

THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-AWARENESS AS REFLECTED IN MARK RAVENHILL'S PLAY SOME EXPLICIT POLAROIDS ¹

Sibel KILINC * & Tatiana GOLBAN **

* Instructor, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University,
TURKEY, e-mail: sibelkilinc@comu.edu.tr
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0572-748X>

** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University,
TURKEY, e-mail: e-mail:tgolban@nku.edu.tr
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7860-0992>

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ABSTRACT

The concern with self-awareness has dominated the Western philosophy and literature being reflected mostly through the ancient Greek motif "know thyself". The awareness of the self would promote one's identity as a unique entity, which should be capable of expressing individual thoughts and experiences in order to confer moral significance to one's actions.

The present study focuses on Mark Ravenhill's play Some Explicit Polaroids which offers a portrait of the societal chaos in a desensitised London, where human life and emotions are commodified and engender the human potential for genuine feelings and expression of moral judgement, thus thwarting the creation of true relationships. Through the characters of his play, Ravenhill generates an awareness of the moral vacuum, which is created as a result of indifference or/and violence of the government apparatus which forces the individual to develop survival mechanisms that abandon altogether the moral significance of their actions and, respectively, any concern with the development of an authentic self. Nadia, a character in Ravenhill's play, who lacks individual critical judgement and self-knowledge, forms her identity in terms of transaction and exchange that allows her to be easily objectified. This research explores Nadia's attempt to regain self-value and self-awareness in terms of the transformative power of negativity and will to truth as the transgression and destabilization of the illusion of perfections as to bring the conflictual state into focus by posing the lethargic values and disintegration of faith which are inherent in the happy world myth.

Key words: Awareness, negativity, transgression, transformation, will to power

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INTRODUCTION

Mark Ravenhill's plays are set in a society which is very familiar to us; a society where the most important values considered to be buying and selling. In a society based on such values of transaction, determined by the capitalist market economies, individuals have no autonomy and their free will is predetermined by the same economic forces which shape individuals' social and cultural lives. Unaware of the entangling power relations around them, individuals are subjected by the same socio-political system which thwarts their self-awareness and alienates them from the rest of society, which is in a state of flux, daze and confusion. In this complex web of relations, where power perpetuates violence, individuals become the flesh and blood representations of the same societal structure. The violence and control binds them to their identity, and they develop self-preservation mechanisms, such as the production of the happy world illusion, in order to maintain their deceptive integrity of the self. However, in a society where market economy determines the moral values and freedom, such individual self-integrity dissolves and authenticity diminishes. Due to their lack of self-knowledge, individuals fail to grasp their organizing principles that consist of the values and the moral codes which are determined by the autonomous self, thus becoming disoriented, nihilistic and psychotic. Building on that premise, the disintegration of the individuals and the politics of the self becomes the representation and criticism for the dehumanizing aspects of such neoliberal political systems.

Diana Nichole calls the process of achieving "stylistic integrity" as the "politics of the self" (2000: 112), in which an individual having many masks, uses their own creativity and own negativity like an artist, continuously labouring in order to have the mastery over chaos and surrender, through self-forgetting, in order to become a well-constituted person and exert their own "will to power". Inspired by Nietzsche's concept of will to power Nichole claims that "will" is the force of openings, and "power" represents the creative, formative moments of provisional closure. Therefore, in aesthetic terms, bringing will to power into context implies their merging into a unity (2000: 118). Mark Ravenhill's characters in the play demonstrate the politics of the self when the effects of consumer capitalism are felt on individuals, their struggle with that power leading to realisation and eventual de-subjectivizing of themselves from that power structure. The dual capacity of such power, as being both destructive and constructive, has also been the concern of the postmodern philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who in his book *Difference and Repetition* (1968), represents such symbolic images as "to throw time out of joint, to make sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God or the father" (1968: 89), that brings about an autonomy of the self or the man with non-identity, the Overman. He explains this transformative power through three-level repetition, where on the first level one repeats because one does not know, does not remember or one is incapable of performing the action because the action is "too big" for him. The second level is the presence of metamorphosis where one doubles the self and becomes equal to the act, thus projecting an ideal self in the image of the act. This is the stage where one becomes capable of acting. The last level signifies the act and the event possessing a secret coherence, which excludes the fact that one turns back against the self, which has become their equal and smashes it to pieces and gives birth to an 'Overman':

In this manner, the I which is fractured according to the order of time and the Self which is divided according to the temporal series correspond and find a common descendant in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the 'plebeian' guardian of a secret, the already-Overman whose scattered members gravitate around the sublime image. (Deleuze, 1994: 90)

This final act of transformation could be associated with the idea of the tragic in theatre, emerging from the encounter with meaninglessness, pain and suffering, which is expressed as a communality of feelings. In the tragic genre in theatre, there is a certain value attributed to human suffering, since it shatters the distinction between the self and the other and enables one to go beyond the self in order to identify with the others' misfortunes. Paradoxically, it is only through suffering that one is truly humanized. One becomes human mostly through the loss and during the process of struggle which is employed in order to end his suffering or suffering of others. In the play *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Nadia, Tim and Victor refuse suffering that infiltrate their life in the form of capitalist market economy. They all suffer in world where the market emptied life out of meaning so characters wander aimlessly searching for a new set of values. The violence on the women's body is internalized which leads to Nadia's alienation but to avoid suffering she rationalizes the act. Tim's body become another object of power for it is preserved through chemicals and he takes his pills to avoid his bodily suffering. Shopping extended into individual bodies then normalised results in decay in personal relationships as Victor seeks for personal gratifications based on physical, meaningless, drug-induced, master-slave relationships.

In his attempt to explore the tragedy genre in today's world, Sean Carney re-interprets the term tragic in a modern sense, as "being concerned with the intersection of humanity's will with situations of the loss of human agency in (apparently) unavoidable, inhuman situations" (2013: 12). In the postmodern societies ridden of any value, where the communal bonds are weakened and market value is imposed upon individuals that could be bought and sold, the individual emerges as desensitized, dehumanized, commodified, thus re-establishing the conditions for the rise of tragic. Such a world raises the awareness of issues such as death of the self and various forms of alienation: social, personal or psychic. It is on that premise that Carney claims that "dialectical aspects of tragedy have the potential to illuminate the contradictions of late capitalism within the contemporary moment" (2013: 11). The dialectical aspect here is considered to be the identity of freedom and necessity, which are in conflict with each other and are experienced by the individual's consciousness as the phenomenon of the impossible or the intimation of consciousness; or put into other terms, it can be described as the Derridean difference, Hegelian concrete, or of Lacanian truth or the real (2013: 16). As it is widely argued, the concept of freedom as a concept loses its significance in postmodernity due to the rising awareness of the difficulty, or even impossibility, in determining any choice. Foucault, in his article *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), claims that the liberal governments produce freedom in order to consume it. In this sense, this "new art of governing" (2008: 63-64) works in a political double bind. On the one hand, while it perpetuates the discourse of freedom, it also sees what it needs to produce this freedom for individuals. On the other hand, it undermines desire and individual will through the restriction or encouragement of knowledge. Thus freedom becomes another marketing buzz term in a world emptied of all values that are not economic, and it disrupts the individual's sense of relationship with the world and turns individual experience into a schizophrenic one. Foucault explains the basic nature of that power as "acting upon an acting subject" (1982: 789). Thus, there is an excise of power in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. As he explains, "In order to act upon the possibilities of action it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult and in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely" (1982: 789). That power manifests itself in the play with Tim's loss of control over his decaying body and his attempt to regain control in preserving it. Tim being an HIV positive takes his medicine to keep alive. He jubilantly tells Tim "In nineteen eighty four I would have been dead in six months. Whereas now...I can spin it out for years and years" (Ravenhill, 2001: 176) However that situation raises questions about the authenticity of the personal choice. Since the role of medicine is an indispensable part of power over life, Tim's insistence to keep his body in the productive realm

of economic and social sphere can be a manifestation of that power controlling the moment of Tim's death or delaying it infinitely. Therefore when Tim eventually refuses to take his medicine and dies, it is his ultimate act in making his body non-productive at his own will and removing it from the socio-economic field which liberates him from the controlling powers. In that sense, his act is both political and transformative.

S. Carney, in his work *The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary English Tragedy* (2013), connects Mark Ravenhill to the tradition of British tragedy playwrights due his attempt to explore the possibility of tragic experience in a postmodern world. Since the idea of tragedy is highly eroded in postmodern societies as a result of the capitalist system with its market values, so does the humanizing experience of suffering lost its meaning, leaving individuals deeply disconnected from each other, exceptionally fragmented and extremely individualized. The loss of the sense of tragic experience is closely related to the loss of the value of truth in life. When Nadia ignores her tragic experience of violence and being treated disrespectfully while embracing the happy world myth where everything is okay, she creates a fictional world where the truth is devalued. Likewise, Tim also lives like he would live forever despite the fact that he could have had only six months to live if he had not taken his pills. Yet, it is first Tim who manages to shatter his illusions and this manifests itself in his speech at the hospital when he refuses to take his pills. He admits that he lost the sense of where his life was heading and says, "My life was a tragedy and that was frightening and sad and it used to do my head in. But I knew where everything was going. Bit by bit my immune system would break down until...no fixed figure" (Ravenhill, 2001: 196). Tim regains the sense of tragic through his awareness of his own mortality and the transitory nature of life.

Such capitalist negating of the tragic experience might be related to the phenomenon called by Mark Fisher "the malaise of thinking that there is nothing new" (2009: 10). By this he means all hope for the emergence of a new system that will replace capitalism has been totally abandoned. This kind of thinking occurs as a result of the capitalist effort of emptying meaning from life, and it leads to the creation of the cynical worldview that "nothing changes". Likewise, a closely related term "crisis" is also emptied of its meaning in postmodern culture, since the normalization of crises becomes the end-result rather than being an apocalyptic experience. Crisis now becomes a part of everyday life and the loss of its significance is transmuted into the traumatic communal experience that results in the gradual erosion of the social fabric.

Anxiety and fear is disavowed from the world of youth which could have brought about change. Since they live a meaningless existence due to the death of metanarratives, depoliticization and emptying of values from life, they tend to show a detached outlook on life that results in the passive acceptance of their current situation. This 'coolness' create some detrimental effects on their life such as numbing their feelings, hindering self awareness, disrupting the meaningful connection to others and devaluation of life.

According to Mel Kanyon, "the nineties" represent a "time of fragmentation" and "of complete uncertainty", when the "certainties of the left proved to be bogus" (Kanyon in Urban, 2004: 354). Following the Thatcherite era, the newly elected New Labour government, led by Tony Blair, wanted to align with the youth movement, and so embraced the notion of "Cool Britannia" which in reality was only "the marrying the free market economics and social liberalism" (2004: 356). The term "cool" promotes a sense of detachment, nihilism and spectatorship which are similar to the market economy values Urban explains that the Labour Party turned to embrace consumer culture for the sheer reason of profit making and the term Cool Britain represented its marketing brand. Moreover, for Alex Sierz, nineties culture in Britain was also fascinated by crime and criminals, which find its reflection in the experimental themes and motifs of in-yer-face theatre. The term "In-yer-face theatre" is coined by Alex Sierz

in 1990's to describe a new sensibility in theatre, whose members use shocking techniques, obscenity and blatant language on stage in order to shatter taboos, reinvigorate emotions and challenge the general assumptions.

In this vein, Urban associates cool Britannia with cruel Britannia. He goes on to explain that "Marked by a libertarian attitude of 'Whatever', cool is highly individualistic, preferring the role of detached onlooker to the passionate commitments of politics; and the 'nineties saw that attitude become the' dominant mindset of advanced consumer capitalism" (2004: 360). These theories are a useful lens for reading Ravenhill's play *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999).

In his play *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Ravenhill, an English playwright born in 1966, creates a microcosm where fragmented youth is disillusioned with its depoliticized state, and market values are contrasted to the socialist values and strong-spirit of the older generation, who are alienated in a culture which lives by the pleasure principle. In the play, the characters Nadia, Tim and Victor represent the youth, with its discourse of coolness, cruelty and nihilism that blends together to form a new ethical vision at a time when government sees Cool Britannia as another commodity and a marketable product. Ravenhill's characters represent cultural degeneration, moral nihilism, spiritual emptiness and relentless consumption that has been triggered by governmental apparatuses and has led to the denial of meaningful relationship with others, spiritual fulfilment, moral judgement or authentic experience for the self-exploration.

In their docility, perpetuated by this new "art of government", they are not made to be the skilled producers of their lives, but rather passive consumers of products, revelling in their hedonistic lifestyles within the current capitalist system. Their passivity and insistence on rejecting the negative feelings also creates situations and events that divulge their frailty and vulnerability in the face of dehumanizing and alienating forces of the capitalism, where they indulge themselves into an illusory happy world in their attempt to refrain from suffering, pain or any negativity. Nadia illustrate this inert state of existence just after she was violently beaten by Simon again, a friend who she shags once in a while (Ranehill, 2001: 155), and when Nick asks her what happened she assures him that everything is okay and refuses to talk about it. When Nick insists, she becomes defensive and says "No. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to latch on to some negative. I'm not going to do that" (Ravenhill, 2001: 180). The negativity she refuses is the end-result of the current capitalist system, which represses negativity in individuals and encourage them to live in a state of perpetual present, a detached outlook on life through positivist individualism.

The old generation, represented by Nick and Helen, is equally fragmented and utterly confused in a world where values are determined by such factors as extreme individualism, inertia, loss of history and politics, objectification of human bodies, and the transactional nature of private human relationships. When Nick asks them if they are really happy and what does that mean Tim answers, "It means we are content with what we've got. [...] And we aren't letting the world to get us." while Nadia responds "And we are at peace with ourselves. [...] And we're our own people" (Ravenhill, 2001: 181).

However in their assertion of the younger characters' "right to be happy" (Ravenhill, 2001: 183), Tim fills his body with tablets and loses control over his body, Nadia rejects the negative thoughts and feelings caused by her invisible boyfriend who constantly beats her up, while Victor just wants to trash himself by establishing a master-slave relationship for the purpose of some anarchic, extravagant, meaning-ridden private experiences. Their inert and numb state of existence is disturbed only by Nick's outrageous scream: "What are you? Nothing's connected, you're not connected with anything and you're not fighting anything" (Ravenhill, 2001: 181).

The young generation's disillusionment with the present and their growing cynicism concerning any possible change in future leads them into experiences that are destructive and violent. Such as Nadia establishes relationships based on emotional dependencies and her body becomes an object of exchange. Tim and Victor refuses to have any meaningful personal relationships and enact a master-slave relationship based on transaction. The notion of "coolness", which was meant to refer to the marketing production and capitalist values of the time, changes its significance into "cruelty" in a dysfunctional society.

In his play, Ravenhill reveals that a society which is dominated by capitalist and consumerist values and the objectification of human bodies and relationships, becomes a community where individuals are lacking in critical judgement and self-knowledge, and they are trapped in a nihilist, cruel, meaningless existence. This might sound too pessimistic, but there is more drama in what the playwright does. Ravenhill leaves room for the possibility of change, which is suggested through his characters' struggle for meaning, which might eventually lead to their transformation.

Nadia is such a character who, through the power of negativity, attempts a transformation from self-ignorance to self-awareness. Nadia, a young woman who works as a lap dancer, forms an abusive relationship with her boyfriend, Simon, unseen by the audience. Although she is brutally beaten by him, she ignores the bruises and scars which Simon inflicted on her body, and tries a self-help therapy, based on some clichés, by focusing on the positive, present experiences and wilfully forgetting the past.

She consciously ignores the negative that happens not only in her life but also in other people's lives. When she is shown an explicit polaroid of her friend, taken by his brother and father who are "crazy about his body", she twists the reality of an abusive family into a misleading positive thing, by saying "so...you're close as a family" and "a very loving family", words which prevent her from the confrontation of the serious issues of abuse (Ravenhill, 2001: 148).

Although she realizes that her closest friend Tim is a loving person who values himself too little and needs someone who would truly care about him instead of taking a trashy boyfriend, she refuses to show the same reflection about herself. The world Nadia lives in redesigns private relationships according to the principles of transaction, as a result of which the body becomes another exchangeable object. The disintegration of the body from the essence creates the alienation, which is manifested both on the personal and social levels. Therefore, her insistence upon spiritual purification, while rejecting her body altogether not only hinders her accomplishment for a complete authentic self, but also prevents her from locating herself within the society. When Viktor asks "what is that she is going for" (Ravenhill, 2001: 148) in life, her response reveals her sense rootlessness and her inability to place herself in the grand scheme of things: "I don't know yet. I'm still trying to find out you know? Where I really belong in the universe. Nothing's fixed for me, which is cool in a way. Sometimes you just have to let yourself be open to possibilities before you can really choose you know?" (Ravenhill, 2001: 240).

Nadia, with her spiritual longing to build meaningful relationships, feels the need for connection, love, and caring for other, but in a society that lives by the pleasure principle her desire remains unfulfilled. Such longing is reflected in the following dialogue with Tim:

Victor : Spiritual? She says you're spiritual.

Tim : Well, she shouldn't have done that. Why do you always do this?

Nadia : I didn't know.

Tim : Just when I've met someone. Just when I'm having some fun at last.

Nadia : I just wanted him to understand / that you've feelings.
Tim : There's nothing to understand.
Victor : I'm going.
Tim : No.
Nadia : That you feel something.
Tim : No I don't. I don't feel anything alright?
Nadia : But you do, I know you do / and I know you want someone in your life because you've got this need...
Tim : Don't you tell me. I want to have fun.
Nadia : And we feel the need.
Tim : Just because you're...Just because you've got no one.
Nadia : I've got Simon.
Tim : Yeah?
Nadia : Sometimes, yes, often I've got Simon.
Tim : And look what Simon does to you. Look at how Simon hurts / you all the time.
Nadia : No, I'm not listening to all this negative... No, I'm going now. I'll make my own way back. I'm going and who knows? I might meet someone on the way back. Because I'm open, I'm at peace with myself, I don't have to...
Tim : What? What?
Nadia : Pay for a...sex ...slave (Ravenhill, 2001: 243-44).

In her attempt to refrain herself from seeing things as they really are Nadia creates an illusory happy world scenario, where she can be protected from all that negativity which is created by the alienating culture, and she tries just to be happy.

Sean Carney describes the state experienced by Nadia like this:

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

Forgetting and remembering are important motifs which are reinforced in Ravenhill's play. Remembering represents an important active agent in constituting of the self, since the individual is shaped mostly by his experiences and memories; forgetting them leads to moral and spiritual degeneration of the individual. Moreover, forgetting brings disruption and dissolution, whereas remembering brings continuity and consistency in our lives.

In Ravenhill's play, Nick is the one who urges Nadia to remember in order to avoid her personal transgression. Nick's presence is pivotal for Nadia's understanding of her relationship with Simon. He makes an effort to shake her out of her inert state and force her to acknowledge the illusory world she created for herself, because it thwarts completely any possibility for her self-realization. Nick's anger at Nadia for letting a "man walk all over her" (Ravenhill, 2001: 161) intensifies when she stands up for an abusive boyfriend and labels his brutality against her by a lame excuse of "being a child inside" (Ravenhill, 2001:162).

Christian Schmitt tries to find an explanation for Nadia's attitude, as he claims that "[her] refusal to judge a particular situation in the light of a larger context makes it impossible

for her to make a stand. Generalizations don't mean anything for her. Making a stand is a form of self-assertion, and generalizations are a necessary part of it" (2005: 253).

In order to value herself Nadia has to bring her body and essence in the context of negativity, so that she can make a stand and refuse to be abused. It is only through her embrace of that negativity she can transform the negative into an affirmation of life. Ken Urban calls it "the curse of consciousness", and he stresses "the unbridgeable gap between being a body and having a body" (2004: 362). It appears that in her denial of the morality and existential responsibility Nadia let her body become a place of violation. The blood on Nadia's face is an ugly reminder that humans are not so easily commodified, and it triggers the possibility of her transformation. Such cruelty inflicted on her body awakens her consciousness to the horrors of pain and suffering and forces her to confront the previously unspoken and unseen. Still, she refuses to truly acknowledge and embrace that negativity. It is only through the reconciliation of her body and her mind that she can come to the full realization of herself, as a complete human being. Since the locus for her essence is the body, the violence and trauma which afflicts the body also cripples the essence. Therefore, the commodification of body and its emptying from all the values represents a conflictual state, as it brings about the alienation between the body and essence. In order to become a subject Nadia has to start looking at things as what they really are and abandon the illusion of the happy world which she created in her mind.

According to Foucault, modern government apparatuses no longer repress the individual but rather apply the method of "acting upon an acting subject" (1982: 789), by taking control over individuals' behaviour or over their knowledge. This means that the regimes of power operate through the encouragement of passivity, conformist behaviour and consumption. This power is infiltrated into the everyday life of the individuals and the nature of it is inherently formless. Saul Newman explains that "this would be what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) called 'micro-fascism: a kind of authoritarianism and desire for one's own repression that permeates the social body, infiltrating everyday habits, behaviours and practices, and inhabiting the politics of both right and left" (2016: 169). This power manifest itself in the play in Nadia's refusal of the negative thoughts and feelings and her tight grip in the happy world myth, Tim's creation of a new set of values in the happy world and his deprecation of the actual life and its values, and Victor's insatiable eagerness for new and 'thrashy' experiences.

Michel Foucault calls this power over life as "biopower", which is the new type of governing over the body of the individuals in modern societies. Elaborating on the issues of power, Paolo Adorno emphasises that "In modernity, power is not only concerned with life and rooted in subjects as living bodies and the population as a body of living subjects, but power also work toward specific ends that have been dictated by economics" (2014: 99). Thus, this new governmental reason is not interested in ensuring the well-being of its citizens but focuses only to protect the interests of the market and its utility. By making its citizens another commodity of the market, it controls the will and desire of its citizens through power itself or in Foucauldian sense it "acts upon the action of others" (1982: 793).

Nadia is only capable of reaching the new state of 'Becoming' when her transformation is triggered by her encounter with Jonathan, a rich capitalist entrepreneur who confronts Nadia about her feel-good clichés. This confrontation can be related to Deleuzian stage of metamorphosis. Whereas Nadia sees Jonathan as powerful, strong and attractive, Jonathan sees Nadia as lonely, unfocused and powerless. In order to avoid her loneliness, she attempts to seduce Jonathan, by objectifying her body and making it an object of transaction. At this point, Jonathan shows strength in overcoming his bodily desires, which might be a sign of the power of the spirit. Another reason might be the fact that he was also once the victim of abuse, his body still bearing the scars inflicted by Nick. Recognizing his similar struggle in Nadia, Jonathan tries to help her and manages to build up an *anagnoris* in Nadia. He, in his eminence,

tells her about her self-deception and then forces Nadia to admit to herself how things really are. She eventually acknowledges that the world is terrible, she is alone and there is no one out there. As a result, Nadia feels dead inside after accepting the negativity that her life is meaningless and she is utterly alone.

Jonathan's response reaffirms the market values of capitalism when he says that her feelings are normal and explains what happens after that:

You're dead and then you come through that and you embrace the chaos...You see the beauty of...the way money flows, the way it moves around the world faster and faster. Every second a new opportunity, every second a new disaster. The endless beginnings, the infinite endings. And each of us swept along by the great tides and winds of the markets. Is there anything more thrilling, more exhilarating than that?" (Ravenhill, 2001: 293).

Jonathan's statement "you see the beauty of..." might be associated with the transformative power of negativity, since the chaos he experiences may represent infinite beginning as well as infinite endings. Looking from this perspective, Nadia might reveal the potential to bring that suffering, this dead feeling, or in other terms, this negativity, into an affirmation of life and thus, de-subjectivize herself from the power relations in order to bring the Deleuzian concept of differance. This process of establishing her subjecthood, with its existential and ethical consequences, might enable her "will to power" and lead to her rejection of the currently imposed values of consumption.

In negativity there is a constant negotiation between openness, differance, and closure, certainty. Diana Nicole associates closure with "impoverishment, oppression, entropy, nihilism" and "openness- which is perceived as more consonant with the dynamics of becoming itself- is valorised" (2000: 231).

In this new politics of the self, the individual brings both positive and negative aspects of her own powers, like an artist, creatively oscillating between destruction and creation, and slipping out of her benumbed state in order to use a critical mind and form an authentic self. This authentic self is created through a transformative process, from *Being* to *Becoming*, and thus opens itself up to the possibility of affirmation of life through the destabilisation of the illusion of the perfections of the happy world, and of negating the social order. The final product of this process is the Nietzschean 'overman' or 'Übermensch', defined not as someone "with retrospective knowledge of its coming to reason but in its enacting again the Dionysian metabolism of life as negativity" (Nichole, 2000: 110). In other words, the individual possesses the artistic power and experiences delight in shaping and reshaping the individual's world.

The Nietzschean concept of negativity and "will to power" is relevant in this process of 'becoming'. It is considered by Nichole as "will to drive" as she relates the Nietzschean concept of will to power with the Dionysian/Apollonian nature: both a creature and creator, revealing both destruction and construction, representing artist and reason, of differentiations and bringing the pieces into a form.

She also claims that humanity is a privileged species who has an unprecedented power to practice an intensity of will to power, "however, the difficulty lies in understanding how it can both affirm (return to) life in its sensuous heterogeneity and sustain its creative symbolic powers" (Nicole, 2000: 110). And this will always be the struggle between the Dionysian and Apollonian with neither emerging as an ultimate victor.

CONCLUSION

The happy world myth that Nadia created is used to serve for the purposes of self-preservation in a world that is destructively chaotic and dismissive, yet unavoidable; in that world memory is repellent as it is a reminder of the suffering and pain that the 'real' world generated. However, at the end of the play the illusion of a happy world myth is shattered and this might be the first step for Nadia in her 'Becoming' through her 'performing' the renunciation of truth, as opposed to her 'inert' affirmation of truth.

In her attempt to see things as they really are, she de-subjectivizes herself from social order and challenges it accordingly. This might be considered as the new horizon for a politics of the self that opens up for her. Thus through the character of Nadia, as written by Mark Ravenhill, we have a new way of thinking about negativity as an indispensable part in the destruction and the reconstruction of the individual self and a necessary component for individuals as acknowledging such negativity generates will to power and have the potential of transforming the self.

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