and/or plot in dramatic theatre is based on representation's quality of referentiality: one is able to connect the particular back to the general because the former refers to the latter. However, referentiality starts to break down in postdramatic theatre; the link between the world of the stage and the world around us becomes strained and, on occasion snaps completely ("Performing" 65).

The connection between the world of the stage and the world around us becomes an uneasy one and creates a shock effect on the part of the audience when Alain begins to touch Pete's genitals. Although Pete allows Alain, he also calls Alain a "faggot scum" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 113). While he points out that he does not have prejudice about homosexuality and believes in the multiplicity of sexualities within the society, he cannot help himself calling Alain "filthy little weenie-feeling heap of shit" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 113). Meanwhile, Alain makes love to Pete and starts to "suck Pete off" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 114). Pete speaks like a TV commentator while he is recording it. The conversation is noteworthy when Alain does not want him to speak: "Alain: You don't have to speak. / Pete: I do. / Alain: Please. No. You don't have to say anything. / Pete: I do. Okay. I do. Make it like on TV, okay? And I can do that, I really can do that. But only if I have the commentary. I need the voice." (Ravenhill, *Faust* 114). It is crucial to note that in this instance, Pete not only records the sexual experience but also

he feels the need to dramatize this experience. Actually, “Pete’s framing of his dramatic experiences contributes to the overall simulation, depersonalization and dehistoricization which Alain sees at work in our postmodern society” (Callens 170). What is more, through the end of the scene, graphic sexuality reaches its peak when Alain “turns away and spits Pete’s cum from his mouth” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 115). Although Pete has been ejaculated, he confesses that he has not felt anything. After taking some pills, they kiss again. At the end of this scene, Alain announces that man is dead, progress is dead and humanity is dead. This striking scene of hard-core sex is likely to upset the feelings of the audience who have a rooted habit of a theatre as a place of illusion of reality. However, as an outcome of the merged aesthetics of dramatic and postdramatic theatre, the limitations have extended. David Barnett illuminates these limitations:

> Clearly, postdramatic plays ask much of performers who are no longer so much concerned with depicting people, action and places than assuming the role of ‘text bearer’. A further implication of the postdramatic paradigm shift is a greater integration of the audience into the meaning-making process. The orientation provided by recognizable characters or plotlines dissolves, and spectators have to negotiate the production of postdramatic plays by working through a new set of conventions. These tend to be

> connected with a movement away from interpretation of the play on stage to the presentation of linguistic and gestural material. The stage becomes a generator of shared experiences rather than knowledge, and spectators are confronted with the question of how they deal with such phenomena (“Post-dramatic theatre”).

Throughout the play, it can be observed that Alain and Pete’s connection with the real is cut off. When Alain wants to share the same room with Pete in the motel, Pete rejects the offer because he is now bored with what he has experienced with Alain. Pete agrees with Alain’s offer to sleep on the floor. Pete will sleep with the disc because as he expresses the disc “is the only thing that is precious” to him (Ravenhill, *Faust* 119). Till this point in the play, although Pete understands that Alain is no producer, he does not know anything about him. It is in Scene 12 that he, by chance in the motel room, has seen Alain on TV in the show presented by Letterman and has recorded it. Pete apparently becomes more curious about Alain and questions him regarding the end of man. Alain agrees to explain his arguments if not recorded. He explains why the end of history has arrived:

> I call this moment the End of History because what we understood as history, this movement forward, has ended.
>
> And the words which have for so been our guides...
>
> Progress, for example. This now means nothing.

> We know this in our hearts. Every man, every woman, they
> Know it, they feel, but they don't say it.
> So we have to ask ourselves this question:
> When will we embrace ... (this is a word for you also, embrace?)
> ... chaos. When will we live the End of History?
> When will we live in our time?
> And how will we live in this new age of chaos?
> Not by being more kind, more ... enlightened.
> We must be cruel, we must follow our desires and be cruel
> To others, yes, but also we must be cruel to ourselves.
> We must embrace suffering, we must embrace cruelty (Ravenhill, *Faust* 120-121).

After such a philosophical talk, the Chorus comes onto the stage and in a way adds further to what Alain has said. It recounts the story of all children throughout the world who are constantly being polluted by advanced technology and computers because of the encouragements by the church, an obvious critique towards the promotion of technological means:

> See the minister of our church, he calls all the moms together one day and he says: 'Ladies, we have to raise some money. We have to raise a lot of money. Because I want the young people of this church to be part of the future. I want them to be online. We're

> going to have a terminal and a modem right here for all our young people so they can spread the word way into the future.'
>
> And my mom and all other moms worked real hard. But when the terminal and the modem arrived they felt so bad. Because their kids spent twenty-four-seven on the Net. And one day they wake up and realise they are living in like Valley of the Geeks and they never see their kids any more. … (Ravenhill, *Faust* 121)

From this point on, the play's primary concern is to show how individuals live a life of simulation. Pete meets a teenager named Donny on the Internet. Donny has a considerable number of cuts and tattoos on his body. Via a computer screen, he introduces himself: "Hi, my name's Donny. How ya doing? I've been really working on this. I want you to know that I really used to hate my body. I used to feel so uncomfortable, so ugly. But now I'm real happy with what I achieved. I've been working. And I tell you: you take the pain, you get the gain" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 123). He then shows his body which has been scarred with a blade. Alain gets interested in the idea of cutting oneself: "He scars himself. He submits to a moment of tribal agony. He creates his art. A testament of suffering upon the body ... A moment of power, of control over the self as he draws the blade through the body ... An initiation rite for the end of the twentieth century" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 124). Although it may be assumed that cutting oneself is celebrated at this point in the play since the body "appears as the site where one

might still gain one's own autonomy without being ruled by outside forces assuming control over one's being" (De Vos 656), Ravenhill intentionally criticizes the issue of cutting: "they told me that cutting has almost taken over from anorexia. People who are powerless find the only thing they can control is their bodies, however perversely" (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face* 137). However, Pete believes that they are all fake and says to the boy that speaking via a virtual method does not mean that he can lie so easily. Then they decide to meet face to face in order to compare their cuts and reality. Meanwhile, Alain desperately wishes to meet Donny to see his cuts and this makes Pete incredibly jealous. He removes his shirt and says: "Everything's a fucking lie, you know? The food, the TV, the music...it's all pretend. And this is the one thing that's for real. I feel it, it means something. Like suffering, like cruelty. I did it like you said. I did it for you. You don't need Donny" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 126).

In spite of all the resistance Pete shows not to meet Donny, Alain is determined to turn this virtual relationship into a real one. The next scene thus shows Alain and Pete waiting for Donny's arrival. This time it has been decided that Alain will make a record of everything. When Donny arrives, before telling his story, he implies that he is one of those who is in need of a true home and family: "I knew I'd feel at home and I do. This feels like home already. Like you're Mom and Dad and brothers and sisters and all, just rolled into one" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 128). Donny was a boy whose mother used to work at nights in

a store. In his childhood years, Donny went to this store after school and what he remembers most is the slush-puppy machine from which he drank cherry water and because of that he was called Red Mouth Donny. His life was devastated when this machine was taken away. As he grew older, he could not cope with his mother and left her. He began to cut himself and soon his mother died of cancer caused most probably by the fluorescent light in the store.

Pete and Donny compare their tattoos and ask Alain "who have the most cuts" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 130). Alain says Donny has the most cuts. Furious, Pete offers Donny to cut himself which is agreed. First Pete cuts himself across his chest. When the turn is Donny's, he cuts his jugular and immediately collapses, all of which is recorded. At this point, Alain puts the camcorder down quickly in an attempt to stop the blood. Donny dies. As Alain is contemplating over what has happened, he points to a fact which underlines the core of the play. He says:

> At some point, at a moment at the end of the twentieth century, reality ended. Reality finished and simulation began. [...] Reality died. It ended. And we began to live this dream, this lie, this new simulated existence. [...] Some examples? Before, in the old world, there was an event, a moment, which was followed by analysis, by the writing of history. / Event—analysis—history. [...] And now? We analyse, we project, we predict—CNN, talk radio—we anticipate

> an event before it takes place: the fall of a wall / in Berlin, a war in the Gulf. [...] And the event itself is just a shadow, a reflection of our analysis. (Ravenhill, *Faust* 132-133)

While Alain is doing these philosophical analysis, Pete is struggling in a panic not knowing what to do and he cries that Donny actually did not have the real experience in the cutting issue and by cutting his jugular, he aimed to prove that he was for real. As a response to Alain whose connection with reality seems to have stopped, Pete exclaims: “Look, just look at him. / See? / This happened. We were there. It was real. / … This is Donny. / Donny is dead. Donny is here and Donny is dead. … He should have known that. / He shouldn’t have gone for the jugular. / I guess he was just keen to prove that he was for real, you know?” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 133).

As a matter of fact, the Chorus verifies Pete in the next scene. The Chorus relates what Donny has told to it: “Had enough of just communicating with all you guys in a virtual kind of way. Had enough of it all just being pictures. See, some guys out there want me to make it real. So, I’m gonna meet them. [...] I’m gonna go for my jugular” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 134). The Chorus further comments that Donny was not so pathetic since “he knew what was happening in this life and figure out a way to make something good come from it” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 135). It is at this point in the play that by creating the character Donny, Ravenhill seems to accuse Baudrillard of being irresponsible. Ravenhill

says that theorists like Foucault and Baudrillard were “being quite chic, having these dangerous thoughts about violence and sexuality, but they lacked any responsibility” (qtd. in Sierz 135). Ravenhill believes that Baudrillard had a nihilistic philosophy which was an easy option. As Alex Sierz puts it, Baudrillard “sees postmodern theory as an act of revenge for the failure of 1968 student movement in Paris. For Ravenhill, philosophy’s retreat from social responsibility is deeply reactionary” (*In-Yer-Face* 135). Thus, by making Donny commit suicide, Ravenhill subverts the nihilistic theories Baudrillard has put forth. At this very crucial point, Donny quits existing as an object and becomes the subject who uses his free will to show that he can resist. His resistance is his suicide by which he attains his freedom.

As a postmodern philosopher, Alain is very much aware of power relations in the Foucauldian sense. After Pete gets rid of the corpse of Donny, he tells Alain that they should leave. However, Alain rejects it and reveals that he has stolen Pete’s disc and will not leave the motel. Interestingly, although Pete approaches Alain with a gun, he can still repeat the same question regarding the Dutch woman and he himself gives the answer: “Who was cruel? / The Dutch woman or the Japanese man? / It was the woman, the woman was cruel. / Because she understood the use of metaphor and he understood nothing” (Ravenhill, *Faust* 136). All of a sudden, Pete shoots Alain and takes his disc.

The Chorus comes onto the stage before the final scene. It re-evaluates what it has experienced so far. The Chorus realizes that it used to cry at night not only because the world was such a bad place but also due to the fact that it:

> wanted the world to come to an end. Like Armageddon or Hellfire or Total Meltdown or some such catastrophe. And I cried because I felt so guilty … it would be all my fault wanting it so much. But the world hasn't ended. … It's just going on, on and on and on. And I wonder if I should feel something about that. But – you want the truth? – I don't feel a thing. See, I'm the kind of person who can stand in the middle of an earthquake and I'm just like 'whoa, neat earthquake'. And I wonder what made me that way (Ravenhill, *Faust* 137).

In the final scene, Alain is seen in a hospital room and Pete reads parts to him from Alain's book. The lines that directly refer to Baudrillard are uttered by Pete: "We feel that we are no longer the subject but the object of forces" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 138). Pete reveals that he is going to work with his father since they have come to an agreement regarding the disc and they have done "a deal on the whole chaos disc thing. / Because, see, I don't believe you. / Sure, I get you point. See, I can do the whole Death of Man speech thing, you know? / But where'd it get us? / It got us Donny. / And I don't want that any more" (Ravenhill, *Faust* 139). Pete's final reunion with his father can be explained by the fact that

in this play “video and the Internet are the realms of performance where extreme and graphic violence offer voyeurs an opportunity to witness ‘reality’. The surrogate son and father play out their dance of death outside the borders of the virtual world, which finally connects them” (Svich 85). Without doubt, their connection is nothing but the triumph of capitalism. De Vos rightly notes that “Capitalism can only pretend to be surrounded by a divine aura, yet it actually holds consumers caught in a tight web of mind-numbing slavery— consumers who are, moreover, robbed of any prospect to ever get the opportunity to kill their master. Instead of killing the father, Pete is joining him!” (659)

Like many of Ravenhill’s youngsters in *Shopping and Fucking,* Pete is the outcome of Ravenhill’s attempt to portray a generation who is “with no values but economic ones, mediafixated and self-obsessed” (Rebellato, Introduction xiii). Alain, meanwhile, refuses to take his pills and seems resistant against recovery. Pete gives a present to Alain as he is leaving the hospital. The box contains Donny’s eyes. After Pete exits, Donny’s ghost enters with no eyes. This fantasy-like emergence of Donny, when considered in terms of postdramatic theatre, verifies the fact that “in the postdramatic discourse, the believability of character and plot is replaced by the truthfulness of effect” (Stegemann 21) and this effect is apparently achieved in the play. The ghost of Donny tells Alain that his mother has told him everything while he was on the boat to heaven. Pete and his father will take over the world, it says. It will never leave Alain and as the

play ends Donny tenderly gives Alain his pills. This ending remarks one of the core aesthetics of postdramatic theatre: “Instead of illusion, mimesis and action (*dran*), postdramatic theatre follows the logic of a dream. It endeavours to liberate the body from prescribed roles – it sees the scene as a place to dance outside of time and space …” (Karschnia 8).

Structurally speaking, Donny’s reappearance in the play is important. According to Svich:

> the merging of real and virtual worlds in *Faust* have shown his [Ravenhill’s] insistent interest in a more unified sense of realism than the kind of heightened naturalism common in twentieth-century Western theatrical narrative. While he has not been as bold stylistically as some of his contemporaries, with each play Ravenhill seems to be deconstructing the naturalistic conceits of *Shopping and Fucking*, the play that launched his career as a writer and with which he will be forever identified (92).

The fact that “Ravenhill challenges his audience to respond to the works’ violence, representations of graphic sex, and roving intimations of transgressive desire” (Svich 89) is what enables the playwright to exploit the postdramatic techniques. While in *Faust is Dead*, we have a plot structure that could be followed easily, this is not to conclude that postdramatic theatre is free of a text or plot. It is true that “theatrical sign usage, as Lehmann points out, has

changed – and not surprisingly so, in the light of the emergence of technologies and the subsequent shift in modes of perception instituted by new media. This does not suggest the end of classical or modern drama …" (Hamilton 6).

To conclude, *Faust is Dead*, like *Shopping and Fucking*, is a play which clearly illustrates that "the dramatic is always already inherent in the postdramatic; the postdramatic is also – albeit somewhat paradoxically – inherent in the dramatic" and that "the postdramatic can never fully abandon the dramatic" (Woolf 35-36). As it has been discussed, Ravenhill, in the two plays studied, does not abandon to make use of the aesthetic norms of dramatic theatre such as plot with a clear beginning, middle and end, definable characters, use of definite time and space. However, the incorporation of media which helps the audience to question the limits of reality and hyperreality as well as fragmentary narratives, intertextual references, lack of stage directions, a fantasy-like ending, extremely illustrated scenes of sex and violence that come as an attack on the spectators and problematize mimetic representation all contribute to the play's oscillation between the aesthetic norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre.

CHAPTER 5

POOL (NO WATER)[16]

Mark Ravenhill's *Pool (No Water)*[17], written and produced in collaboration with Frantic Assembly in 2006, was first performed at Drum Theatre Plymouth in the same year. *Pool*, a relatively short play compared to the previous plays that are the focus of this study, is marked by its "darkly comic, visually spectacular and at times challenging and uncomfortable" (Vale) style. Although Ravenhill's audiences are accustomed to such a style, they are likely to be taken aback by the way theatrical techniques as well as the content are put one the stage.

Contrary to *Shopping and Fucking* and *Faust is Dead*, *Pool*'s subject matter takes us not to a world ruled by globalization, digital technologies and consumerism, but to a world where friendship, success and art are questioned. As far as Ravenhill informs in his Introduction to *Pool*, his collaborative process of writing the play with the director and choreographer has shaped the play:

> When I began working on *pool (no water)* with Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett of Frantic Assembly, I knew their form of physical theatre would push me into a new way of writing. But I quickly found myself very lost. A few images – proffered by Scott and

[16] The third play to be scrutinized in this study is originally and intentionally written as *pool (no water)* in the playtext. However, for stylistic reasons, it will be written with its first initial capitalized except for the direct quotations by the critics.
[17] The play will be referred to as *Pool* hereafter except for the direct quotations by the critics.

> Steve – from the American photographer Nan Goldin were enough to anchor me and take me into an exploration of the destructive nature of friendship and the relationship between illness and art. Scott and Steve proved to be as scrupulous with words as they are in shaping moves, and so the final form of the text came about because of my collaboration with them" (xii).

From the start of his career, Ravenhill has always liked working in collaboration with directors and actors/actresses. As a playwright, he says that he has learned it is always good to collaborate in the course of creating a play: "Some plays pop up in your head, you lock yourself away until they're ready … But … there's a danger that if you only write in this way, you retreat from the world, divorce yourself from other people's experiences. Collaborators can challenge you, question your patterns of working …" (Ravenhill, "Deep End"). As it has been constantly mentioned throughout this study, the collaborative process Ravenhill embraces signifies his affinity with a theatrical vision in which the playwright and the text do not have the upper hand in the overall production. Contrary to Aleks Sierz's claim that "the writer is king (or queen)" (*Rewriting* 50) in British theatre, Ravenhill rather acts as a bridge between the audience and the stage and in this way demonstrates the features of a postdramatic playwright.

If it is considered that, as this dissertation is currently striving to show, Ravenhill exhibits a tension between the aesthetic norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre, in *Pool*, this tension reaches its peak. Compared to the two previous plays studied in this study, in which Ravenhill's oscillation between the norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre is explicit, Ravenhill in *Pool* thoroughly exploits the techniques of postdramatic theatre. To illustrate, it is even impossible to say that the play has a definite number of characters. As it is stated in the play's informative preface, in the original production there were four "speakers" – A, B, C, D and the playwright clearly informs that "other productions don't have to follow this"[18] (Ravenhill, *Pool* 294). Thus, even before reading the playtext, it could be understood that the play entails not characters in the traditional sense, but "text-bearers" which is an ostensible quality of postdramatic theatre that fosters the "'text bearer' as a replacement for the dramatic 'character'" (Poschmann in Barnett, "When" 17). As it has been mentioned in the theoretical background of this study, Lehmann uses two terms to differentiate between the theatre which renders representation possible and which does not: warmth and coldness.

> For an audience brought up in the tradition of text-based theatre, the 'dethroning' of linguistic signs and the de-psychologization that goes with it are especially hard to accept. Through the participation

[18] For example, unlike the Frantic Assembly production, One Year Lease Theater Company (New York) directed by Ianthe Demos uses five characters/speakers.

> of living human beings, as well as through the century-old fixation with moving human fortunes, the theatre possesses a certain 'warmth'. … For someone who expects the representation of a human – in the sense of psychological – world of experience, it can manifest a *coldness* that is hard to bear (95).

Undoubtedly, in *Pool*, Ravenhill creates a sense of coldness by attributing almost no representative qualities to his characters/speakers who seem to act as mere "text-bearers".

The play is striking not only in terms of its nameless "speakers" but also its lack of any scene division and stage directions. When the play is to be read, it feels as if one is reading a diary or a narrative story. Scott Graham, one of the directors in the Frantic Assembly production, explains that the text is equally interesting for the performers:

> The interesting thing about this text for performers is that it does not claim to have any character consistency other than in its original form, ie it is presented on the page as a monologue. By splitting the text we find new characters who share aspects of the same story but also appear to have individual opinions about what they relay, coloured by what we perceive to be their unique outlook on events. … Although this is presented as a monologue it was written with the knowledge that there would be more than one

> performer. It is the use of and contrast of ‘we’ and ‘I’ and ‘us’ etc. that makes this text so fascinating and full of potential. Also because they never address each other you are never quite aware of whether they speak for the whole group when they say ‘we’. Are they a self appointed voice or are they speaking from a point of safety within the group? (13).

However, in spite of no character attribution, the play nevertheless has a story to tell, most of the time in the past simple tense. The existence of triple dots (…), hyphens or repetitive constructs signify the freedom Ravenhill gives to the imagination of the audience and directors. As a matter of fact, this liberating style is in tune with what Lehmann imagines when he talks about the de-hierarchization of theatrical means by giving a direct quotation from Heiner Goebbels, a German music composer and director:

> I am interested in inventing a theatre where all the means that make up theatre do not just illustrate and duplicate each other but instead all maintain their own forces but act together, and where one does not just rely on the conventional hierarchy of means. That means, for example, where a light can be so strong that you suddenly only watch the light and forget the text, where a costume speaks its own language or where there is a distance between speaker and text and a tension between music and text. I

> experience theatre as exciting whenever you can sense distances on stage that I as a spectator can then cross … (qtd. in Lehmann 86).

In *Pool,* theatrical means are de-hierarchized by firstly deconstructing a naturalistic closed off fictive cosmos. The characters' direct address to the audience as well as their blurred lines entangles the process of theatre-going on the part of the audience especially in terms of the issue of representation. As David Barnett remarks: "Postdramatic theatre asks us to rethink the ways in which we read and perform plays. Character and plot, the mainstays of dramatic theatre, are no longer categories that need enter the stage in an age in which the act of representation has become increasingly untenable" (23). Having the habit of watching actors/actresses who are representative of fictionally created characters, the audience is likely to be shocked when the characters on the stage begin their very first lines like narrating a short story:

> A pool, she had a pool.
>
> Of all of us the most – at least in the eyes of this so-called world – the most successful of us.
>
> So – a pool.
>
> Did she mean to impress? Was it for show?
>
> No. I can't think. No. Because she's …
>
> She's good. She's nice. She has integrity. Her roots.

> And she has a pool now – it's fantastic fantastic fantastic fantastic (Ravenhill, *Pool* 295).

As it is observable, it is impossible to see which speaker utters which sentence, at least in the playtext since the "four characters are nameless and the lines of the script are not allocated to any one of them" (Vale). As for the production, four speakers narrate the story or speak the text. As Sierz's review of the Frantic Assembly production shows, in this play "Ravenhill foregrounds direct address to the audience, with only brief moments when the characters talk to each other, and this allows him to tell the story with flair and rapidity" (112). Moreover, the play turns into a memorable show with its incorporation of music and dance which has an equally important place as actors/actresses, story and lightning in the overall production. As recounted by Sierz in his review of the play: "Frantic Assembly's production raised your pulse rate from the moment you set foot in the theatre. Yes, pumping techno music does wonders for the spirit. … the show's nerve-zapping music mixed with dance moves and simple props to create a compelling piece of theatre" (112). Peter Billingham even contends that it was a fascinating experience to witness "the two contrasting languages of movement and text spoke either simultaneously, or better still, in atonal counterpoint to each other" (160). Thus, movement/dance and text become separate languages that speak either at the same time harmonically or in contrasting tonality. In this sense, the play has a postdramatic stance since it

seems to deconstruct the logocentric position of the text. Although there is still a text to be spoken and even a plot structure; nevertheless, none of the theatrical means seems to have superiority over another. That is the very reason why the play manages to make "you feel you are not so much a part of the audience, [but you feel you are] as participants in some group-counselling session" (Vale).

As the story unfolds, it is understood that the four speakers constitute a group of friends who are artists. The speakers talk about the central character who is also an artist and never appears in the play. Although the speakers say that they "all absolutely adore her" since she is the most successful in the group (Ravenhill, *Pool* 295), it is soon revealed that their admiration for her is mixed with a suppressed feeling of jealousy. The play thus "explores the opportunism of friendship with a celebrity, and examines the resentment inspired by another's success" (Sierz, *Rewriting* 112), indicative of one of the most favourable quotes of Ravenhill by Gore Vidal[19]: "Every time a friend of mine succeeds, a part of me dies" (qtd. in Sierz, *Rewriting* 112). In *Pool*, the speakers seem to have similar feelings to their friend. Just after their expression of their admiration for her, they recount how she outrun them in her success and became a celebrity: "It's that quality in her work that sells. The pieces that first began when we lost Ray to the whole Aids thing. And she used Ray's blood and bandages and catheter and condoms. Pieces that sold to every major collector in the world" (Ravenhill, *Pool*

[19] Gore Vidal is an American novelist, dramatist and essayist known for his humorous and critical style.

295). It is understandable that the pool owner's success and fame stems from "the creation of art that used the blood, bandages, catheter, and condoms of a mutual friend who died of AIDS" (Propst), a highly postmodern artistic expression that celebrates art as process.

The speakers openly relate and comment on the past events sometimes in the past and sometimes in the present tense. For example, they narrate how their friend owned a pool and invited the group to see the pool in the present tense: "And now she has: the pool. The poooooooooool. … Her pool. 'You're welcome at any time. Come over, share the pool. Any of you – singularly or together – just come over and enjoy the pool'" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 296). Ironically enough, after telling that there is a pool boy and a personal trainer employed by the owner of the pool whom they guess are porn stars ("maybe the pool boy fucks the trainer. / Or the trainer fucks her. / Or she fucks the pool boy"), the speakers also humorously mention, how moral their friend is: "No no no no – she's always been a very moral person. She's always had a strict code of morals. Even in the hovel days. She never did the hah-hah-heroin for more than a day. And she always kept her door strictly shut at night" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 296).

Through this monologue-like storytelling with no scene division, Ravenhill manages to provide the audience with multi-perspectival points of view. As Andy Propts points out in his review:

> As the story unfolds – with the performers speaking singly and in unison, almost like a kind of latter day Greek chorus – the characters provide differing interpretations of their memories, motives, and even justifications, both in terms of their perceptions at the time the events are occurring and in hindsight. … This dual perspective of the events creates an intriguing puzzle for theatergoers …

Apart from the story of Ray who died of AIDS and whose story was turned into an art form by the pool owner, one more story is revealed by the speakers: the story of Sally who has cancer. When she dies, the speakers juxtapose the idea of death and art: “And you’re just stripped naked because suddenly all the art was worth nothing, it is nothing, it means nothing. Sally has gone and Art did nothing and Art could do nothing and Death is big and we are small and really we’re nothing, we’re nothing” (Ravenhill, *Pool* 297). One of the speakers blames the pool owner of “killing” Sally intentionally by ignoring her illness and providing no money for the treatment and medication. This is the point the group expresses its hatred towards the pool owner:

> Isn’t that strange? All the time she was amongst us as a friend, all that time and yet really we harboured the most awful … well I suppose *hatred*
>
> Murderous hatred

> Would be the only word (Ravenhill, *Pool* 298, original emphasis).

This murderous hatred ambivalently contains affection on the part of the group members who soon express that they must embrace and love their friend showing "how envy, jealousy, and competitiveness can simultaneously undermine and exist alongside love and compassion" (Propst). Their ambivalent feelings towards her are revealed one more time when they arrive at her house: "We notice how graceful her movements are and how beautiful her laugh sounds … You know she's a marvellous person. One of us, out in the world and doing well. It's time to celebrate that" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 300). Showing a nostalgia for the happy days when "everything was so full of meaning" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 300), they immediately accept the host's offer to dive into the pool: "And we're back out into the night and we're giggling and we're drunk and there's no light in the grounds there's no light on the pool everything's been switched off: And we say: clothes off" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 300-301). Although the play is devoid of any character attribution, the story has its climax and this is the climactic moment: the moment the host is diving into the pool which contains no water, as the title of the play suggests:

> Some of us thought we heard the splash. You do. When you think there's going to be a splash then you hear a splash. You do the work. But we didn't hear the splash. There was no splash. There was

> The crack
>
> The cracking of her body.
>
> The harsh crack of her body against the concrete.
>
> Then there was silence.
>
> Then there was her groan and her squeal and her screams of pain.
>
> Aaaaaaggghoooowooooooowoowwwwwwww.
>
> We edge forward in the darkness our naked figures moving forward in the dark until we're at the edge at the pool. And then we see, see as our eyes adjust
>
> Pool. No water (Ravenhill, *Pool* 301-302).

At this very climactic moment in the play, the audience is normally expecting the speakers to express how they feel sorrowful for this unfortunate event and how they struggled to save their friend at that moment. When considered in terms of the aesthetic norms of postdramatic theatre, which, "for Lehmann, is the privileged art form to subvert established modes of signification" (Wessendorf), the speakers' behaviours make sense. They believe the pool owner has deserved what has befallen on her: "And the great absent thing is lying at our feet and we're thinking: This is right. This feels – there is right in that. I'm sorry you had to suffer, I'm sorry there's this pain – but there is justice in this. Something is shaping our ends. For Sally, for Ray, for us, this had to be" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 303). The bitterness in their tone looks as if they have been

waiting for such an accident. As Sierz comments, Ravenhill in this play "throws his unnamed characters into the emotional deep end and watches them splash about. The result is a glimpse of the darker side of life, even if the psychology on view is childish in its playground petulance and narcissistic egotism" (*Rewriting* 112). It may feel really irritating when the speakers go further in their reassessment of the accident:

> You see you flew – yes – you reached out your wings and you flew above us. And that's okay. You tried and congratulations. For trying. But you thought that could last? Flying above the ground, looking down on our lives in the city below? You really thought that could last? Of course that couldn't last. And now you've crashed right down. And that hurts doesn't it? I understand. That hurts.
>
> …
>
> You bitch you bitch you bitch you bitch you bitch you bitch you bitch (Ravenhill, *Pool* 303).

The way the speakers relate their stories on the stage is one of the characteristics of postdramatic theatre which is handled by Lehmann in the part he explores the place of narration in theatre:

> Here the theatre is oscillating between extended passages of narration and only interspersed episodes of dialogue; the main things are the description and the interest in the peculiar act of the

> *personal* memory/narration of the actors. This is related in a form of theatre that is categorically different from epic theatre and the epicization of fictional events, even though it shows some similarity to those forms. Since the 1970s, performance and theatre practitioners have found the meaning of theatre work in giving preference to *presence* over representation, in as much as it is about the communication of *personal experience* (109).

Without doubt, the harsh recounts the speakers convey about their friend from the moment she dived into the waterless pool till the time she was hospitalized indicate a preference to presence over representation. Moreover, the story of Ray and Sally would have a meaning in the play and now time has come to build a bridge between the Ray-Sally story and that of the pool owner. This is the moment when "her 'friends' — who collectively narrate — are suddenly impelled to turn their rich friend's tragedy, and her body itself, into an *objet trouvé*"[20] (Brown). Just like the host who turned the bodies of Ray and Sally into an art form, the group, without ever verbalizing their aims, decides to do the same thing with the body of the pool owner:

> We can't remember now. It doesn't matter Oh of course it matters to curators it matters to historians. But to us it doesn't matter at all But one of us first thought of taking a camera.

[20] Objet trouvé: object found/discovered.

> We don't even know who first packed the digi-digi-digi-digi-cam for our visit. Maybe we all did (Ravenhill, *Pool* 306).

The fascination with the body is already a phenomenon in postdramatic theatre. As Lehmann maintains: "While the dramatic theatre conceals the process of the body in the role, postdramatic theatre aims at the public exhibition of the body, its deterioration in an act that does not allow for a clear separation of art and reality. It does not conceal the fact that the body is moribund but rather emphasizes it" (166). Thus, the group starts to take photos of their friend every day for two months during her unconscious state. In the morning, they visit her at the hospital and take her photos and in the evening, in her house which has become their studio, they "start to arrange, start to order, start to catalogue. Start to – print with a quality of drenched colour, tone and definition" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 307). They are really fascinated by the "beauty" of the scars: "Now the blood's been cleaned away. The body bruised and swollen into shape no other human's yet achieved. Her limbs in plastic. Her neck in plastic. Her mask …The line of the machine … The purple of the bruise … It appeals. It tempts. There is beauty here" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 306). They cannot even overcome the temptation to move the bed to get the proper light so that "science and art can work together happily" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 307). They confess the fact that they have "become fascinated by the – look you can see – fascinated by the way the markings and the bruisings and the cuts progress from day to day … The way

the bruises and the swellings grow and ripen over her. The myriad colours that a bruise can take …" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 308). One of the characteristics of postdramatic theatre is "the presence of the *deviant body*, which through illness, disability or deformation deviates from the norm and causes an 'amoral' fascination, unease or fear" (Lehmann 95) and clearly in this play it is the fascination. The group's fascination with the body and healing process, however, would end one day. At the end of eighth week, they were informed that their friend regained her consciousness. What they felt was a sense of relief: "I am so happy that art has gone away and now we can be people" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 309).

In *Pool*, the interaction between the speakers and spectators is undoubtedly of vital importance. Scott Graham believes that the play is not about the events, rather:

> It is primarily about the characters and the audience. This is why they do not talk to each other and only talk to the audience. This is why we felt the need to return to direct address and any theatrical moments are merely conjured to illustrate the points they need to make. They start the evening sitting in chairs chatting to the audience. Everything that follows is still part of that initial audience character relationship and exists in the present. It is just that the

> illustration of certain events get more and less vivid, allowing the characters to return to a more obvious direct address (15).

The direct contact with the audience must have been effective when the speakers tell spectators that just like the moment when they decided to take the photos of their friend in her comatose state, they do not remember who has decided to show her the photos. As their friend has been looking for a mirror to have a look at herself, they show her the laptop with the images. She neither scorns them nor quarrels with them. She wholeheartedly thanks them. For several weeks they do not talk about the photos. One day, she wants her friends to bring the camera again: “Bring the camera. I want to carry one. I’m still healing. I’m getting stronger all the time. And I’d like to carry on recording that” (Ravenhill, *Pool* 313). To no one’s surprise, one day she wanted the hard copies to arrange them and show them to the owner of a gallery. Thus, it will be her who will get the most of her own “bruises” and multiply her fame and success although this time the hard work belongs to her friends. In the meantime, when she was de-hospitalized, her friends accompanied her and they were like housemaids striving to make her happy. Then the moment comes when they have no toleration left at all. They cannot imagine, after all this time, to bear the idea that she will gain a big fortune and enjoy fame through the collection of photos which actually belong to the group. Thus, another climactic moment appears: “And then one of us produced the camera, produced the memory.

Choose our first image and / Delete / oh yes oh yes oh yes oh yes oh yes / Select Delete Select Delete Select Delete … until not a single memory of the 'miracle of healing' left" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 320). They erase all the images of her. This is the second time, apart from the moment their friend has had the accident, that they really feel superior to the pool owner: "A little pause then as we drunk in what we'd done. A little chance to celebrate how strong we are now. God – the triumph pumping through our torsos" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 320). When their friend finally discover the fact that all her "artful" treatment process is done away with and that "everything she thought was friendship was hate. Everything that was care was envy" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 322), the group verbalizes what they believe her to have uttered in a vengeful way (although they are not sure if she really said all these): "You are small people. You have always been small people. … I am a big person and you are not. … I have talent. I have vision. I am blessed. … You thought I didn't see all your jealousy and hatred all these years? Of course I saw it. …" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 323).

The ending has a dreamlike finale that resembles the traditional ending in which everything is resolved. The pool owner, or one of the other speakers (we are not sure because the lines have no indicatives), has met someone and has now two children who take the photos of their mother by the pool. The final speaker talks as if what has been happening was all dream: "So. Light the

candles. Bake the cake. Sing the song. The gang's all here. We're here together. And the dream is dreamy and oh life is long" (Ravenhill, *Pool* 323).

When the play is taken into consideration in terms of its plot and form, it can be seen that *Pool* is a significant play in Ravenhill's career. Unlike his other plays which have been investigated as examples of in-yer-face theatre, this play has not been labeled in the same way due to its structural features. Furthermore, Ravenhill's stance as a British playwright subverts the idea that in British theatre "the author's seat [is] placed firmly at the top of the creative hierarchy" (Lane 26). The playwright's collaboration with the directors and performers as well as his enhancement of the interaction between the audience and performers already indicate the opposite of the afore-mentioned claim. What is more, as it has been elaborated in this chapter, in *Pool*, Ravenhill does avoid creating dramatic characters that represent an individual. Instead, he prefers speakers with no character attribution. No speaker in the play, even the owner of the pool who never appears neither on the page nor on the stage, possesses a name. Equally crucial are the presentation of the idea of the physical body and the celebration of body as art which contribute to the play's postdramatic qualities. In this sense, Ravenhill's *Pool* exhibits a strong sense of "postdramaticity" with the exception of one quality: The play, although it is not acted mimetically and although it is staged by way of narration, has a plot structure that can be followed. This is the reason why and how, in *Pool*, a

tension is created between the aesthetic norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre. However, this tension does not mean that there is an equivalent tendency to both norms. In this play, Ravenhill is clearly more akin to the postdramatic theatre.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

To know and understand the present certainly requires an insight and investigation into the past. The fusion of the present with the past is a natural phenomenon in all sorts of art regardless of their generic legacy. In our current world where almost any philosophical theory possesses its “post” form, such as the famous postmodernism, poststructuralism, post-Marxism and posthumanism, it is an undeniable fact that this “post-ness” ironically encompasses the “past” since it is not plausible to think, for example, postmodernism without modernism. This inseparable bond between the present and the past (and even the future) has been manifest in theatre as well. In order to explore this bond as well as the ever-changing relation between drama and theatre, postdramatic theatre has been theorized. The term postdramatic theatre is ostensibly connotative of both the entangled relationship between drama and theatre and between the audience and the stage. What is more, by constantly questioning the validity and primacy of the text and its playwright in a production, postdramatic theatre clearly calls attention to the relationship between the playwright and the director, between the director and the performers in the overall mise-en-scène. Because of these very reasons, it has been found

academically suitable to approach the selected playtexts in the light of the theory of postdramatic theatre.

The aim of this study has been twofold because of the nature of the topic selected. Firstly, it has attempted to explore and scrutinize Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre. Conceptualizing Lehmann's theory as an independent phenomenon has necessitated an investigation into the idea of drama and dramatic theatre from the times of Aristotle to twentieth century in order to figure out how the dramatic structure has gone through an evolution. In other words, in order to establish a bridge between dramatic and postdramatic theatre, there has been a need to make a historical overview of the generic development of drama since it will be undoubtedly impossible to internalize the concept of postdramatic theatre without an assured and detailed background of dramatic theory, especially with regards to the Aristotelian idea of mimesis and elements that make a play drama. Secondly, after a detailed analysis of Hans-Thies Lehmann's groundbreaking theory of postdramatic theatre with specific references to *Postdramatic Theatre* by the same author and going deep into the basis of his theory, the dissertation has aimed to analyse the plays of the British playwright, Mark Ravenhill. As it has been stated throughout this study, the plays of Ravenhill have been claimed to possess the aesthetic norms of in-yer-face theatre not only by Aleks Sierz, who coined the term and formulated the basics of this theatre, but also by many scholars. The current study, however,

while accepting Ravenhill's affinity both to an in-yer-face taste and postmodern norms, has endeavoured to argue that Ravenhill does not remain within the confines of these theatrical aesthetics. From this point of departure, this study has aimed to show that Ravenhill utilizes the techniques of postdramatic theatre while, simultaneously, employing the norms of dramatic theatre. In other words, his plays openly go beyond the confines of in-yer-face sensibility and they signal a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre.

In order to prove the validity of the argument, following the Introduction in Chapter 1 where the aim and scope of the study have been clarified, this study has dwelled upon the changes theatre has gone through in Chapter 2. In this theoretical background chapter, the aim has been to show how and in what way dramatic structure has changed throughout the centuries. In order to understand the basic principles of dramatic literature and concepts like mimesis, Aristotle's *Poetics* has been the illuminating source. Aristotle's celebration of mimesis (unlike his teacher Plato) and his definition of tragedy as a mimesis of an action have been linked to the hierarchically ordered elements that make up a tragedy. Plot, character, reasoning, language, song and spectacle have all been crucial not only with regards to Aristotle but also to Lehmann's theory since postdramatic theatre puts the validity of these elements into question. In this respect, Aristotelian theory has been of great importance throughout the study.

In the same theoretical background chapter, it has been also aimed to show that Aristotelian dramatic structure has also gone through enormous changes throughout the centuries. In order to demonstrate the overall picture, deviations in the dramatic structure from the time of the Medieval Ages till twentieth century have been the focus. This historical outline has been helpful to see that trends in each movement or century both carry the traditions of the previous trend(s) and come as a reaction to their precursors. From this point of departure, it becomes obvious that deviations from the Aristotelian norms have still pointed to a dramatic world where the events are tied up in a logical sequence even if, for example, the rule of three unities is disregarded or the comedy is mixed with tragedy as in the case of a Shakespearean play. Therefore, in this study, what is defined as dramatic theatre encompasses a wide scope of qualities – qualities which either do not exist in postdramatic theatre or if they still exist, they are in a diminished state. Broadly speaking, a coherent world enabling representation/mimesis and illusion, a definable plot, character(s), dialogues and monologues as well as a structured beginning, middle and end characterize dramatic theatre.

Although with the appearance of the historical avant-gardes, the afore-mentioned characteristics were most of the time subverted with the incorporation of such qualities as antirealism in symbolism, vague characters in expressionism, estrangement of the audience in epic theatre, these did not

make the plays be labelled as undramatic. On the contrary, Lehmann considers the historical avant-gardes, particularly epic theatre, as still being a modal of dramatic theatre since they present the audience a coherent world.

Following this argument, the characteristics of in-yer-face theatre have been clarified prior to postdramatic theatre since Mark Ravenhill has always been claimed to be one of the forerunners of this artistic movement and in order to understand the playwright, this movement has been touched upon. Another crucial reason for the addition of the in-yer-face theatre has been Lehmann's assertion that German theatre was influenced by British in-yer-face theatre and this situates Ravenhill in a similar paradigm with some of the German dramatists who wrote postdramatic plays. Also, since postdramatic theatre is a German-based phenomenon, Lehmann's assertion becomes relevant for the current study due to the very fact that according to him, in-yer-face theatre contains a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre – an assertion which is also true for Ravenhill as well.

All these historical and argumentative details have been linked to the definition of postdramatic theatre in the same theoretical background chapter. Lehmann's theory has been reconfigured with an attempt to emphasize the details that point to a differentiation between the dramatic and postdramatic. It has been invariably stressed that the term postdramatic refers not only to a theatre aesthetics celebrating the times "after drama" (unlike the term

postmodern theatre which is considered to point to an epoch) but also to the subverted position especially of the playwright and the text. Postdramatic theatre allows room for the deconstruction of the hierarchically-ordered theatrical mise-en-scène in which the playwright and her/his text used to have the upper hand. In postdramatic aesthetics, the playwright and the text occupy an equally important seat as the director, lighting, décor, costumes, etc. Moreover, in postdramatic theatre, playtexts with a lack of plot which are presented, rather than represented, are celebrated. In such texts, the avoidance of character development, structured time and place, mimesis, logically organized events are also welcomed. Characters become presenters of the texts. A non-hierarchal approach is naturally preferred on the stage where multiple signs may be offered simultaneously. Density of the signs, plethora, musicalization, scenography, warmth/coldness, physicality, concrete theatre, irruption of the real and theatre as event are concepts that all contribute to Lehmann's theoretical framework. With this accumulated knowledge that offers a chance to read the selected plays with respect to their dramatic and postdramatic features, it has been observed and argued that Ravenhill's plays make use of aesthetics of both dramatic and postdramatic theatre.

In order to demonstrate the validity of this claim, Chapter 3 has strived to analyse Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* in an attempt to manifest that Ravenhill in this play utilizes the techniques of dramatic and postdramatic

theatre almost equally. This equal treatment stems from the fact that in this play we have a plot, definable characters, dialogues and structured time and space. However, graphic scenes of physical and verbal violence and sexual interaction, the blurred line between fact and fiction, incorporation of technological means all problematize the long-established notion of representation. In this respect, Ravenhill in this play seems to show an equal distance to both theatrical paradigms.

In Chapter 4, the aim has been to approach Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* from the same angle. As it has been manifested, this play is similar to *Shopping and Fucking* in terms of having a plot structure, definable characters and dialogues as well as a structured time and space. Yet, the inclusion of hard-core sexual scenes, intertextual references, fragmentary narratives along with the use of technological means point to a postdramatic taste. As a matter of fact, in this play the lines between fact and fiction have been blurred even more compared to *Shopping and Fucking* not only through constant allusions to the theories of Baudrillard, Foucault and Fukuyama but also through an obsessed use of a camcorder without which perceptive skills seem to dwindle. Therefore, although Ravenhill shows a similar affinity to the two theatrical realms, the constant questioning of reality versus illusion binary problematizes the issue of representation even more in this play.

In *Pool*, which has been analysed in Chapter 5, Ravenhill employs theatrical techniques that are different from the previous plays. In this play, we have speakers rather than developed characters. As a known characteristic of postdramatic theatre, the nameless speakers possess no character attribution at all. Instead, they seem to verbalise the playtext rather than acting the role of a character. Thus, through a monologue-like story-telling method and lack of interaction among the speakers who have actually communicated solely with the audience as well as the presentation of the physical body as art all deconstruct the firmly-rooted mimetic representation on the stage and the superior position of the text in the overall production is put into question. In this respect, as it has been argued, in this play Ravenhill is almost thoroughly postdramatic.

When all the afore-mentioned characteristics of Ravenhill's plays are re-assessed, it becomes crystal-clear that unlike many examples in postdramatic theatre, Ravenhill in his plays does not seem to abandon the 'primacy of the text' (Lehmann 21). Yet, it cannot be argued that his plays are dramatic in the traditional sense. Thus, Ravenhill definitely employs the techniques of both theatre forms although in differing quantities and this is a quality that situates him in a different position among the other in-yer-face playwrights. His use of verbal and physical violence, which is considered as a quality of in-yer-face theatre, and his playful portrayal of contemporary societies driven by economic, cultural and political impositions such as shopping, sex, addiction and

technology go beyond the convictions of dramatic theatre when they are merged with strategies to shock the audience and lead them to self-questioning through hard-core scenes of sex and violence in addition to the incorporation of technological means pointing to question the binaries of illusion and reality especially in *Shopping and Fucking* and *Faust is Dead* and a preference for creating nameless speakers over named characters in *Pool*. In the first two plays studied in this dissertation, Ravenhill seems closer to dramatic qualities since he does not hesitate to create a plot structure that can be easily followed through clear dialogues of characters that follow actions formed in cause-effect relationship. In the last play, however, although the chain of events can still be followed, they are not represented by the characters but presented by the speakers. In this respect, Ravenhill, as a playwright, cannot sacrifice using an easy-to-follow plot structure in the three plays studied. Although the “dramacity” and “postdramaticity” of his plays vary as discussed in this study, plot acts as a common denominator in his plays and that makes his plays oscillate between the aesthetic norms of dramatic and postdramatic theatre.

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