

**KAFKAS UNIVERSITY**

**SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE**

**DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND  
LITERATURES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND  
LITERATURE**

**A POSTMODERNIST READING OF MARK  
RAVENHILL'S SHOPPING AND F\*\*\*ING AND SOME  
EXPLICIT POLAROIDS**

**MASTER OF DEGREE THESIS**

**ÇAĞLAYAN DOĞAN**

**YRD.DOÇ.DR. GENCER ELKILIÇ**

**KARS-2013**

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**KAFKAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE**

Çağlayan DOĞAN' a ait *A Postmodernist Reading of Mark Ravenhill's Shopping and F\*\*\*ing and Some Explicit Polaroids* konulu çalışma, jürimiz tarafından Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim dalında Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak oy birliğiyle kabul edilmiştir.

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Yrd.Doç.Dr. Mustafa ÖZDEMİR

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürü

## ABSTRACT

### MASTER THESIS

#### A POSTMODERNIST READING OF MARK RAVENHILL'S SHOPPING AND F\*\*\*ING AND SOME EXPLICIT POLAROIDS

Çağlayan DOĞAN

Supervisor: Asst.Prof.Dr. Gencer ELKILIÇ

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This thesis aims to scrutinize Mark Ravenhill, one of the most significant playwrights of In-Yer-Face Theatre, which began to gain influence in Britain at the beginning of the Nineties. *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*, two of Ravenhill's plays, are a postmodernist view of that decade; both are described as controversial. The beginning of the introduction discusses the ongoing understanding of theatre and its representative perspectives after World War II, as well as the social, economic, and political processes that led to the arrival of In-Yer-Face Theatre. Additionally, Mark Ravenhill's theatre aesthetic and his contributions towards contemporary British Theatre are revealed. It also scrutinizes the plays in a postmodernist aspect. *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is a dark comedy in which three friends' experiences are portrayed, a portrayal that reflects the postmodernist view of a globalised, recklessly capitalising world confronted by alienation as one of its most important problems. *Some Explicit Polaroids* is a political criticism on the confrontation of the two generations and reflects postmodernist tenets, which hold nihilistic values. In this study, the evaluations written on postmodern drama and the criticism on postmodernism are dealt with according to their resonances in the plays. The conclusion reveals the evaluations of this thesis.

**Key Words:** Mark Ravenhill, Shopping and F\*\*\*ing, Some Explicit Polaroids, Postmodernism

## ÖZET

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ  
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Bu çalışma, İngiltere’de doksanlı yılların başında etkisini göstermeye başlayan tartışmalı bir tiyatro türü olan suratına tiyatronun en önemli oyun yazarlarından biri olarak gösterilen Mark Ravenhill’in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* ve *Some Explicit Polaroids* isimli oyunlarını post-modern bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Giriş bölümünün başında ikinci dünya savaşından sonra süregelen tiyatro anlayışının ve temsilcilerinin tiyatroya bakış açılarını ve suratına tiyatronun oluşmasında etken olan sosyal, ekonomik ve politik süreçler ele alınmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak, Mark Ravenhill’ in tiyatro estetiği ve onun çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosuna kazandırdıklarının da üstünde durulmuştur. Giriş kısmından sonra oyunların postmodernist açıdan incelenmesine geçilmiştir, *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, günümüzün en büyük sorunlarından biri olan yabancılaşma ile yüzleşen, küreselleşen ve acımasızca kapitalistleşen dünyada, üç genç arkadaşın yaşadıklarının postmodernist bakış açısının eleğinden geçirilerek aktarıldığı bir kara mizahtır. *Some Explicit Polaroids*, iki farklı neslin çatışmasının postmodernist ölçütlerle yansıtıldığı, nihilist özellikleri de içerisinde barındıran politik bir eleştiridir. Bu çalışmada, postmodern tiyatro üzerine yazılmış olan değerlendirmeler ve postmodernizmin üzerine yapılmış olan eleştiriler oyunlarda buldukları yankılara göre ele alınmışlardır. Sonuç kısmında bu çalışma sonucunda erişilenler ortaya konulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mark Ravenhill, Shopping and F\*\*\*ing, Some Explicit Polaroids, Postmodernizm



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## INTRODUCTION

After the great impact of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, the contemporary British theatre experienced many fluctuations in the twentieth century which directly depend on the social and political agenda which occurred in the postwar period. The end of the Second World War meant: "rationing and poverty in economic terms and as a result of this economic weakness, a greater degree of political dependence upon other countries" (Skovmand, 1991, p.7). In 1945, the Labour Party acceded and provided young people coming from the labour-class the opportunity to get involved in the higher education process and thus create a welfare society, but people were still suffering from the destructions of the Second World War. In 1956, the Suez crisis "in which the authority of British imperial impulses was judged, globally and domestically, to have overstepped its political mark" (Rabey, 2003, p. 29) developed, Hungary was invaded by Russia, the predominant view in the political arena was oppositional and the interest of Britain focused on the politically conscious. Because of the loss of reputation in the economic and political arena, The Suez crisis also initiated a poignant discussion on public opinion. The British people who believed that they were still the superpower of the world were deeply disappointed as a result of the loss of Suez. In the 1950s and 1960s, Britain came up from behind its European neighbours with the effects of social drawbacks that occurred in this period. The increasing unemployment and rising prices were the most significant problems which Britain faced. The young generation, who were forced to maintain their lives in hard economic circumstances, started to inquire about the political system and the culture in which they grew up.

At the end of the twentieth century, the novel was the most dominant subbranch of literature, since it was the most obtainable and popular cultural literature subbranch in this period. In the 1950s, the social and political visions were introverted, the novels of this period, which were quite national, and limited, reproduced the British social milieu. At that time, the art of novel was a genre which appealed to middle class reader. As for the genre of theatre, it was an art which was heavily affected by the Second World War. Fifty percent of Britain's theatres went out of business in London until Second World War. Because of the

war, most of the theatre halls were destroyed and the war conditions caused a deep sorrowful aura in the society, and therefore it was not possible to perform anything on stage in this period. After several stagnant years, T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, and Terence Rattigan restored the British theatre over the period of ten years. At the same time, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, which reproduced the social and political circumstances and the milieu of the period in which it was written, breathed a sigh of relief into the post-war British theatre. It is considered that the debut of *Look Back in Anger* "marks the real break-through of the new drama into the British theatre" (Innes, 1992, p.98). Michael Billington who is the one of the most notable theatre critics of *The Guardian* highlights the importance of it in his *State of the nation: British Theatre since 1945*:

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, which opened at the Royal Court in May 1956, as ushering in a revolution in British theatre. [...] What actually happened, both in theatre and society, was something more complex: a perceptible shift in the balance of power and a growing tension between an entrenched conservatism and a burgeoning youth culture impatient with old forms and established institutions. The Tories were still in office and many familiar British rituals, from the Boat Race and Royal Ascot to the Last Night of the Proms, remained unchanged; but there is little doubt that the country itself became a more turbulent and violent place. (2007, p. 84)

This new spirit unearths a sort of long-awaited freshness in British theatre which had been in the doldrums since the beginning of the new century. The playwrights of this period started to write their plays for the Royal Court which supported and paid young writers. They wrote to take on the problems and sensibility of twentieth century man and depicted their anger against the system. Those writers unveiled their anger via their plays which grabbed truth instead of degenerate bourgeoisie theatre and gave voice to social and political issues of the period in which they lived. The Royal Court Theatre championed them, helping to stage plays and support the new young writers who were growing up in this period such as John Whiting, John Arden, Norman Frederic Simpson, Arnold Wesker, Caryl Churchill, and Harold Pinter, who are called the first wave, and Edward

Bond, Tom Stoppard, Joe Orton, David Hare, Howard Barker and Howard Brenton, who are called the second wave. The first and second wave playwrights of The Royal Court Theatre fulfilled the duties which had been placed on their shoulders and they completed their missions.

Since capitalism was the solitary economic system in existence in the monopolar world at the end of the Cold War, and since so many developments occurred, the preexisting modernism and postmodernism which had come to exist were also surpassed, making a new kind of aesthetic inevitable to express the political and social atmosphere. The post-war period was reclaimed in the Renaissance of British theatre after the Elizabethan period, but the playwrights focused on similar topics in their plays and people grew accustomed to the issues which the writers dealt with. The new playwrights were less interested/attached to these ideas, thus theatre writing and theatre in Britain were under threat.

Moreover, in the 1980s, the Tories returned to power and implemented their harsh conservative policies which adversely affected the British theatre. On 4 May 1979 Margaret Thatcher, who was the first woman Prime Minister in British history, went to Buckingham Palace, thereby giving birth to Thatcherism which created many complications for the British theatre in this decade. In this respect, it is important to note the specialities and implications of Thatcherite politics and policies. As Michael Billington in his book *State of the Nation* expresses:

What, though, did we mean by Thatcherism? Hugo Young in *One of Us* calls it a ragbag of ideas often lacking intellectual coherence. Peter Clarke in *Hope and Glory*, however, helpfully quotes *Nigel Lawson's* definition: a mixture of free markets, monetary control, privatisation and cuts in both spending and taxes, combined with a populist revival of the Victorian values of self-help and nationalism. At the heart of Thatcherism also lay a belief in the sacredness of the individual entrepreneur. (2007, p.28)

Although Thatcherism was dominant in every sector such as the economy, the way of thinking, taxation, and individuality in entrepreneurship, it particularly delivered a blow to the theatre. Even Caryl Churchill, one of the most predominant

feminist playwrights, said “she may be a woman but she is not a sister, she may be a sister but she is not a comrade. And in fact things have got much worse for women under Thatcher” (Billington, 2007, p.307). Another significant parameter is Thatcher’s inclination to the society on which she made a statement in Women’s own magazine:

I think we’ve been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it’s the government’s job to cope with it. I have a problem, I’ll get a grant. I’m homeless, the government must house me. They’re casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. (Thatcher, 1987)

Margaret Thatcher did not believe in the unification and power of society. In her ruling period, her inclinations towards any kind of art were not bright, and she even suspended payments to the theatre. These oppressive implications stifled theatrical developments and intellectual discussion, so there could not be a new sort of theatrical sensibility; therefore, British theatre remained vicious, helpless, and prosaic in this period.

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. The perception of this event in the media varied, so the Iraq war was broadcast live by CNN International using simulations. The genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda took place in the eyes of the world. When it comes to the early nineties, the world witnessed many political and social fluctuations, such as the fall of communist regimes, the reunification of Germany, and Margaret Thatcher’s resignation. From the theatrical point of view, British theatre experienced stagnation, so everybody blamed each other and institutions could not meet the need of contemporary theatrical development. It was unveiled that “British playwriting was in trouble, the playwright and new writing no longer appeared to be the driving force of British theatre” (Urban, 2006, pp.5-6). The predominant feeling of the early 1990s is bleakness towards the British theatre. Michael Billington in his *One Night Stands: A Critique’s View of Modern British Theatre* stated that “new drama no longer occupies the cultural position it has in

British theatre over the 35 years and he criticized new writing for its small scale nature which increasingly privatizes experience” (1993, pp. 360-361).

In such an atmosphere Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* debuted in Royal Court in 1995, and a new aesthetic and sensibility to British theatre labeled as In-yer-face Theatre by theatre critic Aleks Sierz appeared. By the 1990s, the rise of In-yer-face Theatre resurrected British theatre with a new sort of brutality. At the beginning of the 1990s, British drama was deprived of liveliness and it had recurrent circles of pedestrian forms. Sierz puts forward that “in the nineties, British drama was in trouble, it was In-yer-face writers that saved British theatre” (Sierz, 2001: xii). The arrival of In-yer-face Theatre secured British Theatre with new kinds of aesthetics and its experimentality. It is described by Sierz: “In-yer-face theatre is any drama which grabs the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message” (2001, p.4). How can you tell if a play is in-yer-face? Sierz in his *In-yer-face Theatre: British Drama Today* explains:

...the language is filthy, there's nudity, people have sex in front of audience even homosexual intercourse, violence is seen, one character humiliates another, taboos are broken, unmentionable subjects are broached, conventional dramatic structures are subverted. Expect tales of abuse; don't worry about the subversion of theatre form; expect personal politics, not ideology. Above all, this brat pack is the voice of youth. At its best, this kind of theatre is so powerful, so visceral, that it forces you to react - either you want to get on stage and stop what's happening or you decide it's the best thing you've ever seen and you long to come back the next night. As indeed you should. (2001, p.5)

An unusual way is used in the new aesthetics and form and different types of staging can be seen on stage. It draws on scenes of sex and sexual violence to agitate the audience. It uses a harsh language overtly, and the topics dealt with on-stage go beyond the ordinary, and many nasty things such as eye-gouging, rape, and homosexuality are witnessed on stage. It is postulated that In-yer-face theatre deals with taboo-breaking elements in its plays generally. As Aleks Sierz noted;

How can theatre be so shocking? The main reason is that it is live. Taboos are broken not in individual seclusion but out in the open. When you're watching a play, which is mostly in real time with real people acting just a few feet away from you, not only do you find yourself reactive but you also know that others are reactive and aware of your reaction. [...] Situations that are essentially private, such as sex, seem embarrassingly intimate onstage. Compared with the rather detached feeling of reading a play text, sitting in the dark surrounded by a body of people while watching an explicit performance can be an overwhelming experience. When taboos are broken in public, the spectators often become complicit witnesses. (2001, p. 7)

It is put forward that 1990's British drama wanted people to be shocked by staging the taboo-breaking matters on stage. In this sense, Sierz delineates that "it usually involves the breaking of taboos, insistently using the most vulgar languages, sometimes blasphemy, sometimes pornography, and it shows deeply private acts in public. These have the power to shock, and constitute anthropology of transgression and the testing of the boundaries of acceptability" (Sierz, 2003, p.19). In-yer-face theatre shocks spectators by using awfully filthy language and disgusting images, and it disturbs them by referring to violence onstage and shocks them by its unusual way of staging. Most In-yer-face playwrights are not involved in unveiling events in a normal manner: spectators sit and watch the play, they are totally passive- instead, the in-yer-face plays are experimental-the playwrights want audiences to feel the extreme emotions that are being shown on stage. In-yer-face theatre is totally experiential theatre.

Actually, the turning point of the theatre in the 1990s is Sarah Kane's appearance which triggered a rampart theatre aesthetic in British drama. Her first play, *Blasted*, which was staged on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1995 in the Royal Court breathed new life into the British theatre. Ken Urban expresses his feelings: "Kane's plays altered the landscape of British theatre in the 1990s" (Urban, 2001, p.25). Mary Luckhurts draws a parallel between Bond and Kane;" [With] *Blasted* the Royal Court directorate could argue that they had discovered a 1990s version of Bond" (Luckhurts, 2005, p.111). It is clear that Kane's theatre, which includes scenes of

abuse, rape, cannibalism, eye-gouging, torture, mutilation, annihilation, castration, addiction, madness, trauma, depression, and horror, is not completely new, but the timing of its appearance in British drama makes it more effective.

Given that In-yer-face Theatre is an experimental theatre, Kane's plays totally mirrors the sense of this new sensibility, and Urban in his *An Ethics of Catastrophe* highlights that "[...] Sarah Kane emerges as the most far-reaching experimentalist" (2001, p.40). Sierz's word supports that In-yer-face theatre is experimental 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" (Sierz, 2003, p.19). Kane refers to extreme violence and an unstageable new aesthetic in her plays to strengthen her new nihilistic, brutalist, and relentless theatre. Rebellato emphasizes that "Sarah Kane was not some petulant *enfant terrible* who simply glorified in shocking audiences; she was a committed, sophisticated, challenging playwright who had a fine sense of the traditions from which she came, and had a generous respect of and love from the community of writers she moved in" (Rebellato, 1999, p.281). As the pioneer of In-yer-face theatre, Kane creates a world in which harsh act of violence appeals, emphasizing her incredulous point of view. In point of fact Kane and the other in-yer-face theatre playwrights restored the nasty 90s theatre; Michael Billington, theatre critic of the Guardian, changing his first assessment which he made five years previously, commented in 1996: "I cannot recall a time when there were so many exciting dramatists in the twenty-something age group: what is more, they are speaking to audiences of their own generation" (Billington, 1996). In-yer-face writer, as Billington says, shifted the demographics of the theatre goers which consisted of older audiences before In-yer-face, but after the theatre halls were full of the twenty-something generation.

In the light of these developments, British Theatre in the 1990s gave birth to new playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill, Jez Butterworth, Judy Upton, Joe Penhall, Patrick Marber, Anthony Neilson, Philip Ridley, Phyllis Nagy, Naomi Wallace and Martin McDonagh. Their main inclination was not to expose their socialist utopia, yet they wrote their plays within the scope of decentralization,



nihilism, incredulity of metanarratives, and postmodern society. They mostly focus on consumerist society which gained strength after the Thatcher regime, because they followed the criticism of postmodernist philosophers such as Jameson and Baudrillard who deal with the spoiled or reckless sides of capitalist society in their works. In this period, Quentin Tarantino's movies *Pulp Fiction*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Natural Born Killers* came out, as did Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, in which "Welsh tells the stories of a group of Scottish junkies, with a wacky humour and dark, stylized language"(Sierz, 2001, p.57).

For those playwrights who accepted the challenge that plays would be written for black box (small theatre halls), a contest was arranged in Britain at the beginning of the 1990s, and they stood out with the harsh language they used, a more extreme version of sexuality on stage, and the manipulation of the depiction of intense violence. The playwrights of this period chose people who are exhausted, powerless, hopeless, and isolated for their plays because In-yer-face theatre snaps the audience's heads off with the most relentless of truth.

In-yer-face, which Boles described as "the second renaissance of contemporary English drama, which is always surprising, ever challenging and, on occasion, a tad messy" (Boles, 1999, p.125) refers to aggression, addiction, postmodern consumerist society, and sexual violence on stage. Sierz underlines that "it is a type of drama [that] uses explicit scenes of human emotion. It is characterized by stage images that depict acts such as anal rape, child abuse, drug injection, cannibalism, and vomiting. It also has a rawness of tone, a sense of life being lived on the edge" (Sierz, 2003, p.19). It applied shock tactics to increase the effectiveness of the plays; De Buck clarifies that "the main aim of these new [...] [aesthetic] is to make the spectators react to the moral problems discussed in their plays. It is no longer possible to simply enjoy watching a play without being provoked and feeling the need to respond" (2009, p.5). In-yer-face theatre is a sense of theatre which is inevitable, and reproduces the aggressive side of contemporary society.

It shocks the audience, without regards to the moral and social facts, and groups close together extreme violence, sexuality, and postmodern consumerism. In-yer-face theatre which includes those characteristics "[...] is not a clearly

delineated movement, but rather a theatrical sensibility” (De Buck, 2009, p.5). Ravenhill’s words support De Buck’s claim: “[...] we had no intention of being a school. I hadn’t met Sarah until well after the first production of *Blasted* in 1995, and I had neither seen nor read her play when I wrote *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*” (Ravenhill, 2006 (a), p.2). This is openly a product which is made by individual, twentysomething playwrights who are called by some critics as New Nihilists, New Jacobians and Cool Writers. The Playwrights of the nasty Nineties who wrote about the problems of postmodern society, post-consumerism, and alienation of modern man, selected their characters for their plays as reflections of the imminent milieu of British society which consisted of ribald, impertinent, troubled, and isolated members. These playwrights touch upon these characters’ relentless inner conflicts by using the most powerful postmodern discourses to postulate the present conditions. It was unveiled that Ravenhill generated the most significant examples of the new aesthetic and De Buck discloses that “in most of his plays, Ravenhill focuses on the absence of reliable ideologies and the link between sex and consumerism. Sexual transactions, omnipresent in contemporary British society, are emphasized, whereas political viewpoints are neglected to entirely left out” (2009, p.4).

Mark Ravenhill, considered one of the trailblazers and prolific playwrights of In-yer-Face Theatre, was born in 1966 in Haywards Heath, West Sussex and *Ravenhill* managed to study Drama and English at Bristol University from 1984 to 1987. In his twenties, he discovered that he was not a great actor, and he said that “I originally wanted to act, [...], but I quickly realized that other people were better than me” (Sierz, 2001, p.122). Ravenhill has always been concerned with theatre through different lenses, therefore “he had taken jobs as director, administrative assistant, drama teacher and freelance director before he decided to become a playwright” (Goethals, 2010, p.26).

He lays bare that two things in his life urge him to write: the death of his homosexual boyfriend and the James Bulger murder (Ravenhill, 2004, p.312) He was diagnosed HIV-positive in the mid-90s (Ravenhill, 2008), and his boyfriend died from AIDS during that decade (Ravenhill, 2004, p.309). The other event, the James Bulger murder in 1993, was also very heart-wrenching. James Bulger was only three years old when he was kidnapped from a shopping mall by two boys: Jon

Venables and Robert Thompson. The boys harassed him and left him to die. In Ravenhill's *A tear in the Fabric: The James Bulger Murder and The New Theatre Writing in the Nineties* he explains that: "how could I have never spotted before that I was someone who had never written a play until the murder of James Bulger? And it was the Bulger murder that prompted me to write? I've been writing ever since the murder" (2004, p.308).

As his late childhood and his twenties were impressed by the social and literal development in the 1980s, Ravenhill found inspiration in "mainly American novels of the late Eighties and Nineties: Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*, Bret Easton Ellis's *Less than Zero*, Tara Jonowitz's *Slaves of New York* and Jary McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big city*" (Sierz, 2001, p.124). He expresses that "they managed to capture the essence of materialism and a kind of moral vacuum, and they reflected my sense of the world better than any British fiction or drama" (Sierz, 2001, p.124).

Ravenhill is regarded one of the most revolutionary playwrights in the nineties' new theatre aesthetic in Britain, like Sarah Kane and Anthony Neilson, his works gained him a sensational reputation. Ravenhill's first job was as administrative assistant at the Soho Poly, a new writing theatre. After he left the contemporary theatre, he became a freelance director, taught drama and worked at the Finborough Theatre, run by Phil Willmott's Steam Industry. After these experiences, Ravenhill directed *Hansel and Gratel* which is a children's play, written by Sheila Goff in the Midlands Arts Center in Birmingham for Christmas Eve. He complained about the kids' screaming, saying "Oh God, when I get back to London I just want to do something really adult" (Sierz, 2001, p.123). Then, Ravenhill wrote his first play, *Fist*, in which two men talk about sex for ten minutes; it is considered to be the precursor of the beginning of the new sensibility in British theatre.

Ravenhill's first outstanding play is *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*<sup>1</sup>; it was directed by Max Stafford –Clark for the Out of Joint Theatre at the Royal Court Theatre in

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<sup>1</sup>Because of the Indecent Advertisement Act of 1889, the title was transformed to *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, (Sierz, 2001, p. 125) Under a Victorian law –the Indecent Advertisement Act 1889, amended by the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981-the word 'fuck' is banned from public display. Originally drafted to stamp out the explicit adverts that prostitutes once put in shop

September in 1996. It is considered one of the most important plays obviously reflecting the Nineties'-especially the nasty Nineties- social fluctuations in In-er-face Theatre. The play harbors some cruel characters in the chaos, the social criticism, isolation, alienation, sexual violence, and postmodern society; it was taken into consideration with its shocking and confronting sides. According to Sierz "If Sarah Kane's *Blasted* publicized the affronting new wave, Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* proved that a new sensibility had well and truly arrived" (2001, p.122). He divulges that the characters mirror physical, verbal, and sexual violence which are seen in the British society of the 1990s. Ravenhill made social criticism via using harsh metaphors on stage. As all leftist playwrights, Ravenhill implements as the main topic of his play consumerism and materialism and his emphasis is on the exploitative system of today's cruel world. He desires only to be a playwright who reflects his own truth through the use of violence on stage. However, he approaches gay relationships in most of his plays, and he handles the topic of homosexuality by scrutinizing the concepts of otherness, alienation, and consumerism. Ravenhill's characters in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* are lacking a certain sense of structure, as he expresses: "Certainly in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* the young characters are in a world that's without politics, without religion, without family, without any kind of history, without structures or narratives, and as a consequence they have to build up their own structures" (Monforte, 2007, p.93).

Ravenhill brings forward some supplementary parts by using postmodern images which are considered philosophical insertions to his play. In this sense, the actual responsibility is on the audiences' shoulders, and thus, he forces them to react, and he divulges that "the audience is asked to view the text in such a way that the effect is a bit [like] being at a peep show" (Svich, 2003, p.83). Ravenhill desires that audiences pay attention and restore their ideas at the end of the play. It is raised from Ravenhill's theatre perception which intensifies criticism of corrupted relationships of the contemporary milieu. In this respect, Ravenhill highlights the agency of the audience who are no longer just a theatergoer. Svich makes it clear that "the reflexive nature of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* places the audience as not only voyeurs but also consumers of Ravenhill's theatrical outlet. While this is a

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windows, a law designed to curb a real-life activity was used to ban adverts for a play that represented, among others, that activity." (Sierz, 2001, 125) From now on it is used in this way.

provocative concept, it allows the play to turn back on itself, leaving the audience simply as consumers of fringe goods ... (2003, p.83)

Apart from *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Ravenhill wrote other shocking plays such as *Faust is Dead*, *Sleeping Around*, *Handbag*, and *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Ravenhill's most controversial plays were written in the mid to late Nineties period. In *Faust is Dead*, Ravenhill puts forwards a postmodernist perspective, Svich states "unlike *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*'s quasi-epic Kafka-esque commentary on an immediate, specific London, *Faust is Dead* presents California as a virtual Baudrillard-like world whose topography is flattened by transitory experience" (Svich, 2003, p. 85). Ravenhill touches upon two themes "anonymity and the randomness of identity in the contemporary world" (Svich, 2003, p.84).

His next play, *Sleeping Around*, was written by in cooperation with three other writers: Abi Morgan, Hillary Fannin, and Stephen Greenhorn. It is about emotional violence. Svich comments about the play: "Written while he was literary director of Paine's Plough Theatre Company, which is based in London but is devoted to supporting writers from Scotland, Wales, and the regions of England, *Sleeping Around* is a unique modern-day version of Schnitzler's *La Ronde*" (Svich, 2003, p.85). Ravenhill's next play *Handbag* (1998) was reproduced from Oscar Wilde's classic play *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895). Svich notes that "Ravenhill's play is both a prequel to Wilde's text and a contemporary story about unconventional parenting and its effects. The marriage of two fin-de-siecles, *Handbag* looks back and forward in time with equal moments of unease and dread" (Svich, 2003: 85-86). Next Ravenhill wrote *Some Explicit Polaroids* which is a follow-up of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. It revolves between two different generations and "it was a portrait of societal chaos, random violence and a desensitized London" (Goethals, 2010, p.28).

In *Mother Clap's Molly House* (2001), Ravenhill changes his style, a bit musically, and he adds songs to the play for the first time. Goethals also expresses "in *Mother Clap's Molly House* (2001) Ravenhill worked with alternations of songs and dialogue" (Goethals, 2010, p.28). Ravenhill altered his perception of form and he applied different themes after 2000 writing *Product* which was highly experimental and referred to new themes which "is both a satire on our post -9/11

attitudes to terrorism, and also a minutely observed reflection on the limits of language and form to capture contemporary reality” (De Buck, 2009, p.4). His other significant plays are; *Feed Me* (Radio Play) (2000), *Totally Over You* (2003), *Education* (2004), *Citizenship* (2005), *The Cut* (2006), *Pool (No Water)* (2006), *Ravenhill for Breakfast* (2007), *Scenes from Family Life* (2007), *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008), *Overthere* 2009, *The Experiment* (2009), *Ten Plagues* (2011).

Mark Ravenhill is referred to by Matt Wolf as the one of the new Nihilists (1997:44) along with Sarah Kane. In Monforte’s interview, he says “the reason why I became interested in *Faust* was actually the responsibility-or irresponsibility- of the philosopher who creates-even fetishizes- a sense of nihilism and pointlessness in the way that Baudrillard can do” (2007, p.96). In this statement, he reflects on his point of view and why he chose to write about *Faust*, and we notice that one of the most appealing features of it is the sense of nihilism. The dirty realism is seen and he recreates the hopeless moral nihilism of the world in his plays.

In most of his plays, he highlights post-consumerist society and sexual violence by using a shock technique which was called upon by former playwrights: “Like Joe Orton, to whose anarchic spirit he is often compared, Ravenhill revels in unnerving his audience and crossing boundaries of authority and moral license in order to expose the licentiousness of his age” (Svich, 2003, p.90). Ravenhill wants the audience to be shocked by his vulgar, harsh, and violent images on stage. Therefore, he refers to explicit presentations of sexual intercourses in order to shock theatergoers and create reactions. Ravenhill’s characters totally unveil the imminent milieu and lay bare their post-consumerist lifestyle. It is disclosed that humankind consumes everything and therefore, they are numb towards everything. It is postulated in the play that the characters have no responsibilities and commitments to each other. Peter Billingham expresses that in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* “[...] everyone knows the price of everything but the value of nothing” (2007, p.137). They are all alone in their quasi-crowded desolate ambit. The conditions make them more selfish and ignorant to other issues. The relationships are mannered and being human is on sale. Ravenhill criticizes the spoilt system of society by indicating distorted relationships on stage. “Ravenhill is not an angry

young man, but a more paradoxical figure: his plays may explore contemporary life, using gadgets, pop culture icons and poststructuralist ideas, but his values are traditional. His motive is always moral, his politics leftist. Not for him the relativism of postmodern philosophy; he much prefers traditionally humanistic values” (Sierz, 2001, p.152). He also alludes to many diseased connections, which are mainly related to immorality and the dark side of consumerist society. The emotional relations among characters are unwell, materialistic and carnal. All of them have assorted ailing affinities with others. In addition to their own relationships, it is seen in the plays that there are strong bonds between characters and some commoditization. A direct link between stories and distorted sensual pleasure is also emphasized. It is divulged that transactions are also a substantial element in Ravenhill’s plays and it is specifically associated with disclosing the trashiness of others.

Ravenhill indicates explicitly that the consumerism and materialism of the exploitative system of today’s cruel world are the main topic in his plays. He reflects the bad sides of the contemporary world which is full of fatal consumerism in all arenas. Even as the problems of the consumerist lifestyles he saw in society urged him to write, he also highlights the totally materialized world in his plays. Enric Monforte’s interview with Mark Ravenhill puts forth the reason for the cruel consumerism in his plays, and why his plays reflect so much of a commercial, economic, and highly materialized world:

There were massive changes happening in Britain all the way during my education at university, with the country moving from being a society with a mixed economy and an anachronistic consensus about politics – a consensus about a form of state capitalism-to a free market economy. It was the first country in Europe to do that so aggressively and to do it very quickly. The whole fabric of the country was transformed, and that had a huge effect on everybody. Those kids in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* are at the very tail end of that experience in terms of what wild free market, that radical western capitalism does... (Manforte, 2007, p.95),

As regards Mark Ravenhill's plays being considered as products of a gay author, he disclaims that he is a member of the gay/lesbian theatre and says he wanted to state his own voice by referring to violence on stage. Although he touches upon gay relationships in most of his plays and deals with the topic of homosexuality, by scrutinising the relationship between capitalism and consumerism, Ravenhill takes homosexuality into account in his plays in a postmodern way. He was called one of the most predominant queer playwrights, but in his interview with Enric Monforte, he says;

I don't remember ever saying that I was a queer playwright. I have certainly never wanted to be involved in any kind of theatre that's directed towards a specific gay/lesbian audience. There's a strand of theatre in London, a fringe theatre, that aims specifically to attract gay/lesbian audiences and that never interested me. To speak to a particular constituency and offer a confirmation of an identity doesn't seem to me to be very challenging. My plays have included gay and lesbian characters because writing about those characters always comes easily to me, especially in the case of gay male characters. As a reflection of who I am I include gay characters in the plays. (2007, p.91)

Ravenhill's plays "are driven by both the appropriation and assimilation of postmodern superficiality or depthlessness, and a critique of these same features and values. In particular the role of consumption and commodification in the plays produces a problematic commentary on contemporary selfhood and responsibility" (Wallace, 2005, p.269). He presents his point of view by exhibiting postmodern discourses in the plays, which commonly deal with the corrupted sides of human being, selfhood, irresponsibility, alienation, post-consumerism, ailing relationships in society, hypocrisy of the political system, and incredulity of grand doctrines. Since the contemporary theatre goes beyond borders and the plays show unstageable things – i.e. extreme violence on stage, rape, castration, and visceral images - Ravenhill refers to the discourse of postmodern philosophers such as Baudrillard, Foucault, Jameson, and Lyotard in order to support his claims. Therefore, his plays are reflections of a typical response to the difficulties of living in a postmodern society which is described as a blurry, chaotic ambit.



In this study, the goal is to present Mark Ravenhill's postmodern style and his postmodern plays in a broad perspective. First, it is focused on *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* one of the most significant plays reflecting the nasty Nineties' postmodern philosophies. In this play, the post-consumerist society which is reflected in the exhausted Nineties' society in a postmodern harmony is exhibited. Since the play is a product of post-consumerist contemporary society, Lyotard and Baudrillard's postmodernist discourses play a significant role in this study. It is also scrutinized in the second part in detail. The last play studied is considered a follow-up of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. *Some Explicit Polaroids* reflects the post-consumerist side of contemporary societies explicitly. It is focused on the gaps of two different generations, and young characters reflect the consumerism in a postmodern society while the old characters reproduce the political sides of the play. We propound *Some Explicit Polaroids* has an out of tune characterization and ideology, as the play reflects the ambiguity of postmodern society. The body depicted the characteristic of the play and the postmodern sides in a far-reaching manner.

In the course of this thesis, postmodern criticism is referred to clarify the links between plays and postmodern culture which is dominantly seen in Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*. The purpose of this thesis is to focus on postmodernism in his two plays in terms of postmodern criticism which "[...] can take up the task of criticism and critique in their modern sense, by shaping the connection between the two terms in an original way which has still to be thought" (Wood, 1990, p. 66). This thesis reveals that the postmodern tenets correspond in two plays within the scope of its theatrical echoes. As a result, it determines that the evaluations written on postmodern drama and the criticism on postmodernism are dealt with according to their resonances in the plays as a method of this study. In addition, this thesis will conclude that Mark Ravenhill's provocative theatre aesthetic ravaged the 1990s theatre perception, as propounded in the light of postmodern tenets.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF POSTMODERNISM**

Postmodernism, which is used for almost every new thing, is one of the most controversially discussed cultural concepts since Second World War. It is adduced to define architecture, music, technology, contemporary lifestyles, television, radio, all kinds of arts, furniture, and so on. Postmodernism is so complex concept that there is no single definition to totally clarify it. The term of postmodernism was first used in Federico De Onis's book *Antologia de la Poesia Espanola e Hispanoamericana* which is a reaction to modernism. (1934). In 1947, it was used by Arnold Tonybee in his book *A Study of History*. In the 1950s, the term postmodernism was used by Irwin Howe and Harry Levin in literature criticism. In the 1960s, postmodernism was used by Lesli Friedler and Ihab Hassan who had different views on it. In the early 1970s, postmodernism first gained validity including the terms, in first architecture, dance, theatre, painting art, cinema, and music. After World War II, Europe tried to dress war's wounds, therefore, postmodernism came late. Postmodernism totally existed in Europe at the end of the 1970s. The philosophers who scrutinized it were Kristeva, and Lyotard in France; Habermas in Germany. In the 1980s, postmodernism became controversial in all kinds of arts and intellectual areas.

Moreover, Postmodernism evolved out of the Second World War which had a great influence on development of postmodernism. Therefore, postmodernism takes on reckless sides of world since it was grown in a milieu that saw the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Cold War in years which the world was divided into two main groups Communists (Russia and the Warsaw Pact) and the West (USA and NATO). After the war, "Britain lost its power and status in the world. Those were the years in which people experienced the threat of the hydrogen bomb which resulted in the increase in weapons of mass destruction and the fear of total annihilation of humanity" (Usman, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, in the following years, several merciless wars and social problems broke out, such as the 1950-53 Korean War, the Cuban crisis in from 1962, 1964-1973 the Vietnam War, and the Watergate Scandal in 1974. In 1981 Iran waged war with Iraq. 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War years continued until the

collapse of the communist regime in the USSR. It is revealed that all these developments had an impact on postmodernism, and so it is a discourse which focuses on a catastrophic and reckless world. It is a mouthpiece of the oppressed, for people who were treated as doormats, and for others.

In the 1950s and 1960s, British society experienced great changes in lifestyles, living standards, cultural structure, and personal freedom. The income of workers increased, and the economic recovery was implemented, therefore, domestic and international demand was created. Besides, a huge transformation in sexual behavior, attitudes, and preference was witnessed. As compared to past British society, sexual preference and liberation gained importance for example among homosexuals, and feminist relationships were permitted in to social life. In the 1970s and 1980s, society experienced recession and a high unemployment rate. The violence appearing in the society was on the rise day by day; there was variance of thoughts about the reasons to define this violence. It is revealed that “conservatives claimed that it was because of the loss of strong family and church ties and lack of discipline, the left wing put the blame on high unemployment, and aimlessness among the youth living in the country” (Usman, 2011, p.4). In the 1990s, Britain became a country whose cultural and ethnical backgrounds changed considerably, therefore, British society included different subcultures such as feminist, homosexuals, and ethnic cultures. In short, it is claimed that the unity in society was no longer available in terms of ethnicity in the 1980s and 1990s.

## CONSUMERISM AND POST-CONSUMERISM

It is certain that capitalism is one of the most significant tenets behind postmodernism. Karl Marx asserted “[a] society which is under the control of capitalism lets the market organize its lives which leads to materialism” (qtd. Lyon, 1999, 11-12). The postmodern society is directly associated with the consumerist lifestyle and mass consumerism in the contemporary world. Indeed, it is dominantly related with the balance of supply demand; if it is high, it is revealed that services and facilities require new markets. Therefore, everything in the world is commodified, and cities are centers of consumerism where people spend their time or money recklessly. In postmodern society, there are many variant forms of consumerism such as shopping malls, credit cards, or online shopping which allows you to buy anything from any part of the world easily, and they are all connotative of global capitalism.

In respect thereof, consumerism goes beyond the usual using-up; therefore it has a bad reputation which exploits everything. It is adduced in Jean Baudrillard’s expressions: “[...] the ultimate configuration that of postmodernism undoubtedly characterizes the most degenerated, most artificial, and most eclectic phase [...]” (1989, 40) and also “postmodernism is the simultaneity of destruction previous values and their reconstruction” (1989, 41). It is unveiled that there is a strong link between degenerated things and consumerism. Since human-being consume everything, everything in the world is trivialized. On the other hand, consumerism or post-consumerism are based on the redundancy of the contemporary system. Jean Baudrillard in his *The Anorexic Ruins*, highlights:

We are no longer in a state of growth; we are in a state of excess. We are living in a society of excrescence, meaning that which incessantly develops without being measurable against its own objectives. The boil is growing out of control, recklessly at cross purposes with itself, its impacts multiplying as the causes disintegrate. That is leading to enormous congestion of the systems, to their deregulation through hypertely, through an excess of functionality,

through virtual satiation. This process can be compared best with cancerous metastases – conditions, in which a body's organic rules of the game are lost, enabling such a formation of cells to manifest its invincible and fatal vitality, partially leading it to stop obeying its own genetic commands, and finally to grow rampantly instead of following an organized pattern of development. (1989, 29)

In this study, the terms consumerism and post-consumerism refer to the insatiability of contemporary postmodern society. These terms are reproduced in the Mark Ravenhill's theatre aesthetic which dominantly focuses on social, emotional, and economical consumerism witnessed on all sides of contemporary society. In the investigation part of the plays, the term of post-consumerism is referred to in order to reveal Ravenhill's characters' social status and their attitude toward life. In this parallel, it is claimed that Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* and *Some Explicit Polaroids* reflect a marginalized perception of consumerism, which includes excessive manners of sexual relationships, drug use, emotional ups and downs, and extreme emphasis on capitalism; thus, the term post-consumerism is used to clarify the contemporary social milieu for this thesis.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE END OF GRAND NARRATIVES: SHOPPING and F\*\*\*ING

After the success of Sarah Kane's landmark play *Blasted* in British theatre, Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* proved that the new aesthetic had arrived and a new epoch had begun. Peter Billingham stated: "Mark Ravenhill is, along with the late Sarah Kane, probably the most well known and controversial of the new generation of young writers in British theatre from the mid-1990s on until the present" (2007, p.134). Ravenhill stages commoditization and consumerist society in his plays so as to depict the postmodern age explicitly. According to Wandor (2001), it is suggested that:

[...] consumerism absorbs both shopping and fucking. No-one is really able to look after themselves. The former involves theft and ownership, the latter, continuous physical, homosexual violation. At the centre are semi-homeless, parentless, unloved young people. The only older figure is the exploitative, cruel, emotionally hypocritical Brian, who represents the male-dominated society outside (p. 228).

According to De Vos, "contemporary uprootedness and lack of values are [...] directly and expressly put in the context of postmodernism" (De Vos, 2002, p.48). It can be discerned that Ravenhill unveils the contemporary consumer society by using a postmodern perspective. Clare Wallace stated that:

The ways in which Ravenhill's plays are driven by both the appropriation and assimilation postmodern superficiality depthlessness, and a critique of these same features and values. In particular, the role of consumption and commoditization in the

plays produces a problematic commentary on contemporary selfhood and responsibility. (Wallace, 2005, p.268)

It is revealed that Ravenhill wants to shock the audience by using postmodern ill-communication, individualism, and consumerism. He reproduces his own period using harsh violence and contemporary postmodern images. On this issue, he has stated his desire “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” (Ravenhill, 2003).

Ravenhill’s *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London, on 26 September 1996. The protagonist of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is Mark<sup>2</sup> who is a drug addict and decides to go to a rehabilitation centre. He is dismissed because he violates the rules of the centre. When he comes back, he renounces all sentimental commitment; nevertheless, when Mark meets Gary, a fourteen-year-old prostitute, he falls in love with him. Lulu, who is the only female and only heterosexual character, and who according to Michelene Wandor is superfluous in the play (2001, p.228) suffers from sharing problems and inner conflict. Robbie is a bisexual character and the most reckless figure of the play. Gary, who was abused by his stepfather in his youth, wants paternal love because he was deprived of it by his own parents. At the center of the play’s action, Robbie gives all the ecstasy pills away for free, and, growing nervous, Brian demands his money, which leads Lulu and Robbie to start a telephone sex line to repay Brian’s. Gary offers to give the money that Brian wants if they fulfill his dream: being penetrated with a knife. In the last scene, Gary is no longer seen or mentioned, and it is generally inferred that he died in violent sexual intercourse. At the end of the play, Brian forgives their debts since they grasp his ideology.

In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Ravenhill refers to the “graphic treatment of urban violence and merchandised sex” (Wade, 1999, p.109), and he exhibits postmodern brutality and human solidarity using harsh shock tactics while referring to his characters immense sense of lack of communication. Ravenhill’s work

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<sup>2</sup> Caridad Svich in her *Commerce and Morality in the theatre of Mark Ravenhill* referred to Mark as the protagonist of the play.

reproduces sexual graphics of simulations, and onstage sexual violence. Wade highlights that:

Beyond its sensationalist aspects, however, *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* poses for its audience some very basic questions concerning the contemporary moment and its disconnections. It is my contention that the play well dramatizes the confusions, impasses, and emotional vertigo of the postmodern condition and that the depiction of violence is an attending consequence. And, its guttersnipe sensibility notwithstanding, I view Ravenhill's work as ultimately ethical in its focus and philosophical in its resolution, with a conclusion that begs reflection regarding personal freedom, identity, interdependence, and the viability of human solidarity.(1999, p.109)

It is claimed that Ravenhill's work is directly related to postmodern society, and that he deals with the philosophical, psychological, and emotional sides of post-humanity. Mostly his characters symbolize the ill-communication of postmodern society and their inner confrontations with themselves. It finds its resonances in lines like these:

**Mark:** I want to be alone for a while.

**Robbie:** Is someone coming round?

**Lulu:** Do you owe money?

**Mark:** No. No one's coming round. Now – go to bed.

**Lulu:** So what are you going to do?

**Mark:** Just sit here. Sit and think. My head's a mess. I'm fucked.

(Ravenhill, 2001, p.4)

Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, revolves around three main characters, pointing to the three young home-mates' world by focusing on their isolated, desolate relationships with each other. One of them is a drug-addict, Mark, and he



is dismissed from a rehab center due to his violation of one of the rules: he has sexual intercourse with one of the other members of the rehabilitation centre. One of the most important and telling issues for Ravenhill's protagonist, Mark, is that he only has sexual intercourse when he pays:

**Mark:** Pretty regular. The important thing for me right now, for my needs, is that this doesn't actually mean anything, you know? Which is why I wanted something that was a transaction. Because I thought if I pay then it won't mean anything. Do you think that's right-in your experience? (Ravenhill, 2001, pp.24-25).

It is delineated that the things we pay for are trash and useless. Actually Ravenhill emphasizes the trashiness of the other, and he renders a corrupted social unit devoid of any moral order. It is underscored that transactions substitute for the real love that is commonly seen as trivial in contemporary, postmodern society. In addition, Ravenhill's work criticizes reckless capitalism which is directly referred to as postmodern consumerist society; it is testified, as Jameson claims, by the fact that "aesthetic production today has become integrated into a commodity production generally and consequently such a market demands aesthetic innovation and experimentation" (Jameson, 1998, p.316). In the beginning of the play, Lulu wants Mark to tell them a shopping story. This corresponds to the trashiness of others and the inconsequentiality of contemporary humans:

**Mark:** 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 sort of straight away that I'm going to have you. You know you don't have a choice. No control. Now this guy comes up to me. He's a fat man. Fat and hair and lycra and he says: See the pair by the yoghurt? Well, says fat guy, they're both mine. I own them. I own them but I don't want them- because you know something?-they're trash. Trash and I hate them. Wanna buy them? How much? Piece of

trash like them. Let's say...twenty. Yeah, yours for twenty. So, I'd the deal. I hand it over. And I fetch you. I don't have to say anything because you know. You've seen the transaction. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.5)

Ravenhill's play has nihilistic characteristics, as is commonly seen in the characters' expressions. Nietzsche gives a clear-cut definition of nihilism: "What does nihilism mean? That the highest devaluation of themselves. The aim is lacking: why? finds no answer" (Nietzsche, 1968, p.9). It is reevaluated by Urban: "nihilism appears as a three-fold concept: it is a philosophical problem about value and meaning in a godless world, an effect of hopelessness, and an ethical stance where change comes from destruction" (2007, p.44). It is disclosed that one expects to find something - a god, a higher power, a unity, a reason. Instead, one finds absence. This corresponds in the play to one of Gary's lines: "I've got this unhappiness. This big sadness swelling like it's gonna burst. I'm sick and I'm never going to be well... I want it over. And there's only one ending...He's got no face in the story. But I want to put a face to him"(Ravenhill, 2001, p.85).

Ken Urban explains that "the play's exploration of nihilism connects it to the world of Cruel Britannia, to the possibilities of an active nihilism (2007, p.47)" which "is an affirmation of life; suffering becomes a way to extol existence, not denigrate it. The recognition of the valuelessness of the world, while painful, is also the opportunity to create new values, rooted not in metaphysics, but in materiality" (Urban, 2007, p.44). This finds its mirror in the play in Gary's lines: "I should kick you out, you know that? I shouldn't be wasting my time with losers like you. Look at you. Druggie with thirty quid. I'm in demand me. I don't have to be doing this. There's a bloke, right, rich bloke, big house. Wants me to live with him..." (Ravenhill, 2001, p.26). Gary's fantasy that a man wants him to live with him is a nihilistic demand similar to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* which is considered an early postmodernist and nihilistic play of the mid-twentieth century. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon anticipate Godot's coming, but he does not come and they console themselves. As is seen in the play:

**Vladimir:** We'll hang ourselves to-morrow.

(Pause.) Unless Godot comes.

**Estragon:** And if he comes

**Vladimir:** We'll be saved. (Beckett, 2006, p.87)

Ravenhill's characters mirror the nihilistic, amoral sides of postmodern society. Mark's speech proves this: "So I'm in there. I'm in and I kneel. I pay worship. My tongue is worshipping that pussy like it's God. And that's when she speaks. Speaks and I know who she is" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.75). It shows that the characters' blasphemic attitudes cover the whole play. Additionally it is seen that the characters are not pious, and that they reflect the Godless nihilistic view. It finds its mirror in Gary and Mark's lines:

**Mark:** You God Squad?

**Mark:** I'm sorry?

**Gary:** I had 'em before. We're at it he kept going on about Lamb of Jesus. Hit me. I give as good as I took.

**Mark:** No, I'm not God Squad (Ravenhill, 2001, p.24).

In *Postmortem Thought and the End of Man* Michael Clifford states: "The death of God means the end of man. The end of man heralds the possibility of a space in which it is once more possible to think. To think requires thought's liberation from metaphysics. Thinking requires a language that can speak outside of/free from the arch of metaphysical discourse" (1989, p.219). It is directly related to the play's mood because of Ravenhill emphasis on the end of man and end of humanity in *-Shopping and F\*\*\*\*ing-*. Ravenhill tries to lay bare the end of man by portraying Lulu's self-oriented and virtueless attitudes towards shopping. She shows that being human is not as significant as their self-satisfaction. It is explicitly embodied in the sex line scene:

There was this phone call. I had this call. Twenty minutes, half hour ago. Youngish. Quite well spoken really. And I did the...you know...where are you sitting? In the living-room.

Right. And you're...? Yes, yes, playing with his dick. Good. Fine. So far, auto-pilot. And then he says, I'm watching this video. Well, that's good. And then he starts to...he describes...because he got this video from his mate who copied it from his mate from dahdahdah. And I mean, he's wanking to this video of a woman, a student girl who's in the Seven-Eleven, working behind the counter. And there's a wino and...yeah. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.61)

Fredric Jameson, who is one of the most powerful theorists of postmodernism, states that "I believe that the emergence of postmodernist is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late consumer or multinational capitalism. I believe also that its formal features in many ways express the deeper logic of this particular social system" (Jameson, 1998, p.11). In this sense, Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* emphasizes capitalism, which is the only dominant system in contemporary society and his characters obviously reproduce the reckless capitalist view. Urban testifies that "Ravenhill's characters are overdetermined by economics. But while money is crucial for survival, it has paradoxically robbed the world of its meaning, of its value" (2007, p.46). This idea is referred to in the play:

**Brian:** We must work. What we've got to do is make the money. For them. My boy. Generations to come. We won't see it of course-that purity. But they will. Just as long as we keep on making the money. Not in chemicals. Not pure. Supplies aren't the best. So a kid dies. And then it's headlines and press conferences. And you watch the dad, you watch a grown man cry and you think: time to move out of chemicals. (Ravenhill, 2001, pp.88-89).

Postmodernism is not the discourse of dominants, but rather the others, losers and oppressed such as blacks, gays, and denizens of third world's countries. Ravenhill represents the otherness within the body of the characters, who generally stand-in for the sexually problematic: they can be called alien "sex fiends (Otherness, gender, insecurity, and antagonism merge in them) who violently

challenge the symbolic boundaries on which normality rests” (Emig, 2005, p.276). Ravenhill ‘s *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, “has already lost out to its other, as Lulu’s violent outburst (both rhetorical and physical) against male homosexuality indicates”(Emig, 2005, p.276):

**Lulu:** Fucking fucker asshole. Fuck. Pillowbiter. (Hit.)  
Shitstabber. (Hit.)

Boys grown up you know and stop playing with each other’s willies. Men and women make the future. There are people out there who need me. Normal people who have kind tidy sex when they want it. And boys? Boys just fuck each other. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.37)

It is revealed that Lulu, the only heterosexual character in the play, reproduces what is generally seen as a sexually violent and postmodern sense of brutality. Rainer Emig in his *Alien Sex Fiends: The Metaphoricity of Sexuality in Postmodernity*, asserts that:

Lulu delivers an ode to Freudian normality, where childish polymorphomous perversion makes way for adult genital heterosexuality. The hegemonic power of this bourgeois model is implied in the casual you know. It is a normality that would apparently grant Lulu’s existence a purpose, but is undercut by the way relationships and sex are portrayed throughout the play (not kind, not tidy, not when wanted), and furthermore undermines itself when it sets deviant boys against normal people, a comparison that does not work. The alien fiend is always already inside normality and not to be separated from it (in the same way that perversion in Freud partakes of normality- or even constitutes it). (2005, p.276)

According to Freud, “no healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim; and the universality of finding is in itself enough to show how inappropriate it is to use the word perversion as a term of reproach” (Freud, 1967, p.26). It is claimed that Lulu’s

heterosexuality reproduces Freudian normality, but the postmodern alien fiend is seen in Lulu's Freudian normality.

Ihab Hassan, who is the one of the most powerful postmodernist literati, puts forward that postmodernism in drama: "[...] veers toward open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms, is a course of fragments, an ideology of fracture, a will to unmaking, an invention of silence - veers toward all those and yet implies their very opposites their antithetical realities" (qtd. In Hooti and Shooshtarian, 2011, p.44). Ravenhill asserts the fractured identities of his characters in an alienated world, which is created to mirror the ill-communication of contemporary society. He lays bare the problematic sides of postmodern aliens in his play. Emig puts forward "there are further aliens not so much the wino who represents understandable, categorisable evil, but the anonymous, young, quite well-spoken man and his mate who derive their sexual excitement from turning the surveillance tape into a snuff movie"(Emig, 2005, p.277). Ravenhill refers to the absence of identity and the idea of stability:

**Gary:** 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.

**Mark:** But if you had a choice.

**Gary:** Then I wouldn't choose you. I want to be taken away. Someone who understands me.

**Mark:** There's no one out there.

**Gary:** Think just because you don't feel that way no one else does? There's lots of people who understand. And someone's gonna do it. I'm going now. (Ravehill, 2001, pp. 56-57)

Ravenhill brings forth the digitalized versions of identity by using technological names to emphasize the postmodern element. His characters chase their identity, which they have lost or never had. Elinor Fuchs describes postmodernism: "Like a hologram that produces three-dimensional objects though a mysterious transformation of two-dimensional images, postmodernism has been an elusive story of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't" (1996, p.144). When Mark and Gary talk about technological issues, Gary responds to Mark "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. You know what I mean? I think a lot about that kind of stuff. See, I called you back. Don't do that for everyone" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.22). It is put forward that the cyber age has begun and that it has replaced the traditional way of presence. It is divulged that:

Virtual reality, the internet, and the digital world are taking over during the 1990s and that these technologies are so very powerfully replacing the traditional physical ways of being that in a couple years' time people will turn out to be living lives through digital forms, thereby effectively becoming digital existences rather than flesh and blood organism. (Bal, 2010, p.70)

At the end of the play, Mark tells them a story about a postmodern fantasy world in the year 3000 A.D. It's just a fantasy, but Mark says that: "It is the future." The Earth has died. Died or we killed it. The ozone, bombs, a meteorite. It doesn't matter. But humanity has survived. A few of us...jumped ship. And on we go" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.89). Ravenhill postulates that fantasies referred to in a postmodernist manner are totally related to the perception of reality -since "the concepts of reality and truth have totally changed. The notion of an absolute truth has been replaced with interpretations of reality and truth which constitute the main essence of postmodernism; because according to postmodernists, truth is believed to change from community to community and to vary in accordance with interpretations of people" (Usman, 2011, p.5).

Robbie and Lulu's use of sex lines to repay Brian's debt evokes Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* in the way it fantasizes the world of sad people. Baudrillard uses the concepts of the simulacrum - the copy without an original - and simulation crucial to an understanding of the postmodern, to address the concept of mass reproduction and reproducibility that characterizes our electronic media culture (Baudrillard, 1995, p.166). In the play, they make love in a special way with their customers who call them. They pretend to be engaging in sexual intercourse with them and create situations. It is explicitly seen in their dialogue:

**Robbie:** (on phone) This is, I tell you this is Paradise. This is Heaven on the Earth. And the spheres are sphering and and the firm...Good good. And now we're in the...? Tower of...I see...the Tower of Babel. All the tongues in the world. Splashinsky. Mossambarish. Bam bam bam. Pashka pashka pashka. Alright then. You're done? Good good. That's good. You take care now. Yeah. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.52)

Ravenhill creates a world which reverberates with the bleakness of imminent milieu, and refers to contemporary society, which is successfully depicted by its despairing side. Since Ravenhill touches upon materialism and immoral issues in his play, he actually portrays postmodernist extremist British society by depicting the post-consumerist social ambit. It is comprehended that Ravenhill shows nineties' British society by using immorality and reproduces the social deteriorations by referring to realist parameters. As it is known, Ravenhill is a member of In-yer-face theatre; nevertheless he denies using violence on stage to create a sort of aesthetic which may be called a postmodern type of art. In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Mark puts forth his capitalist view: "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" (Ravenhill, 2001. p.33). In addition, Brian, who is the mouthpiece of postmodern consumerist society, states:

**Brian:** Tell me, son, says my dad, what are the first few words in the Bible? I don't know, Dad, I say, what are the first few words in the Bible? And he looks at me, he looks me in the eye and says: Son, the first few words in the Bible are... get the money first. Get. The Money. First. It's not perfect, I don't deny it. We haven't reached perfection. But it's the closest we've come to meaning, Civilization is money. Money is civilization. And civilization-how did we get here? By war, by struggle, kill or be killed. And money-it's the same thing, you understand? The getting is cruel, is



hard, but the having is civilization. Then we are civilized.  
Say it. Say it with me. Money is... (Ravenhill, 2001, p.87)

Ravenhill also touches upon the nihilistic amorality of British society, which can be seen as a postmodern tenet. It is divulged that characters mirror the social amoral tendency of the contemporary milieu through Lulu's attitude to a wino, Gary and Mark's sexual relationship, and Robbie and Lulu's ecstasy friendship. It is supported by Rebellato's expression:

... while we should never underplay the genuine originality of the characters, their casually nihilistic amorality, their tracing of new forms of friendship, our developing interactions with information technology, overstating all this cyberglamour distorts the delicate moral shapes of Ravenhill's work, his relationship to traditions of British playwriting that he engages and contests, and the fierce satirical energy that powers the work. (2001: x)

It is understood that Ravenhill postulates an exhausted society which consumes everything and comes to the end - a postmodern end. The relationship between the end and In-yer-face theatre is revealed in Ravenhill's plays by referring to the hopeless side of an exhausted British society. In considering the social milieu of the especially nasty nineties, Ravenhill's play reproduces the sense of consumerism which dealt with the sense of hopelessness, feelings of alienation, unbearable loneliness and diminished sense of responsibility toward others. In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Mark avoids being connected to someone else, and, in doing so he mirrors the contemporary postmodern lifestyle's no commitment: It is referred in the play:

**Mark:** Listen. I want you to understand because. I have this personality you see? Part of me that gets addicted. I have a tendency to define myself purely in term of my relationships to others. I have no definitions of myself to others as a means of avoidance, of avoiding knowing the self. Which is actually potentially very destructive. For me-

destructive for me. I don't know if you're following this but you see if I don't stop myself I repeat the patterns. Get attached to people to these emotions then I'm back to where I started. Which is why, though it may seem uncaring, I'm going to have to go... (Ravenhill, 2001, pp.32-33)

In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, the sense of alienation towards others is also witnessed. These others are evident in the play. In their so-called crowded lifestyle, they are alone in their loneliness. They are growing dispirited with their initial world of the alienated capsule. Ravenhill delineates the alienation with Mark, the protagonist in the play, Mark goes to the rehabilitation centre, but he come back having broken the rules: having sex and using drugs. His attitudes toward his flat mates changed a lot, and his approach to having sex also evokes his alienation. He only engages in paid sex, otherwise he cannot be satisfied because he should not feel anything with his sex partner, as the partner must be insignificant for Mark. In the play, consumerism is present in all forms: characters deplete all private life, at the same time, and they consume recklessly; thus, they are alienated. Their carnal needs come before all else. The following scene takes place in a shopping mall:

**Gary:** You gonna take me home and fuck me? Alright then. One day. Take me home.

**Mark:** Suck my cock.

**Gary:** You taking me home?

**Mark:** Suck my cock now. Take you home later.

**Gary:** There's a security camera.

**Mark:** Doesn't matter.

**Gary:** All this for me? Fourteen. You got it wrong. I'm fourteen.

(Ravenhill, 2001, p.57)

Besides, Ravenhill touches upon one of the most significant philosophical tenets in his play. He tries to support his claim in the light of dominant philosophical cornerstones. He refers to the fall of grand narratives, also known as master narratives, to emphasize a postmodern end. In this sense, grand narratives

have died and the world grows impotent so now we all constitute our own little stories. It is mirrored in the play:

**Robbie:** I think ... I think we all need stories; we make up stories so that we can get by. And I think a long time ago there were big stories. Stories so big you could live your whole life in them. The Powerful Hands of Gods and Fate. The Journey to Enlightenment. The March of Socialism. But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we're all making up our own stories. Little stories. It comes out in different ways. But we've each got one. (Ravenhill, 2001, p. 66)

Jean François Lyotard notes that these metanarratives (grand narratives) are traditionally used to give cultural paradigms some form of legitimization of authority, having lost their credibility since the Second World War and notes the idea that “simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). In parallel, Ravenhill scrutinizes the persuasiveness of big narratives and he vocalizes in his postmodern play *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* explicitly; Peter Billingham also highlights Robbie’s postmodern words. He asserts that “we all need stories so that we can get by is more than some simplistic, postmodern mantra. It is more than an equation of the story and narrative as being the only secure cultural rendition for individual and communal lives. In a montage world where all constituent cultures and identities amass in some value-free, valueless coalescence, the story is a limited lifebelt” (2007, p.138). Robbie’s lines resonate the time for the little people’s little stories. As postmodernism is considered to be for the others, Ravenhill’s *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is called a postmodern play for that reason alone. In respect thereof, Alek Sierz expresses:

The sensibility of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is not only youthful but also postmodern. A very knowing play, it makes frequent use of discourses, creating the effect of a collage. When Robbie says that a long time ago there were big stories but now we’re all making up our own stories, he recalls theories about the end of

grand narratives; when Mark says, I have a tendency to define myself purely in terms of my relationship to others, he parodies therapy-speak. Other discourses include Lulu's quotation from Chekhov, her parody of postcolonial ideas while serving ready-made food (you've got a fucking empire under cellophane), Brian's paean in praise of money, the Diana story and, above all, the mutating shopping story. Here everything is about stories and surfaces. On one level, the play is a very postmodern mix of savage critique and playful entertainment; on another, the evident longing of committed drama. Ravenhill denies knowing much about postmodern theory, but the content of his play argues that he is better read than he admits. (Sierz, 2001, pp.132-133)

It is seen, in Ravenhill's most scandalous play, *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, that he has a postmodern vision and he attempts to impose on the audiences/readers Lyotard's significant postmodern tenets. Afterwards Peter Buse defines the circumstances such that "[...] the postmodern period is marked by an 'incredulity toward metanarratives, or, to put it another way, that [t]he grand narrative has lost its credibility' " (Buse, 2001, p.52). It is obvious that Ravenhill highlights a topic which is directly related to the postmodern condition, and he lays bare that modern man has consumed all grand narratives and has made his own little story; therefore, Ravenhill appears to make up little stories in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*.

Ravenhill's characters are all member of post-consumerist society, and they stand for the insignificance of being human in a postmodern world; thereby, he delineates the positions of his characters in the system of commodities and commodification. Ravenhill's characters reproduce the relentless commoditized society. In this respect, Wallace states that "the language of consumption is used most strikingly to express the relationships around which the play is structured. These might be classified as familial, business and sexual, though notably the categories are often indistinct and overlap in a variety of patterns throughout the play's fourteen scenes" (Wallace, 2005, p.271). In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, it is seen that there are so many ailing examples of postmodern tenets which are always reflected as post-consumerist. It is embodied in Lulu's lines:

**Lulu:** Come on, you've got the world here. You've got all the tastes in the world. You've got an empire under cellophone. Look, China. India. Indonesia. In the past you'd have to invade, you'd have to occupy just to get one of these things and now, when they're sitting here in front of you, you're telling me you can't taste anything. (Ravenhill, 200, p. 61)

Another postmodern reference in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is the atomization of society. The isolation from one another in society induces one to focus on fragmentary relationships in the play. It is revealed that "Ravenhill shows this postmodern selfhood by referring to his characters perpetual consumption of pre-prepared, individually wrapped meals in the form of takeaways or microwave meals" (Wallace, 2005, p.271). It is obvious that this sort of lifestyle causes a high rank of individualism that is evaluated as postmodern. The substantial characteristics of these meals referred to in the play are that they cannot be shared with the others and it is emphasized that in the postmodern era you are alone in quasi-crowded ambit. In the play, it is connotated in Lulu's expressions explicitly:

**Lulu:** We're just eating. Sitting down for a meal. It's actually very difficult to share them actually because they're specifically designed as individual portions but I can get an extra plate. Plate. Knife. Whatever (Ravenhill, 2001, p. 62).

...Well, look at this mess. If you don't watch yourself, you just revert, don't you? To the playground or canteen and suddenly it's all fights and mess. So let's be adults. Not much but I think I can still... a portion. Anyone? Darling? (Ravenhill, 2001, p.63)

Ravenhill also touches upon Jean Baudrillard's postmodern discourse in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* which is obviously related to consumerism and postmodern isolation: "Whereas the directed *acquisition* of objects and commodities is individualizing, atomizing, and dehistoricising, [...] As a consumer, humans become again solitary, cellular, and at best *gregarious* (for example in a family viewing TV)"(Baudrillard 1988, p.54). According to Wallace, "the characters'

feeding of each other at the end of the play obviously is intended to suggest an attempt to overcome this condition in some small way, nevertheless the gesture is mitigated by the fact they are still eating individualized portions of convenience food” (2005, p. 283). On the other hand, Urban states that:

In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, although it is unclear whether Gary’s desire kills him, now that Gary is gone Mark can again become emotionally attached. The play’s final scene shows Mark, Lulu, and Robbie feeding each other a microwave dinner, an echo of the play’s first scene but, unlike that opening, where Mark vomits up the gift of food, still too sick on heroin to keep anything down, this time the trio has become a family of sorts, sharing the meal. Stafford-Clark emphasized this development by having identical staging for both moments. But if this is a moment of ethical possibility, it is, of course, a very fraught one, for this kindness would not be possible without Gary’s sacrifice. (2004, p.369)

Ravenhill reveals that today’s world forces humans to be more introverted and to live in a capsule, even when they live in a so-called crowded society that reflects the loneliness of postmodern man. In this sense, Mark Ravenhill reproduces the postmodern social atomization in the ill-family unit<sup>3</sup> in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. As Robbie ridiculously suggests: “[...] and here we are. I’m Barney, this is Betty. Pebbles is playing outside somewhere (Ravenhill, 2001, p.62). In the play, Mark is an undecided character and represents the most problematic member of the ill-family unit; he complains about the status quo in the beginning of the play, then at the end of the play they feed each other. It is emphasized that Ravenhill exhibits the atomization of contemporary society which is predominantly seen to be knitted with fake-relationships. Their feeding each other is not an indication of their true sympathies towards each other. Mark’s bloody face suggests that he has fulfilled Gary’s fantasy of being raped by a blade:

**Mark:** I’m so tired. Look at me. I can’t control anything. My ...  
guts. My mind.

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<sup>3</sup> It is taken from the article *Responsibility and Postmodernity: Mark Ravenhill and 1990s British Drama* written by Clare Wallace. It emphasizes the characters’ ailing relationship with each other.

**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.

**Lulu:** And you said: I love you both and I want to look after you for forever... (Ravenhill, 2001:4)

...

**Robbie:** Hungry now? I want you to try some. (He feeds Mark with a fork.) Nice?

**Mark:** Mmmmmm

**Lulu:** Do you want some? (She feeds **Mark**.) Is That good?

**Mark:** Delicious.

**Robbie:** You've got a bit of blood.

**Lulu:** Bit more?

**Mark:** Why not? (Ravenhill, 2001, p.91)

In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Ravenhill constitutes his world view by using postmodern discourses to strengthen his perspectives. Ravenhill frequently refers to the predominant ideas of postmodern philosophers: Michel Foucault's idea of Man as the instrument of production, Jean Baudrillard's ideas of over-consumerism and how it uses up human beings and his idea of money as the center of the world, Baudrillard's idea of crisis bringing forth a catastrophe in slow motion and his idea of no future, all which are seen as postmodern philosophies expressed straightforwardly in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. Besides, it is noticed that Ravenhill focuses on Jameson's discourse in the postmodern era: "market capitalism (realism), monopoly capitalism (modernism), and multinational or customer capitalism, which coincides with postmodernism" (Jameson, 1998, p.42). Ravenhill refers to the postmodernist parameter to reinforce his criticism towards imminent milieu, and systems. It is embodied in Robbie's expression in the play:

**Robbie:** Just listen for a moment, OK? Listen, this is the important bit. If you'd felt...I felt. 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 Kiew, selling everything she's ever owned. 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. You see? (Ravenhill, 2001, p.39)

In spite of the appearance, the title of the play echoes its focus on the twentieth century's postmodern discourse clandestinely. The concept of shopping evokes the contemporary consumerist's society naturally and also the expression of f\*\*\*ing, a taboo word prohibited to be used in public, emphasizes the lifestyle in twentieth century's social fluctuations explicitly. It is also used to show the vulgar side of human relationships in the contemporary world. So far, we have touched upon the postmodern philosophical perspective of the play, but when it is considered, Ravenhill wants to expose his exhausted world view about contemporary British society through his play. Actually, the title draws more attention to itself and the connotes postmodern or post-consumerist structure of society, a fragmentary or atomized sort of society. The play's title is not just a title; it is sum of Ravenhill's aim. It is highlighted that the title suggests "a setting in which one finds only inexhaustible consumption, issues of money, transactions, shopping, forced and natural types of sexual intercourse, drug-dealing and drug-use which altogether result in a world of what the title openly signifies" (Bal, 2010, p.55). Moreover, he criticizes the system of capitalism similar to the other postmodern philosophers such as Jameson, and Baudrillard. It is propounded that Ravenhill refers to postmodern discourses in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, which also criticizes the twentieth century's ailing social relationships. In addition, he puts violence on stage in order to shock the audience and shows the impact of his play in the postmodern world. His reference to violence on stage may be in consideration of a desire to strengthen his postmodern shock fest. In the play, Lulu witnesses a murder, but she steals a bar of chocolate instead of trying to help to the small girl. It is proved that she is inured to the deteriorated society. In the play, Lulu states:

**Lulu:** Not me. The Seven-Eleven. 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-and really why should I be



any more aware? –that an argument is forming at the counter. A bloke. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.28)

**Lulu:** Yes. Student girl behind the counter. Wino is raising his voice to student. There's a couple of us in there. Me-chocolate. Somebody else-TV guides. (Because now of course they've made the choice on TV guides so fucking difficult as well.) And wino's shouting: You've given me twenty. And I didn't see anything. Like the blade or anything. But I suppose he must have hit her artery. Because there was blood everywhere. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.29)

Ravenhill dominantly reproduces the other in his play as he also represents the other. Auslander states that “in theatre, presence is the matrix of power; the postmodern theatre of resistance must therefore both expose the collusion of presence with authority and resist such collusion by refusing to establish itself as the charismatic other” (Auslander, 1987, p.26). Since postmodernism is not collaborating with dominants, but minorities, it is asserted as a postmodernist approach. He explains why he prefers gay characters in his drama, especially in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*: There is a hedonistic, materialistic, selfish disposition in contemporary British desires. Therefore, in many ways, the gay narrative is the narrative that everybody wants. That's why gay characters and contemporary gay men's lives are useful to write about, because they're the ultimate definition of a hedonistic, materialistic society. They're metaphors for a wider society (Monforte, 2007, p.92)... In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, it is embodied in Gary and Mark's relationship and Robbie and Mark's tenderness. Here is one of the most dramatic examples:

**Gary:** He does love me. He did say that.

**Robbie:** Did he do this thing-ask you to lick his balls while he came?

**Gary:** Yeah. Have you ...?

**Robbie:** Too many times. I'm his boyfriend.

**Gary:** He doesn't do nothing for me, alright?

**Robbie:** No? Not your type?

**Gary:** He's too soft. Do you love him?

**Robbie:** Yes. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.65)

Towards the end of play, Gary offers to discharge Robbie and Lulu's debts if they help him to fulfill his dream. It is seen that Ravenhill refers to postmodern traumatic fantasy: Robbie asks Gary multiple times if this truly is his wish. When Mark is penetrating him, Gary imagines that Mark is his stepfather:

**Gary:** Are you him? Are you my dad?

**Mark:** No.

**Gary:** Yes. You're my dad.

**Mark:** I told you –no. (Ravenhill, 2001, p. 82)

Mark starts hitting Gary, because he does not want to be compared to his stepfather. Robbie refuses to go on when Gary asks to bring his fantasy to a conclusion like his stepfather does: "He fucks me –yeah-but with a knife" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.82). Gary is fully aware of the possible consequences and despite this he wants to go on:

**Robbie:** It'll kill you.

**Gary:** It's what I want.

**Lulu:** Go home now.

**Gary:** Just do it. Just fucking losers you know that?

(Ravenhill, 2001, p.85)

Gary's inner traumatic feelings which are based on his childhood have his stepfather rape him with a knife, and he is affected by this traumatic process. When he goes to Social Service to file a charge, the social worker there asks a very ironic question:

**Gary:** I knew it wasn't right. I went to the council. And I said to her, look, it's simple: he's fucking me. Once, twice, three times a week he comes into my room. He's a big man. He holds me down and he fucks me. How long? She says. About two years, I say he moved in then six months later it starts. I told her and she says 'Does he use a condom?'

**Mark:** Yeah?

**Gary:** Yeah. I mean ‘Does he use a condom?’ When it’s like that he’s not gonna use a condom, is he? Just spit. All he used is a bit of spit. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.40)

The ridiculous question evokes postmodern irony which is seen as one of the tenets of postmodernism in the play. Ravenhill particularly criticizes the stolidity of social services by using this ridiculous discourse, ironic at the same time. The woman poses a new question to Gary “Does he spit up you?” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.40), Gary swaps his notes to Mark in a considerably harsh and ironic way: “Listen. I tell her he’s fucking me – without a condom – and she says to me – you know what she says” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.41). The most critical and ironic part of play is the woman’s suggested solution in the social services building: “I think I’ve got a leaflet. Would you like to give him a leaflet? (Ravenhill, 2001, p.41). It emphasizes the postmodern mood in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, proving Nichol’s statements about postmodernism:

...postmodernity is the era of the space age, of consumerism, late capitalism, and, most recently, the dominance of the virtual and digital. Such generalized portraits of modern and postmodern society have been paralleled by similar comparisons of the specific aesthetic style which have dominated in these periods. Where modernist art forms privilege formalism, rationality, authenticity, depth, originality, etc. postmodernism, the argument goes, favours bricolage or pastiche to original production, the mixing of styles and genres, and the juxtaposition of low with high culture. Where modernism is sincere or earnest, postmodernism is playful and ironic. (2009, p.2)

On the other hand, Ravenhill creates Gary to mirror the traumatic sides of the contemporary twentysomething. Ravenhill brings forth his traumatic and agonizing past to enhance the level of effectiveness. Since it is also laid bare that Gary’s traumatic past reverberates in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, it is understood the problematic parts are based on his stepfather. Gary feels devoid of father, and it

makes him the most traumatic member in the play. Gary's situation corresponds to Caruth's definition of trauma:

...an event that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and therefore is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor...so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on. (Caruth, 1995, p.4)

Ravenhill touches upon the postmodern apocalypse in his work; it finds its mirror in Mark's speech at the end of the play. First Mark tells a shopping story in the beginning about he bought Lulu and Robbie from a fat man. Close to the end, Mark tells a story about the future – in 3000 A.D. According to Bal, “[the play] clearly carries implications relating to the End, in that he mentions the end of the Earth, thereby the fulfillment of the expectations relating to the end of the planet due to natural (like the crash of a meteorite) or artificial (like the nuclear bombs or the damage given to the ozone layer due to the industrial gases) causes” (Bal, 2009, p.82). Mark's speech echoes the end of man in the future and the postmodern apocalypse:

**Mark:** It's three thousand AD. Or something. It's the future. The Earth has died. Died or we killed it. The ozone, the bombs, a meteorite. It doesn't matter. But humanity has survived. A few of us...jumped ship. And on we go. So it's three thousand and blahdeblah and I'm standing in the market, some sort of bazaar. A little satellite circling Uranus. Market day. And I'm looking at this mutant. Some of them, the radiation it's made them so ugly, twisted. But this one. Wow. It's made him...he's tanned and blond and there's pecs and his dick ...I mean, his dick is three-foot long. This fat sort of ape-thing comes up to me and

says...See the mute with the three-foot dick? Yeah I see him. Well, he's mine and I own him. I own him but I hate him. If I don't sell him today I'm gonna kill him. So... a deal is struck, a transaction, I take my mutant home and I get him home and I say: I'm freeing you. I'm setting you free. You can go now. And he starts to cry. I think it's gratitude I mean, he should be grateful but it's...He says-well, he telepathies into my mind-he doesn't speak our language-he tells me: Please I'll die. I don't know how to...I can't feed myself. I've been a slave all my life. I've never had a thought of my own. I'll be dead in a week. And I say: That's a risk I'm prepared to take. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.90)

At the beginning of his speech, it is highlighted that human-beings cause the end of the earth owing to man's destructive activities. It may be called a human-made postmodern end. Bal comments that "the mutant may represent a Gary of the future who has been denied a full existence and identity of his own and wants to die soon. A parallel could also be found in Mark's initial story about buying Lulu and Robbie in a store from a fat man. Alternatively, the mutant may be read as a future counterpart for all the characters..." (2009, p.84) It is noticed that Mark's speech evokes the future version of the events that occur in the play. The circulation of postmodern non-ending sense in the play is stressed particularly. The shopping and sex activities are also emphasized even in 3000 A.D., and it may be claimed that in 3000 A.D. the world remains the same. It revolves around identical orbits such as money, shopping, and sex. Actually, the end of man means the unending postmodern consumerist society in the play.

Ravenhill refers to many postmodern indicators in the play at the same time; therefore, Mark's story may be interpreted in the light of Baudrillard's end of reality, where hyperreality begins. In the beginning of the *Simulacra and Simulations*, Baudrillard uses a metaphor to implant the loss of reality and the beginning of the hyperreal:

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the

generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it...It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself. (Baudrillard, 1995:1)

Mark's story shelters fantastic figures that encompass the same topics: consumerism, shopping, buying, and selling, but they are created in a hyperrealist manner. Mark mentions a mutant, who is twisted and ugly due to radiation in the play, and he describes it using hyperrealist words: "his dick is three-foot long" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.89). This metaphor explicitly symbolizes the resonances of hyperreal world of the future in the play.

In short, it is revealed that Ravenhill reflects on postmodern society by borrowing substantially from Lyotard's end of grand narratives, Jameson's postmodern views about late capitalism, Baudrillard's simulations and hyperreality theories, and Nietzsche's view on nihilism. In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, Ravenhill aims at creating a world which intensely reproduces the postmodern manners of the post-human<sup>4</sup>. The mood of the play is very chaotic, and it harbours the contemporary ill-family unit which is represented as an alienated capsule of postmodern man. Since the ends of grand narratives are mostly emphasized in the play, it is concluded that Ravenhill's ambition is to unveil the reckless truth of a contemporary decentered world. He displays the realities of contemporary postmodern society with the help of Lyotard's cornerstone postmodern discourse: The end of grand narratives. He underlines that everybody has to have their own little story; it is not the time for big stories anymore. Consequently, Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* has postmodern tenets which are considerably focused on contemporary consumerist society.

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<sup>4</sup> It is taken from the article named *Exporting an Aesthetic, Importing Another? Experimental (Ad)ventures in Contemporary British Theatre* written by Elizabeth Sakellaridou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki). This expression is related to postmodernism and postmodern man in this study. It is used to enhance the meaning of postmodernism in this thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE LOGIC OF CONSUMERIST CULTURE: SOME EXPLICIT POLAROIDS

*Some Explicit Polaroids*'s debut was performed in September 1999. It is seen as a follow-up to *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* because of its treatment of current post-consumerist society and the amoral circumstances of the twentysomething age set. *Some Explicit Polaroids* is based on Ernst Toller's 1927 play *Hoppla, Wirleben!* (Hurrah, We Live). "Toller's play dealt with precisely the same kind of political compromise and betrayal explored in *Some Explicit Polaroids*" (Bilingham, 2007, p.139). Ravenhill puts forth the same topic by using a younger generation and political issues. Ravenhill fictionalizes two plots which reverberate in two generations. De Buck makes it clear that:

The first plot line focuses on Nick, who is released from prison after being incarcerated since 1984 for attempted murder on Jonathan. Helen-Nick's former partner in anarchic rebellion – has now established a firm reputation as a local councillor and wants to sever all possible links to her past. The second plot line displays the lives of Tim, Victor and Nadia. Tim bought a sex slave, Victor, who is only concerned with his beautiful body and obsessively flees all negative feelings; Nadia has sexual intercourse with men to avoid loneliness. In the end, the younger generation is dispersed, whereas the older generation reconciles after a peaceful confrontation between Nick and Jonathan." (2009, pp.24-25).

*Some Explicit Polaroids* takes place in contemporary London. The play begins with Nick's release from prison after fifteen years and follows his adaptation to postmodern society. After the date of Nick's incarceration in 1984, there are terrific antisocial structural changes in society such as relentless individualism, and consumerism. A former socialist activist, Nick was imprisoned for the kidnap and torture of capitalist Jonathan. He is released from prison only to find that the friend who encouraged him to carry out the attack is now a New Labour city councillor

and is hoping to become an MP. Helen's political ambitions have been reduced to fighting for public transport between housing estates and shopping centers. Though Nick's first encounters with the minutiae of everyday life leave him disoriented, Helen refuses to let him stay with her, and she suggests that: "You start with the little stuff [...] bit by bit you do what you can don't look the bigger picture, you don't generalize" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.236). In the play it is divulged that a conflict has formed between the older generations versus the young. Pavis delineates that: "The two opposing groups fail to meet. Nick alone, set adrift on his release from prison, can move easily between the two and hesitates to commit himself to either, feeling divided between neoliberal reformist and alienated nihilism, but feeling quite happy with his drug-filled, marginal status" (2003, p.11). In the younger generation, Nadia is a lap dancer who is afraid of being alone, and therefore, she has sexual intercourse with men. Tim is a gay man who is HIV- positive and purchased a Russian sex slave over the internet, Victor, who represents the trash culture and consumerist society. In this sense, Jonathan, who is a capitalist drug-dealer, is Nick's political nemesis. Although Jonathan is a respectable businessman in this capitalist world, he blackmails Helen who desires to pursue her career by entering as a New Labour MP. The two generations face each other, and they present their inner conflicts openly in the play. In *In-Yer-Face Theatre British Drama Today* Alek Sierz remarks that:

The militant leftist certainties, the bigger picture that Nick once believed in, seem simplistic when juxtaposed with Helen's concern with trying to make life more bearable for the poor; the hectic fantasy of Tim, Nadia and Victor's happy world seems fatuous when confronted with the realities of HIV infection, domestic violence and loveless sex. By bringing Nick into conflict with Helen, Tim, Nadia, and Victor, Ravenhill forces all of his characters to look again at what they feel, believe and want to do. Conflict is what enables each of them to break out, however briefly, of the prison of loneliness. (2001, p.147)

In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Ravenhill presents the conflicts which revolve in a gap between the young generation and the old. When he is released from prison, Nick feels alienated in this society, and he has difficulty comprehending



what is going on. As in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, in *Some Explicit Polaroids* the shadows of postmodernism can be seen explicitly; Wallace states that “Nadia and her friends Tim and Victor introduce him to the new world of postmodern trash culture of consumption at its most self-indulgent” (2005, p.273). In Ravenhill’s work, it is presented by Victor and Tim’s dialogue: **Victor:** And you’re trash? **Tim:** We’re both trash. Come on, eat something, eat some rubbish. (He gets his pills out.) And Nadia’s trash too really. She’s alright; you’ll get to like her after a bit. She’s been good to me. We have fun together (Ravenhill, 2001, p.244). In *Theatre Today - the new realism* Vera Goetlieb underscores this tenet explicitly:

Another aspect of the postmodernist ideology is that by reducing everything to commodity, nothing has any value. On its own, this too has reinforced the sense of direction, feeling of chaos and, again, offered an alibi for those wishing to turn away from previous valuations of culture and entertainment to leave market forces and box office returns to provide the critique. As playwright Joe Penhall put it: Much as I love it, the theatre is an inherently conservative business, increasingly run by marketing and finance departments, occasionally trying to reinvent itself as the new rock ‘n’ roll, when it’s as rock ‘n’ roll as Ben Elton’s underpants (2003, p.11).

Ravenhill casts capitalist characters in *Some Explicit Polaroids* similar to those *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. Jonathan is a product of post-consumerist society, and he refers to her politics explicitly. He reproduces the figure of Brian in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* who has a post-capitalist world view. He gives priority to money more than anything else, which is the symbol of consumerism. Jonathan voices his own capitalist ideology when he demands money for drugs:

**Jonathan:** Do you have any money?

**Helen:** I’m sorry.

**Jonathan:** Money. I’m rather hoping that you’re carrying cash.

**Helen:** No.

**Jonathan:** I really could do with an injection of capital.

**Helen:** No chance.

**Jonathan:** Thing is they send you out of rehab and what they don't take into account is you need a good lump sum if your dealer's even going to offer you some second-rate gear.

**Helen:** I don't give money to people with a drug problem.

**Jonathan:** I have a cash problem. My problem is I think you've got some money and I don't want to use force to get it from you.

(Ravenhill, 2001, p. 262)

In addition to this, Jonathan reproduces the individualism and exhausted social atomization. One of the most important features of postmodernism is spelling out disasters such as talking about chaos. It finds its resonances in Jonathan's lines in the play: "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" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.293). In *Top Girls: Postmodern Imperfect*, Prapassaree Thaiwuting Kramer asserts that:

We seem to be in the realm of the postmodern eclectic, a playful mix of perspectives and costumes which challenge our grasp on reality and render all debates ultimately undecidable. What may appear a chaotic bricolage, however, comes to resolve itself into a decisive conclusion about the protagonist's failures of comprehension on both a political and human level (and implicitly, therefore, a decisive conclusion about the correct perspective on these human and political issues). (2008, p. 235)

Ravenhill creates a social chaos milieu to reinforce the postmodern manner in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. In the play, the immense chaotic structure is supported by various lines. In this sense, in *Commerce and Morality in the Theatre of Mark Ravenhill* Caridad Svich asserts that:

*Some Explicit Polaroids* is a swift, ten –scene portrait of societal chaos. Sharing to some degree *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*'s mordant fascination with random violence, and a desensitized London that is spinning egregiously out of control, it is a ninety minute whirlwind of a play that sets its playfully ironic heart in the

mourning for socialism's values. Focusing on Nick, who has spent fifteen years in jail for a politically executed vicious attack on a capitalist rival, the play finds this old-time revolutionary adrift in a modern world of Play Stations, lap dancing, new-age psycho-babble, and disaffected political careerists looking to keep their jobs or simply move up the ladder. This is the fallout of post-Thatcher Britain, and the play centers on the dislocation and confusion of a man ill at ease with the cynical hedonistic mentality that has swept British society at the edge of a new millennium. (2003, p.90)

In parallel with this, the end of the world is highlighted in the play by Jonathan, who is the mouthpiece of postmodernism in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, it is echoed in Baudrillard's *The illusion of the End*: "It is unable to escape it; humanity will pretend to be the author of its destiny. Because it cannot escape being confronted with an end which is uncertain or governed by fate, it will prefer to stage its own death as a species" (Baudrillard, 1994, p.71). With the changing world, and all that it brings, everything has been complicated in the postmodern process as a result of certain alterations: nuclear wars; various threats; Gulf War, which was the first war to be watched on TV with the help of simulation; internet, viruses such as Ebola, and AIDS; and cyber space technologies. It is put forward that human-beings are preparing the end of man in postmodern society. In the play Jonathan mention in one of his speeches:

**Jonathan:** Can't have a wobby in the last few hours, can we? Can't have everyone going off-message and throwing us all into confusion as we reach the end.

**Helen:** I really don't think I need to hear...

**Jonathan:** Because this has got to be the People's Armageddon, you see? We want to make sure that everybody has been listened to, that every social and racial grouping is represented in the events of the last few days. Exclusion must be avoided. (Ravenhill, 2001, pp.261-262)

It is obvious that the discourse of end is one of the most dominant postmodern concepts in Ravenhill's plays. In *Faust is Dead*, there is a character who writes the book *The End of Man* which refers to Francis Fukuyama's book. In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, he touches upon the destructive end mostly. Ravenhill uses end discourse to highlight how pointless it is. In the play, Tim's speech proves this: "Because it's not out there anymore, alright? You can't look out there and blame, blame, blame. And I can imagine what it was like for you. Everything blocked, everything weighing you down. Communists, apartheid, finger on the nuclear button. It was frightening and you were frightened" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.269). Ravenhill divulges that the meaning of the end is burdened by the depleted doctrine of communism; actually it represents the end of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and their fearful tendencies. Jonathan's lines also display the sense of end: "... not to reciprocate. You see, the thing is, the world is going to end" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.261). Frederic Jameson also touches on this twentieth century erosion of the individual in his book *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* where he prefers the term subject instead of man and maintains that the issue is highly significant in contemporary theory: "Such terms inevitably recall one of the most fashionable themes in contemporary theory, that of the death of the subject itself- the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual-and the accompanying stress, whether as some new moral ideal or as empirical description, on the decentering of that formerly centered subject or psyche" (1991, pp.14-15).

On the other hand, Baudrillard puts forward a different sense of end, in respect thereof, he asserts that: "We had come close to this philosophy with the atomic age. Alas, the balance of terror suspended the ultimate event, then postponed it forever and, now deterrence has succeeded, we have to get used to the idea that there is no end any longer, there will no longer be any end, that history itself has become interminable...there will be no end to anything" (Baudrillard, 1994, p.116). The theory finds its mirror in the play in Jonathan's lines: "Every second a new opportunity, every second a new disaster. The endless beginnings, the infinite endings. And each of us swept along by the great tides and winds of the markets. Is there anything more thrilling, more exhilarating than that?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.293). Ravenhill splashes the sense of infiniteness in Jonathan's lines to

strengthen his postmodernist view in the play. Hooti and Shooshtarian claim that "... in postmodern plays endings are both open and closed because they are either multiple or circular" (Hooti and Shooshtarian, 2010, p. 22).

Ravenhill reflects the problematic sides of community, which are scrutinized in a postmodern sense in the play. His characters represent the current social plight by showing postmodern onstage violence to reinforce his aim. He refers to shock tactics to stimulate the audience who is not passive in In-yer-face theatre. Ravenhill's work appeals to lots of moral issues, and Ravenhill criticizes the corruption of the moral values of contemporary society. Ravenhill's characters in *Some Explicit Polaroids* exhibit the ideologies of politics explicitly in what can be called a postmodern- post-ideological world. In respect thereof, Leslie Wade states that Ravenhill's plays:

Go beyond shock value and attempt serious philosophical (and political) inquiry. Giving potent voice to a generation disillusioned by national civic life, facing the complexities of an emerging global marketplace, Ravenhill questions the possibility of moral action. With volatile emotion and dark humor, his plays seek the ethical in a postmodern, post –ideological world (2008, p. 284).

Ravenhill's works present some basic features of postmodernism. In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, he uncovers the ambiguity which is substantially seen in the uncertain links between the actions. This is an element of postmodernism, Hooti and Shooshtarian states that: "Since every text that is written by a postmodern writer, or the work produced by a postmodern artist, as a means of verbalizing the chaotic nature of modern life, is not governed by Pre-established rules, it is filled with ambiguities and thus, it is usually possible to apply familiar categories to these works" (2011, p.48). Ravenhill does not refer to clear certainties, but he propounds upon suspicious terms. In Scene Two, Nadia and Victor are in the airport, but it is uncertain why they are there. The beginning of Scene Three is also blurred, Nadia and Nick, who are from separate layers -Nick has just been released from the prison, Nadia is beaten by her boy-friend- come together in Nadia's home, which is not described clearly in the play. On this point, Ravenhill cannot pose in a certain

way or he is ambivalent to consumerism and global commodification. Since he merely exhibits aspects, he permanently exhibits a suspicious perspective; it is vague like a still developing Polaroid. In this sense, Ravenhill's uneasy mix of characters and ideas evokes the postmodern ambiguity which is seen in the play with the conflicts of two groups' ideological differences toward life politics. In this sense, Wade proves that:

I argue that Ravenhill's play exhibits a profound yearning for interpersonal connection and altruistic possibility; however, the work reveals a deep ambiguity. Ravenhill remains suspicious of ideology, of any foundational authority, and thus cannot embrace the assurances of socialism (there is no going back); yet his depiction of postmodernism offers no positive alternative. The play ably captures the frustration and anxiety of a 1990s generation, bereft of moral grounding though still desirous of political efficacy (2008, p. 285).

Ravenhill's work reflects anger against contemporary society, and has expressed that "anger is a necessary part of being human" (qtd in Sierz, 2001, p.146). Ravenhill paints a portrait which shelters both nostalgic and contemporary society with the topics or terms using a postmodern style of narration. Dan Rebellato stresses Ravenhill's committed leftist politics, going so far as to argue that he "is profoundly moral in his portraiture of contemporary society. His vision is elliptically, but recognizably social, even socialist. He addresses not the fragments but the whole, offering us not just some explicit polaroids but the bigger picture" (Rebellato 2001, p.x). He also shows the conflicts of his characters in his play. Ravenhill's characters "exemplify his use of dramatic irony and contradiction: although the twentysomethings are free of ideology, which, he says, allows you to be open to new ideas and experiences, they are lost and confused" (Sierz, 2001, p.147). It is also obvious in Pavis's claim: "The play is structured on the basis of tragic irony" (2003, p.11). He underlines that Ravenhill uses this tragic irony and clarifies: "Formerly, Nick had tried to kill the class enemy Jonathan ... Now he feels the same anger towards the man who beats Nadia, the woman he loves (is it Jonathan again? – to begin with we may think this), while Nadia is used to

receiving blows and, in the end, leaves Nick because of his earlier attack on Jonathan" (Pavis, 2003, p.11). In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Victor, who is a sex slave and go-go dancer, perverts everything as sensual issues:

**Victor:** I think everything is crazy. The whole world is fucking crazy.

**Nadia:** May be it seems-

**Victor:** Yes. Everything is totally crazy. I like that. I'm a crazy person.

**Nadia:** No you're not.

**Victor:** Yeah, totally fucking crazy.

**Nadia:** I don't think you're crazy.

**Victor:** Every day I wake up and I say 'Another fucking crazy day. What am I going to do tomorrow?'

**Nadia:** I think you're a very beautiful person.

**Victor:** You like my body.

**Nadia:** Of course, you've got a great body.

**Victor:** I've got a fucking fantastic body. I could have been porno. Body like this I could be huge porno star. Guys go crazy for my body. (Ravenhill, 2001, p. 239)

Ravenhill touches on his own conflicts in *Some Explicit Polaroids* through Nick, who represents an old socialist, while Jonathan stands in as capitalist in the play. Nick assaulted Jonathan owing to his capitalist attitudes towards Helen's father. When he is released from jail, he bumps into a couple of boys in the lift who try to sell him smack. He makes nothing of these changes and says: "you shouldn't be selling drugs at your age. One of the boys responds: How else am I gonna buy a PlayStation? ... What the fuck is a playstation?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.232) Nick also tells Helen in the play "I tried to ring you. Let you know. But I was there and I couldn't work out how to get the money in and there's a girl behind me and she says they only take cards and I'm like cards? What the fuck does she mean card?" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.231) Therefore it is certain that he is alienated from today's world, and he has inner conflicts towards the contemporary lifestyle. Moreover, the playwright emphasizes the conflict of socialism in Helen's lines: "I was twenty. Everyone was a fascist or a scab or a class traitor. *Eat the rich*. We used to chant

that, I mean what the fuck did that mean - *eat the rich?* ... Well, everything's changed" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.235). Nick and Jonathan reproduce the anger of political realities in the play, and they symbolize the conflicts of political and ideological realities of contemporary society. Ravenhill suggests that "the lifestyles of today's bright and those who were once angry, antagonistic and politically active reflects badly on both" (Sierz, 2001, p.147). In this sense, Wade sums up Ravenhill's own confliction as follows:

Clearly the play underscores the need for some point of resistance, some assertion of value that works to counter the dehumanizing effects of an increasingly powerful global capitalism. Ravenhill appears ambivalent on this matter, nostalgic for a larger ideological frame from which to combat a marketplace that reduces all to commodity, yet suspicious of any totalizing outlook that is too certain of its premises and proposals. (2008, p.296)

Another significant feature in *Some Explicit Polaroids* is postmodern ethics; Wade describes postmodern ethics that "sets ethical relations against the Western tradition's pursuit of knowledge. This outlook renounces the erasures and impositions of modernist, rationalist thinking –which translates difference into categories of likeness and the same" (Wade, 2008, p.287). The ethics of otherness is also stated. Ravenhill focuses on the otherness issue in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Ravenhill forms the play by selecting people from alternating marginal groups such as gays versus straights, the young generation versus old, and leftist versus capitalists. In this point, Wade indicates "[P]ostmodern ethics rather underscores the call for responsibility, the primacy of the self's obligation to the others" (Wade, 2008, p.287). In the play, it is connotated in Nadia and Victor's:

**Victor:** How does this feel?

**Nadia:** Good.

**Victor:** You could fuck this body?

**Nadia:** Maybe.

**Tim:** Go on-fuck each other.



**Victor:** Yes. Fuck these gays, yes?

Scared of the woman's bodies.

**Nadia:** Yes. Scared.

**Tim:** If that'll stop you being lonely, fuck each other

**Victor:** Gays are...

**Nadia:** Ill.

**Victor:** Ill and ...

**Nadia:** Frightened. Frightened people.

(Ravenhill, 2001, p.287)

In addition, *Some Explicit Polaroids* focuses on the dilemma of moral and political commitment in a post-ideological age. Generational difference plays a significant role in this work; the older characters share a past of socialist allegiance, while the younger characters espouse postmodern positions. Jonathan and Nick represent two nemeses who reflect two opponent concepts: capitalism and socialism. Through these binaries, Ravenhill focuses on the amorality of contemporary society. Moreover Aleks Sierz notes, "Behind the violence of these plays, lies anger and confusion"; the plays are responses "to the difficulties of living in a post-Christian, post-feminist and postmodern society" (Sierz, 2001, p.240). Ravenhill lays bare the postmodern condition in which an old grand narrative of Christianity and morality is no longer available. Especially, it reveals that the moral values disappear in the contemporary society; this is seen in Victor's lines:

**Victor:** Boyfriend, yes. Many boyfriends. They go crazy for my body. But also my father, yes? My father and my brother go crazy for my body.

...

**Nadia:** A very loving family.

**Victor:** Yes I think so. Yes. My brother he likes to photograph me, you know? Polaroid? Since I was fourteen. Polaroid of my body. See? Fucking fantastic body.

**Nadia:** And that's your ...? Right. Right.

**Victor:** And I say to my brother when I am fourteen: I could be in porno.

**Nadia:** Well that's great.

Victor: Yes?

**Nadia:** Yes, I think it's great to have an ambition. Something you want and really go for it.

**Victor:** One day I was so fucking crazy I took Polaroids and I ...please word is ...I...scan Polaroids on home page and I say: 'Look at this great body. Great body, crazy guy. Any other crazy guys out there want to do stuff with this fucking crazy body?'  
(Ravenhill, 2001, pp.239-240)

Ravenhill's work gives a postmodernist mood to the audience in terms of its subject matter, characters' promiscuous relationships with each other, and contradictions in times. It is also related to the claims of Hooti, "everything in the stratum of postmodernism is indeterminate. As a movement which rejects the idea of the autonomy of the text, postmodernism believes in indeterminacy and relativity rather than exactness and absolutism. Therefore, there are many issues in postmodernism which can be permanently or radically indeterminate between two or more status" (Hooti, Shooshtarian, 2011, pp.51-52). In the play this idea is mirrored in Nadia's lines: "Because we all have our own journeys that we're travelling. Each of us has our own path and, of course, we can't always see the path, sometimes it seems like there's no sense in anything, you know? But of course there is. Everything makes sense" (Ravenhill, 2001, p.238). She underscores the ambiguity of life itself in the play. Ravenhill also refers to some indefinite subjects in the play, and leaves questions unanswered in the minds of the audience. In *Beckett and the Stage Image: toward a Poetics of Postmodern Performance*, Neil Murphy, while discoursing on postmodern drama makes it clear:

With respect to postmodern drama the implications are as follow: postmodern drama is different to postmodern fiction quite simply because the words we hear on stage frequently offer views that challenge the idea of the validity of meaning, life, action but, in an implicit sense, this may be compromised by the actuality of the stage, even if the characters appear to be living futile lives; they are still there, they speak, they act, they exist. So a gap between word and deed in postmodern drama at very least delays the full impact of the arrival at unmeaning (2008, p.352).

In *Me, My iBook, and writing in America*, Ravenhill admits that his plays “report upon, maybe even critique, a world of globalised capitalism” (2006 (b), 132). It is noticed in Jonathan’s lines: “There’s the multinationals, the World Bank, NATO, Europe and there’s the grass roots, there’s roadshows where you listen, but still when all’s said and done...” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.259) Wade also states that: “the matter of community and coherence, however, extends beyond national boundaries and points to a global reorientation, of politics and knowledge. The fall of the Berlin Wall stands as something of a political and epistemological watershed, ushering forward a realignment of global power, the rearticulation of identity positions, and the dismantling of ideological assumptions” (2008, p.286). In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, the idea finds its resonances in Victor’s line: “The world is not so big, you know? There’s the same music, the same burgers, the same people. Everywhere in the world. You can keep moving all the time and still be in the same place” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.303). He uncovers the globalised market power in the world; you can purchase any item anywhere because the same item is marketed all over the world. It is actually a criticism of capitalism and postmodern consumerist society. Leslie A. Wade highlights Ravenhill’s aim:

Ravenhill remains desirous of some force or appeal that might assuage the troubling aspects of unchecked global capitalism. What one finds in Ravenhill’s work is a sort of prevailing question and a recurrent confusion-how to retain the moral imperative of socialism given the fragmented and dispersed condition of the global order (and the status of knowledge). The ethics of otherness seek a similar aim-to relate responsibility to the other without the mediation of law, nation, identity, or ideology (2008, p.287).

The general doctrine of postmodernism is illnesses of contemporary society which consists of marginalized groups, and the treatment of the arts is generally beyond ordinary. It is easily seen in every postmodernist work that there are concepts of the troubled sides of being human. It is noticed that most of the subtendencies of postmodernism are combined with the prefix of dis/de. Ihab Hassan narrows in on the compounding of subtendencies that the following words

evoke: “heterodoxy, pluralism, eclecticism, revolt, deformation. The latter alone subsumes a dozen current terms of unmaking: decreation, disintegration, deconstruction, decenterment, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, de-definition, demystification, detotalization, delegitimation” (1983, p.9). In this sense, the illnesses of society are reproduced in contemporary art. In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, it is connotated in Nadia’s lines regarding her desires around sexuality:

**Nadia:** Do you want to go to bed with me? I’ve got a great body.

And I bet you’ve got a great body too.

**Jonathan:** I’m not really interested in bodies.

**Nadia:** Everyone’s interested in bodies.

**Jonathan:** May be there’s something unnatural about me.

**Nadia:** Everyone’s interested in interested in my body. Men pay just for a few minutes near my body. Even when they’re not allowed to touch. ( She takes off her top) What do you feel?

**Jonathan:** Nothing.

**Nadia:** begins to dance.

**Nadia:** You must be feeling something now?

**Jonathan:** It doesn’t mean anything to me. You’re a very powerless person, aren’t you?

**Nadia:** Am I?

**Jonathan:** Oh yes. You are a very powerless, lonely, unfocused person, aren’t you?

(Ravenhill, 2001, pp.291-292)

Throughout the play Nadia’s tendencies are interpreted as a mirror of postmodern society. Since she is the representative of the younger generation which espouses postmodernism in the play, her manners and lines are generally full of illness and reflect the problematic sides of current life. In *The Illusions of Postmodernism* Terry Eagleton proves that:

I must end, regretfully, on a minatory note. Postmodern end-of-history thinking does not envisage a future for us much different from the present, a prospect it oddly views as a cause for celebration. But there is indeed one such

possible future among several, and its name is fascism. The greatest test of postmodernism, or for that matter of any other political doctrine, is how it would shape up to that. Its rich body of work on racism and ethnicity, on the paranoia of identity-thinking, on the perils of totality and the fear of otherness: all this, along with its deepened insights into the cunning of power, would no doubt be of considerable value. But its cultural relativism and moral conventionalism, its scepticism, pragmatism and localism, its distaste for ideas of solidarity and disciplined organization, its lack of any adequate theory of political agency: all these would tell heavily against it. In confronting its political antagonists, the left, now more than ever, has need of strong ethical and even anthropological foundations; nothing short of this is likely to furnish us with the political resources we require. And on this score, postmodernism is in the end part of the problem rather than of the solution. (Eagleton, 1996, p. 134-135)

Ravenhill's characters mirror a traumatic nihilist society by reflecting the absence of hopeful thoughts of the future. Wolf suggests that "a lot of attitude goes in search of a play in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, the latest nihilistic report from Ravenhill, the author of *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*" (1999, p. 52). Tim, one of the most powerful young characters, is HIV-positive and loses his belief in happiness. In his lines it is predominantly noticed that he has some epistemological problems in his mind. He does not know the importance of his presence which he finds meaningless. It connotes Gary's desire to be killed with a knife in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. Urban highlights that these experiences on the stage "make an impact that is tragic in Nietzschean sense. The tragic, for Nietzsche, is that which turns suffering into an affirmation of life" (Urban, 2004, p.369). In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Nadia and Tim's lines shelter an intense sense of nihilist views which includes criticism of basic ideologies: She says that "everything is terrible. Nothing

means anything. There's nobody out there. I'm alone in the universe" (Ravenhill, 2001:288). Moreover, in his hospital bed Tim refuses to take his pills and says:

**Tim:** I want to know where I am. Since I was nineteen, I've known that, you know? I knew where everything was heading. And sure, it was a fucking tragedy. 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. Five years, ten years, some amazing freaks even took fifteen years. (Ravenhill, 2001, p.288)

...

Oh yes, that's happened to me. Now, I've started feeling completely knackered. I've reached the first step. Now I'm on the same path as the others. Better start resting. Wait until stage two. Skin problems. Dry skin, warts. Short of breath. Waiting until...lesions. Here they are. This thing is taking its course. We're moving forward. And now you can see everything all the way down the line (Ravenhill, 2001, p. 288).

Ravenhill's works invoke postmodernist views on contemporary playwrighting which focuses on unoriginal subjects. First, *Faust's Dead* is a reinterpretation of Goethe's classical masterpiece *Faust*, and *Some Explicit Polaroids*, is similar to Ernst Toller's *Hoppla, wirleben* – "which tells the story of a revolutionary who returns home after eight years in an asylum to find that his old comrades have become corrupt conformists-Ravenhill's version combines a seventies state-of-the-nation play with an acerbic critique of both nineties youth culture and traditional leftist militancy" (Sierz, 2001, p.144). In the postmodern sense of drama it loses its originality and uniqueness. In *Postmodern Elements in Shaw's Misalliance*, Tony Stafford highlights:

Another feature of postmodernism is a changed view of the artistic producer, the author, artist, architect, or musician. Previously, the artist was regarded as someone of great creativity and originality, as a genius, different from everyone else and occupying a special place. In postmodernism, the elevated view

of the artist has been debased with a view that art can only be  
repetitious (2009, p. 184).

In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Ravenhill emphasizes political nihilism and criticism of political systems. “Ravenhill’s play is reduced to a vulgar comedy on sex and nihilism” (Pavis, 2003, p.15). His characters represent declining political systems; nevertheless, some of them are consistent enough to maintain their rigid political belief. In this sense Sierz underscores that: “[...] the twentysomethings are free of ideology, which, he says, allow you to be open to new ideas, they are also lost and confused. By contrast, Nick and Helen are firmly grounded in ideological beliefs, but Helen is seen as dull and Nick cannot join in with youth’s frantic partying” (Sierz, 2001:147). It is not proved that the eminent political systems of capitalism and socialism are to be contented. In the play the meaninglessness of these political systems are predominantly dealt with as reflected in Victor’s line:

**Victor:** You are socialist?

**Nick:** Yeah.

**Victor:** I hate socialist.

**Nick:** Right.

**Victor:** Everything falling to pieces. The buildings ugly and falling down. The shops ugly, empty. The ugly people following the rules and then mocking and complaining when they think that no-one is listening. All the time you know it is rotting, but all the time Everything is getting better. Everything is for the best. The people are marching forward to the beat of history.’ This lie. This deception. This progress. Big fucking lie (Ravenhill, 2001, pp.270-271).

Apart from this, Ravenhill reveals the meaninglessness of current political tendencies in Helen’s lines explicitly: “And now finally there’s a chance to do something. Too late for anything big. Too much lost for any grand gestures. But trying to pick up the pieces. Trying to create a few possibilities for the bits of humanity that are left. I’ve seen those bastards fuck up the country all these years. Now I want to do something about it” (Ravenhill, 2001, p.281). Contrary to this, Jonathan, who is the most consistent character in the play, does not change his

posture. He is a capitalist at the beginning of the play, and he is a capitalist at the end. He is the mouthpiece of the postmodern, post-consumerist side of *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Jonathan's lines make it obvious:

**Jonathan:** I think we both miss the struggle. It's all been rather easy for me these last few years. And I start to feel guilty if things come too easily. But really money, capitalism if you like, is the closest we've come to the way that people actually live. And, sure, we can work out all sorts of other schemes, try and plan to make everything better. But ultimately the market is the only thing sensitive enough, flexible enough to actually respond to the way we tick (Ravenhill, 2001, p.311).

In postmodern works, the sense of space and time are generally lost and complex. Radunovic asserts that: "Postmodern Theater approaches the revision of the concept of history through the questioning of teleological stories and linear patterns. Much in evidence in contemporary theatre, the ruptures in dramatic linearity have made the multiple temporalities of theatre performance conspicuous, but they also elicited an awareness of the simultaneous existence of heterogeneous histories" (2008, p.447). Ravenhill does not refer to a sustainable use of time perception in his work. It is divulged that the linearity of the play is not perceived, and he focuses on destinations while ignoring time coherence. The first scene opens with Nick's appearance in Helen's home; the second scene takes place in the airport; the third scene occurs in Nadia's flat. There is no concrete unity of time and space in Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Nadia and Nick's encounter is not clear, and it also unclear why Jonathan and Nadia come together. Pavis lends credence to this claim:

No chronotope emerges having any general symbolic force suggesting exclusion, or the human condition, since the audience is invited to move from one space to another according to the needs of the plot. The meaning of the individual and political story gradually emerges in the passage from one group to the other or from one world, endures this procession of different



places in a state hovering between anger and repentance, while Nadia and Victor, as slaves to sex, organize an alternative place, a crazy world in which drugs, junk food and medicines replace the life and the values of earlier days (2004, p.7)

In brief, Ravenhill's aim is questioning the possibility of morality which is scrutinized in his plays by focusing on dark humor, and the postmodern, post-ideological, and post-consumerist world in terms of ethical values. Ravenhill emphasizes the elements of the postmodern ethic which is referred to as a political and moral programme in the play. Ravenhill's goal to serve as a mouthpiece of the minorities, can be seen in the determination of, his characters; gays, HIV-positives, ex-criminals, shortly the others. He criticizes eminent social and political structures by spiking characters' lines with nihilistic views. He presents two rival generations in the play, which can be separated into the older generation who are focused on the political and, the younger generation formed by members of postmodern society as proved by their lines and actions. In passing from scene to scene, there is no concrete bond between characters when they come together, but it is not clear why. It is revealed in the play that the sense of dehumanizing effects become dominant because of reckless global capitalism. It is proved that Ravenhill tries to lay bare the logic of consumerism and post-consumerism in terms of postmodernism. Ravenhill appears to puzzle the audience by raising postmodern social and political issues in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. At the end of the play, it is uncovered that Tim dies and Victor masturbates with the corpse, Alek Sierz asserts that: "Masturbating a corpse is a powerful image of futility, and Tim's realization, too late, that he does love Victor makes the scene a gut-wrenching one" (2001, p.147). It is sentimental, but at the same time postmodern in its focus on the other. In this sense, it is revealed that Mark Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* has a postmodernist perspective summed up by Jonathan explicitly: The endless beginnings and the infinite endings.

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this study, significant background information was provided about the postwar period and British theatre, which harbored many new forms and aesthetics and served as a global model in a world that has witnessed many rises and falls throughout the twentieth century. Theatrical innovations, playwrights and their sense of theatre in the post-war period are scrutinized up until Nineties British theatre aesthetic, which exhibited the most innovative theatre, and predominantly focuses on drug addiction, mutilation, rape, abuse, and postmodern consumerist society on stage. Since British drama has a long tradition of the genre, and has been one of the richest and most durable in the face of these changes, 1990s British drama, named In-yer-face, introduced a new fresh theatre sensibility in its representation of the human being on the stage.

This thesis argues that Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* and *Some Explicit Polaroids* carries a strong sense of postmodernism which is seen explicitly in these two plays. Postmodernism is a term which "is a vast and complex subject, and much has been about it [...] Exactly when postmodernism begins remains arguable, but it certainly grows out of, shares some features with, and is a reaction to modernism, the high period of which dates from around 1910 to 1930" (Stafford, 2009: 177). After this initial description and claim, it is obvious that postmodernism is a common philosophical doctrine which is seen across the cultural spectrum, from architecture to art. Although there may be many postmodernist writers, the study focuses on the critics who generally write about postmodern drama, or underline the postmodern theory such as Baudrillard, Jameson, Hassan.

After an introduction which aims to lead the reader into the study, there are two parts describing the postmodernism which is a subject for these plays. The body part is built on perspective reflective postmodern tenets. In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, the principals of postmodernism are significantly demonstrated. First, Ravenhill refers to Lyotard's postmodern philosophy with Robbie's tirade, as we need little stories, regarding the end of grandnarratives. Baudrillard's over-consumerism predominantly splashes every part of the play because of his desire to criticize late capitalism. Ravenhill criticizes global capitalism and eminent

consumerist society, which are the main political topics in the play. The postmodern consumerist society comes into existence in Brian who tries to adopt the cliché Money is Civilization. Civilization is Money. Ravenhill also highlights his nihilistic view in the play explicitly. In the play, it is mostly noticed in Gary's lines. He longs for a paternal love as he fabricates a story about a bloke who wants him to take him home. Moreover, at the end of the play, Mark's telling of a mutant story reminds the critics of Jean Baudrillard's end of reality and the commencement of the virtual/hyper reality. Lastly, the theories of End of man or post-human as seen in Jameson are referred to in the play.

In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Ravenhill exhibits two marginal groups which represent the gaps between these two in terms of lifestyle and ideology. In the play, Ravenhill brings close together these two groups as they confront each other in their inner conflicts. He highlights the postmodern ideology in his work when Nick, released from the prison, finds himself in a quandary, and everything in the world is estranged to him. Therefore, Ravenhill gives a clear idea; we are in the post-ideological age. It is similar to *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, as *Some Explicit Polaroids* has a criticism towards the globally capitalist world. Frederic Jameson underscores late capitalism, and global marketing evokes postmodern society. In addition, one of the most significant identifier of postmodernism, chaos or chaotic bricolage is explicitly seen in the play with Jonathan, Nadia and Tim's lines. The postmodern end is highly referenced in Ravenhill's plays: in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, it is called a societal chaos which ironically, is the funeral of socialism. According to Bradby & Delgado, "despite Ravenhill's reputation as an 'In-Yer-Face' playwright who sets out to shock, he discovers in his play *Some Explicit Polaroids*, a complex political analysis of the state of Britain today"(Bradby&Delgado, 2004:1). Additionally, the end of the world is emphasized in the play in Jonathan's lines.

In sum, *A Postmodern Reading of Mark Ravenhill's Shopping and F\*\*\*ing and Some Explicit Polaroids*, is a study that sheds light on Mark Ravenhill's theatre aesthetic which is commonly called in-yer-face, and the postmodern features of his two significant works. The study shows that *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing and Some Explicit Polaroids* have strong aspects reproducing the postmodern fiction and postmodern society. In Postmodern society, everything is disastrous and in a chaotic bricolage. Ravenhill focuses on the problematic sides of contemporary

Britain. He constitutes his point of view in his characters while revealing philosophical sides of postmodernism. He hides the postmodernist points of view in his characters lines. In this sense, Brian, in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, reflects the late capitalist figure in postmodern consumerist society, Mark symbolizes human solidarity and alienation and through Robbie we seize the idea which evokes one of the postmodernist tenets. In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Jonathan's lines are full of discourses which are predominantly related with global capitalism and post-consumerist society. On the other hand, Nick's lines are directly concerned with old-fashioned socialism, which served us politically. Tim's and the other young figure's lines propound the postmodern fiction in the play. It is also found that ambiguity is one of the predominant tenets referred to in *Some Explicit Polaroids* where there is no certain description of place or time. Besides, the confrontation of characters is somewhat unconnected or uncertain; the perception of time is blurred at the same time. Moreover, the nihilistic view is unveiled in the two plays explicitly. In *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*, it is noticed that the characters reflect the nihilistic amorality which is brought forward in Mark's speeches in the play. In addition, In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, it is also unveiled that amoral nihilistic view covers the postmodern society, which Ravenhill also emphasizes in the mostly political nihilism of the end of socialism referred to in *Some Explicit Polaroids*.

This study is the one of the scholarly works written about Mark Ravenhill whose works tries to testify the postmodernist views in his two plays. As it is considered there are not so many scholarly works written on this topic, the academic value of this study is grasped. Therefore it is hoped that this thesis contributes to the scholarly discussion about postmodernism and Mark Ravenhill. It is further hoped that *A Postmodernist Reading of Mark Ravenhill's Shopping and F\*\*\*ing and Some Explicit Polaroids* sets the stage for further arguments and studies on Mark Ravenhill's works as well as In-yer-face theatre, and that future studies on similar or related subjects may develop by referring dialectically to this work.

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