



## Globalization, Risk, and Transformation of Intimacy: Investigating Mark Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust Is Dead*

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## Abstract

Exploring how literature represents social context, the present study aims to critically examine Mark Ravenhill's plays, *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust is Dead*, in terms of Giddens' concepts of Globalization, Risk, and Transformation of Intimacy. The central argument of this analysis is thus to demonstrate how Ravenhill's plays represent the social changes of the contemporary era in which the plays have been produced. The study addresses the concepts of Globalization and Risk in the plays in order to illustrate how transformations brought by it affect individual's day-to-day life in contemporary society. Accordingly, the researcher thus focuses on the impacts of such transformations on the process of self-identity construction as well as the transformation of intimacy in that, as Giddens has contended, the characteristics of the globalized world deeply intrude into the heart of self-identity and reshape the way individuals build up their self-identities.

## Keywords

Globalization, Risk, Self-Identity, In-Yer-Face Theater, Ravenhill

## 1. Introduction

In *Runaway World* (2003) Anthony Giddens asserts that "we live in a world of transformations, affecting almost every aspect of what we do" (26). This globalized world has revolutionized every aspects of life; its influence could be observed on individuals' most personal issues. On the other hand, Mark Ravenhill, in his plays, portrays a society in which people are encountered with a 'new world'; people's apprehensions, sufferings, and anxieties are all indications of their transformed life. The world in which Ravenhill's characters live, is profoundly distinct from the one was



inhabited by people of previous periods. It is within this context that the present article illustrates, on various levels, how dominant social discourses of the contemporary society are represented in Ravenhill's drama. Drama has been widely regarded as a medium for representing social life, a medium through which dramatist reflects happenings in society. Ravenhill and a group of young writers in the mid-90s, known as the dramatists of "In-Yer-Face Theatre" sought to represent violence and sexuality in an unflinching manner and through the application of a specific style and language (Sierz 2001:4).

The present paper first examines the critical approach and major concepts over which the argument is established. The concepts include Globalization, Risk, Insecurity, particularly in the contemporary culture as the tangible consequences of Modernity, and the Dilemmas of the Self as well as Transformation of Intimacy. The literature review section follows next. It includes a close review of the studies of the plays under consideration. Then, a short note is presented on Mark Ravenhill's activity and experiences in the In-Yer-Face Theatre. The core section of the paper follows next which provides a detailed reading of Mark Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust is Dead* in terms of the Giddensian concepts including "Globalization and Contemporary Society," "Transformation of Intimacy in Revolutionary changes in Sexuality," and "Self-identity at Risk." The concluding section summarizes the common ground through which Ravenhill has based his plays on the mentioned concepts.

## 2. Literature Review

Mark Ravenhill and his conspicuous works has been the subject of any research studies. Due to the fact that his works mostly reflect the social issues; accordingly this aspect of Ravenhill's plays is mostly the subject of much of the literature that has hitherto been carried out. Clare Wallace in his essay, 'Responsibility and Postmodernity: Mark Ravenhill and 1990s British Drama', investigates how the contemporary world has been portrayed in Ravenhill's works. Wallace, in this essay, examines the ways in which Ravenhill's plays are driven by both the appropriation and assimilation of postmodern superficiality and a critique of these same features and values. Gerty De Buck, in an essay titled 'Homosexuality and Contemporary



Society in Mark Ravenhill's Works', analyzing plays such as *The Handbag*, *Some Explicit Polaroids*, *Mother Claps Molly House*, and *Shopping and Fucking*, argues that these plays are closely linked and contain similarities both in form and content; the sense of loss and contemporary uprootedness are among major themes De Buck has outlined. He also notes that: "Drugs, violence and explicit sexual images are omnipresent in Ravenhill's theatrical world, as in most other 'In-Yer-Face' plays (2009: 62)."

Caglayan Dogan in "Mark Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids*: A Play as the Reverberation of Consumerist Culture" states that *Some Explicit Polaroids* is one of the most sensational plays which reflects consumerist culture of contemporary society. According to him, this play, is a political criticism on the confrontation of the two generations and reflects consumerist tenets, which hold values of globalization; he attempts to demonstrate how consumerist culture of British society, which is a globalized and cruelly capitalized world, has influenced the individuals. "Pop Culture in Mark Ravenhill's Plays *Shopping and Fucking* and *Faust is Dead*" is the title of an essay by Milena Kostic in which the main argument is how Mark Ravenhill deals with the issue of popular culture. In this essay, Kostic deals with key concepts like Pop culture, consumerism, resistance, defiance, marginality.

*Faust is Dead*, which is a modern version of *Dr Faustus*, has been analyzed by Milena M. Kostic in "Modern versions of the Faustus Myth: Ravenhill's *Faust* (*Faust is Dead* and Mamet's *Faust*)." Kostic mentions how Tzvetan Todorov has referred to modern Western culture as Faustian. His argument has been supported by a number of contemporary plays, like *Faust is Dead* by Mark Ravenhill and *Faustus* by David Mamet directly influenced by Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, who resort to the Faustian archetype to describe the combination of tremendous technological advancement and profound moral failure that characterizes our modernity. Laurens De Vos in his essay, "*Faust Is Dead*: Mark Ravenhill's View on a Post-human Era", departs from a close reading of the play and argues that the play in its Radical postmodern sensibilities asks fundamental questions about the future of a tragic hero in contemporary playwriting.



### 3. Critical Approach and Concepts

#### 3.1 Globalization: Cultural and Internal Aspects

Giddens contends “we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us” (2003: 7). What is remarkable in Giddens’ notion of Globalization is that he looks at it from a culturally constructed point of view. The significance of the term “cultural” is thus foregrounded and provides a new approach to the further exploration of Globalization. Giddens does not consider globalization only as an economical, industrial, and financial phenomenon. Instead, he approaches it from cultural and social viewpoints.

In addition, Giddens endeavors to demonstrate that Globalization is not only related to big systems. “It is wrong,” he argues “to think of Globalization as just concerning the big systems, like the world financial order” (1990:12). For him Globalization does not have a mere external manifestation. It embodies, instead, an internal mode which profoundly affects the contemporary subjects. He states that “Globalization isn’t only about what is ‘out there,’ remote and far away from the individual. It is an ‘in here’ phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives” (12). For him, “Globalization not only pulls upwards, it pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy” (13). Consequently, he argues for the always present and continuing feature of Globalization which is manifested in not only the external aspect of the social but also, more particularly, in the mental mood of the contemporary subject.

#### 3.1 Risk and Insecurity as Consequences of Modernity

Giddens has extensively remarked on the distinguishable feature of the era in which we are positioned. For him in the modern era, unlike pre-modern historical periods, there is always a process of continuous transformation at work. He compares living in the modern time to riding a juggernaut. “To live in the world produced by high modernity,” he states, “has the feeling of riding a juggernaut” (1991:28). Giddens seeks to bring into his attention the close association of Modernity to personal identity. He is concerned with the transformations in self-identity and their relation to globalization. According to him “changes in intimate aspects of personal life are



directly tied to the establishment of social connections of very wide scope” (1991:32). Various factors, in circumstances of high modernity, directly influence the relation between self-identity and modern institutions. Giddens notes that:

Modernity breaks down the protective framework of the small community and of tradition, replacing these with much larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports and the sense of security provided by more traditional setting. (34)

It is undeniable that society has significantly transformed in the processes of Modernization; these transformations reshaped the way individuals build up and develop their self-identities. Giddens contends that using the term ‘Post-modernity’ is a manifest mistake in that, as he argues, “we have not moved beyond modernity but are living precisely through a phase of its radicalization” (51). Instead of employing the term ‘Post-modernity’, Giddens prefers to use ‘High’ or ‘Late’ Modernity. Accordingly, he notes that “rather than entering a period of post-modernity, we are moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before.” (53).

A central argument in Giddens’s oeuvre is the all-inclusive feature of risk in the modern life of the contemporary subject. He states that “to live in the universe of high modernity is to live in an environment of chance and risk” (1991:109). High-consequence risks today are, to a great extent, the result of rapidly increasing processes of globalization. Giddens, in a chapter titled ‘Risk’, in his monumental *Runaway World*, claims that this “simple notion unlocks some of the most basic characteristics of the world in which we now live” (21). Whereas many risks have been disappeared with the emergence of globalization, new risks still appear and re-appear to the modern subject.

He argues “we live in a world where hazards created by ourselves are as or more, threatening than those which come from the outside” (1990:36). Some of these risks, he maintains, are catastrophic and worldwide including the global ecological risk, nuclear proliferation, and the meltdown of the world economy. There are also other risks that frequently affect individuals directly such as diet, medicine, or even



marriage. He expands the notion of risk by building upon 'anxiety,' as a consequence of risk. He asserts that awareness of high-consequence risks is probably for most people a source of unspecific anxieties.

### 3.3. Dilemmas of the Self

Giddens has been dealing with dilemmas of the self, which threaten the modern subject of the contemporary society. "Living in the world of late modernity," he writes, "involves various distinctive tensions and difficulties on the level of the self" (1991: 188). The major manifestations of these dilemmas include 'Unification versus Fragmentation,' 'Powerlessness versus Appropriation,' 'Authority versus Uncertainty,' and 'Personalized versus Commodified.'

As for the first dilemma, Giddens argues "Modernity fragments; it also unites" (189). He claims that "So far as the self is concerned, the problem of unification concerns protecting and reconstructing the narrative of self-identity in the face of the massive intentional and extensional changes which modernity sets into being" (190). The second dilemma, 'Powerlessness versus Appropriation,' is scrutinized by Giddens in way that he ultimately decided to differentiate between the traditional and pre-modern world regarding individual's controlling power. He claims that although powerlessness relates to both pre-modern and modern time, and individuals in both these eras experience such feelings, we should not run out of this simple fact that "with the coming of modern institutions, most individuals either are (or feel) more powerless than in preceding times" (192). Afterwards, Giddens deals with the psychic aspects of such feelings and how it penetrates into aims, projects or aspirations held by individual, as well as to the composition of the phenomenal world.

'Authority versus Uncertainty,' the third major dilemma facing the modern subject, appears to Giddens as existing considerably more than that was conceived of in pre-modern social system. "In conditions of high modernity," Giddens asserts, "in many areas of social life –including the domain of the self – there are no determinant authorities. There exist plenty of claimants to authority – far more than was true of pre-modern cultures" (194). As for the dilemma of 'Personalized versus Commodified' experience, Giddens attempts to indicate how individualism becomes extended to the sphere of consumption; the designation of individual wants becoming basic to



the continuity of the system. For Giddens, “the project of self” in modern era, has been associated with “desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life” (198).

### 3.4. Transformation of Intimacy

Anthony Giddens in *Transformation of Intimacy* explores the impact of globalization on the personal relationships and inner lives of individuals. Those who live in advanced capitalist society, for Giddens, are affected by the transformations in intimate, physical relationships. The central thesis that Giddens seeks to demonstrate is that globalization has fundamentally altered the nature of all personal relationships. More significantly, Giddens looks at these shifts as risky one. He deals with the psychological impacts of such transformations as well. “Personal life”, Giddens argues, “has become an open project, creating new demands and anxieties. Giddens writes:

Among all the changes going on today, none are more important than those happening in our personal lives - in sexuality, emotional life, marriage and the family. There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others. It is a revolution advancing unevenly in different regions and cultures, with many resistances. (1992:9)

The sexual revolution of the past years, for Giddens, is not simply described as a gender-neutral advance in sexual permissiveness. Instead, he asserts that it involves two basic elements” the first element is a revolution in ‘female sexual autonomy’. Giddens believes that the origin of this element goes back to the nineteenth century. The second element is the ‘flourishing of homosexuality,’ in both male and female practitioners. He claims that “the changes now affecting sexuality are indeed revolutionary, and in a very profound way” (3). The other significant idea Giddens elaborates is the notion of ‘plastic sexuality,’ which is, as he contends “decentered sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction” (2). He considers ‘sexuality’ as a prime connecting point between body, self-identity, and social norms.





## 4. Mark Ravenhill and In-Yer-Face Theatre

By the mid-90s, a divergent group of young writers had emerged whose plays addressed violence and sexuality in an unflinching manner, and many were produced by the Royal Court. Aleks Sierz, the well-known British theatre critic, who is famous for his book *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, defines this kind of theatre as “any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message” (2001:4). As he claims, in recent years, British theatre has seen a renaissance in playwriting with the emergence of new writing groups:

New writing is everywhere. Everywhere, you can watch plays that are examples of new writing; everywhere, you can meet new writers; everywhere there are new writing festivals. Every year, more than a million tickets are sold for new plays. In fact, there is a deluge of the new. And the new bears the stamp of the contemporary. (2011: 15)

Sierz elaborates on how this kind of drama employs shock tactics and how it questions moral norms; this new form of drama, unlike the type of theater that allows us to sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, “takes us on an emotional journey, getting under our skin” (Ibid). He argues that: “What they did was to transform the language of theater, making it more direct, raw and explicit. They not only introduced a new dramatic vocabulary, they also pushed theater into being more experiential, more aggressively aimed at making audiences feel and respond” (xiii). Sierz mentions several playwrights as prominent figures in *In-Yer-Face Theater*; among them the name of Mark Ravenhill comes with his first and conspicuous play, *Shopping and Fucking*. Dan Rebellato, in the ‘Introduction’ to this play argues that Ravenhill is famous for his ability to demonstrate the contemporary society in his plays:

He has a reputation among some critics as a theatrical enfant terrible purveying sexually explicit, sensationalist, shack-loaded dram. And there is stuff in the plays one could point to, but Ravenhill 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. (X)



For Sierz what characterized In-Yer-Face Theater were “its intensity, its deliberate relentlessness and its ruthless commitment to extremes” (2001: xiii). He lists a number of themes and motives as the common features in In-Yer-Face theatre such as: the public staging of secret desires and monstrous acts, violent actions, images of sex, powerful and uncontrollable feelings, taboo words, shock tactics, disturbing subjects, explicitness of scenes of sexual abuse and cannibalism, as well as its blatant language and the rawness of its emotion. Ravenhill’s plays all embody the elements Sierz has outlined as the common characteristics of In-Yer-Face plays.

## 5. Reading *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust Is Dead*

### 5.1. Globalization and Contemporary Society

For Giddens Globalization is a process which gets mostly everything transformed. The argument made in this article is that what Giddens proposes by the language of sociology is in close association with what Ravenhill has represented by the language of literature. Ravenhill, in his *Some Explicit Polaroids*, depicts the distinguishable characteristics of the contemporary everyday life with those of few years ago by representing two different groups of people, new and old generation. Caglayan Dogan, in his essay, ‘Mark Ravenhill’s *Some Explicit Polaroids*: A Play as the Reverberation of Consumerist Culture’, argues that this play “is one of the most sensational plays reflects consumerist culture of 2000s” (51). Dogan introduces this play as a political criticism on the confrontation of the two generations and focus on how this play reflects consumerist tenets. Representing the contemporary society, evidently, is subjected not only to *Some Explicit Polaroids* but also to most of Ravenhill’s plays.

The story revolves around the life of six characters; three of them, Tim, Nadia, and Victor, belong to the new generation and three other, Helen, Nick, and Jonathan, belong to the old generation. The protagonist, Nick, was in prison since 1984 for attempted murder on Jonathan and now he is released. After his release, Nick returns to his ex-lover’s house hoping for somewhere to stay and cope with a world from which he has been absent for fifteen years. But he noticed that Helen, Nick’s former partner, has changed a lot and demolished all possible links to the past. Jonathan,



in the story, is represented as a capitalist figure; he is, in fact, the symbol of consumerism in the play, a product of consumerist society, in that he is always obsessed with money.

On the other hand, the second story is the story of Tim, Victor, and Nadia. Tim, a HIV positive, as he uses the words, 'downloads' Victor on the Internet as a sex slave; Victor is only concerned with his beautiful body. Nadia, Tim's close friend, has physical relation with men to escape from her loneliness. After releasing from prison, Nick feels alienated in this society and confused what is going on; he witnesses a society full of contradictions. As the story goes on, he notices that nothing is stable around him. That's why at the end of the play, he admits to Jonathan that he felt more secure in prison and desired to be arrested again.

The first and foremost issue in this play is how characters change within the play. In the first place, Nick was confused for the changes have happened and how other characters like Victor undergoes many changes. This aspect has been pointed out by Aleks Sierz as well; elaborating on Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroid*, Sierz argues: "More clearly than in any of his previous plays, Ravenhill's characters interact in a dialectical way, changing with every new confrontation (2001: 146)."

After fifteen years in prison, Nick's first contact with contemporary society is in scene one in which he tells Helen: "kid in the lift tried to sell me smack. Must have been about seven. I said: 'you shouldn't be selling drugs at your age.'" And Helen replies "there's a lot of that goes on (231)." Nick is confronted with a world quite different from 1984. Likewise, Tim mentions such difference when he told Nick "now these are something you won't have seen in nineteen eighty-four. These are new. You wouldn't have seen these in nineteen ninety-four (268)." Helen also explains for Nick how a great explosion has happened:

Everything gone. Not all at once. Not some great explosion. Not one day you can see what's happening and fight back. But so gradually you don't see it. Long, dull pain. Every now and then thinking: how did we get from there to here? How did we let this happen? (281)

Helen, here, tells Nick how the gradual changes have happened. She mentions the words 'long' and 'dull pain'; these two key words reveal clandestine aspects of those changes. Helen even claims that 'everything has gone.' As already mentioned, what



Giddens attempts to demonstrate is that Globalization is a 'revolutionary' prodigy. It is interesting to note that, Ravenhill by focusing on the lives of these six characters and their relations with each other, similar to Giddens, aims to portray the revolutionized society in contemporary world. In scene five, victor tells Nick:

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. The people are marching forward to the beat of history. This lie. This deception. This progress. (270)

The characters aim to demonstrate a world to Nick which is considerably distinctive from that of the years before prison. Here, Victor asserts that 'everything falling to pieces' this is not true just for Nick; for sure this is being felt nearly by all the characters. Helen was the first person that Nick noticed her changes. The dialogue between Nick and Helen on page 235 and 236 best proves this claim:

Nick: I don't understand anything now

Helen: everything has changed

Nick: and you have changed?

Helen: of course. Look at me

Nick: looking at you now, I still feel a lot of the same stuff about you.

Helen: you're looking at a different person.

Nick: same feelings

Helen: yeah?

Nick: yea. And what are you feeling right now?

Helen: I don't know

Nick: a few of the old feelings

Nick could not understand anything and still speaks about old feelings. Formerly, Nick and Helen have had identical worldviews and both have been socialists; however, at the moment, Helen says 'Everything has changed.'" Elsewhere, Helen tells Nick: "I don't need you, Nick. I've got nothing in common with you. I've cut bits out of myself. Bit by bit, another belief, another dream. I've cut them all out. I'm changed. I've grown up" (281-282).



It is certainly obvious that living in the globalized world has had profound impacts on individual's everyday life. The characters, in this play, are all being lost in the contemporary society, both the old and new generations. That's why Nick says: "I want to understand how the world works now" (236). It is not just Helen that has changed, to Nick; the entire world appears to change. There are tangible evidences in the play indicate that this process of changing happens almost to everyone. One of the key defining features of Globalization, Giddens remarks, "isn't only about what is 'out there', remote and far away from the individual. It is an 'in here' phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives" (2003: 12).

These two plays repeatedly evoke themes of loneliness, the sense of loss, alienation, anxiety, and commodification of love and sexuality. This is evidently connected to the play's portrayal of violence (both physical and mental), drug and sex addiction, alcoholism, unpleasant emotions, explicit sexual images uncontrollable feelings, shocking events, psychological wounds, and blatant language. Ravenhill expand such themes in his plays as the building blocks of the contemporary society. In other words, these elements are all the consequences of the globalized world in which individual's values have been changed drastically. In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Nick who was a socialist activist, after his release, is often being told to take drug and stop thinking of his old belief; Victor, several times, tells Nick that drug is much better than socialism. Nadia, also, suggests drugs as a solution to Nick's pessimistic temper. In scene five, Nadia and Victor attempts to persuade Nick to take drug, but he refuses:

Nadia: I think Nick needs an E

Victor: yes. Much better than Socialism.

Victor fetches an E from his bag

Tim: that's a thing that will be new for Nick. E. very post eighty-four

Victor: everyone is the same when you take this. Everybody loves everybody. Take it. (276)

Nick who belongs to 1984, is now confronted with a 'post eighty-four' world, a world in which individuals like Nadia, Tim and Victor deals with destructive things like drug. Tim says it is a very post eighty-four; and victor knows it better than socialism. Moreover, the theme of loneliness is represented through most of the characters.



Nadia is always afraid of being alone; in order to escape from her loneliness, she has physical relation with men. On page 290 of the play, there is a dialogue between Nadia and Jonathan, which reveals how much alone they are:

Nadia: You are going to abandon me?

Jonathan: I'm going to leave you. There must be someone. Who would look after you?

Nadia: Well. No actually, no. There's nobody.

Jonathan: All alone in the world?

Nadia: All alone in the world.

As it is noticed, here, Nadia implores Jonathan not to abandon him and they both states they are 'all alone in the world.' This serves as an example of Giddens's viewpoint that in Late Modernity "the individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports (1991: 34)." Such loneliness is not only true for the case of Nadia; however other characters, such as Tim, Victor, Helen, and even Nick suffer from it. For instance, Tim feels alone and 'purchased' Victor on the Internet, and told him "I paid for you. I own you." Tim also tells Nadia: "maybe I need you or I need someone to stop me being alone" (310).

*Faust Is Dead*, another work addressed in this study, revolves around the story of a French postmodernist philosopher, Alain, who closely resembles Michel Foucault, on an American TV show, is asked about his recent book, *The Death of Man and the End of History*. These two sides, death of man on one side, and sexuality on the other side, refers to two highly significant items by which Ravenhill attempts to demonstrate the contemporary society. Pete and Alain meet a guy on the Internet, Donny. He cuts his body to prove Alain and Pete that he is a winner, they arrange to meet him in person. At the end of the play, Donny kills himself while he cuts his body to prove himself to Pete and Alain. The play ends with another suicide, Alain. First, in scene seventeen he is shot by Pete and is hospitalized. In the last scene he refuses to take medical help and finally dies. In the hospital, Pete tells Alain he has made a deal with his father and is joining him in the computer company. Pete has stolen an important floppy disc from his father, and he is chasing Pete. Pete is always worried about this floppy disc and sees the world by his camcorder without which he couldn't live. In the story, there are contemporary references to Bill Gates, Kurt Cobain, Saddam



Hussein, Boris Yeltsin, CNN, MTV, the Internet, chaos theory, Michel Foucault, Baudrillard's riddles, as well as Fukuyama and his controversial book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, which Alain's book is echoed from.

Ravenhill in *Faust Is Dead* uses the myth of Dr Faustus to portray the contemporary society in America, a society that is shaped by consumerism and mass media. Sierz claims: "Using his characteristic mix of postmodern ideas and traditional morality, Ravenhill's *Faust is Dead* is a good example of the decade's freedom in turning old myths into new sources of meaning" (138). In the very opening lines of this play a child is crying because he sensed that the world is a bad place:

See a few years ago I couldn't sleep. I'd go to bed and then I got thinking about all this stuff in the world\_ about the riots and the fighting and all the angry people and all\_ and I just couldn't sleep ... What's a wrong poop? You have to tell me what's wrong. Is it the teachers at the school? Is one of the teachers at the school doing bad things to you? Until eventually I'm like: No, Mom, it's not the teachers at the school. I'm crying for the world, because the world is such a bad place.

And Momma is like:

I know poops. It's bad now but it's getting better. It's gonna get a whole lot better. We're going to live in a better world. (97)

Here, a child is complaining about the world and he couldn't sleep due to all bad things going on. He tells his Mom "he is crying for the world, because the world is such a bad place." His Mom promises him that "it's getting better. It's gonna get a whole lot better." However, the child is not convinced and pretends to sleep while he cries in a way that his Mom won't hear him. This is exactly what Giddens claim about an era we are living in; a world that promises getting better but it won't. In scene thirteen the chorus voice again is complaining about what has happened to people and how the minister of the church raise a lot of money to have a terminal as a 'modern' right:

See the minister of our church, he calls all the moms together one day and he says: Ladies, we have to raise some money. We have to raise a lot of money. Because I want the young people of this church to be part of the future ... It may seem like he has taken your children away, but he is working for you in a mysterious way so let's get out there and raise those funds for more terminals and pray for a brighter world. (121)



He says Moms are gathered to raise a lot of money for a 'modern' terminal. They are told about the significance of the 'future' and how important being online for young people is. When Moms complain about the impact of Net on their kids, Minister says 'this is part of Lord's mystery. It may seem like he has taken your children away, but he is working for you in a mysterious way.'" Then he invites them to raise more money and 'pray for a brighter world.' In the above quotation Ravenhill depicts a group of people being deceived by those who have the power, depicts a world in which winners have power over the losers. This is what Giddens named as the characteristic of globalization. For him, globalization creates a world of winners and losers that represents it as a double-edged phenomenon. Near the end of the story, the child which complained in scene one because of "all those things going on in the world", now in the scene eighteen becomes an adult and still cries because the world is such a bad place:

Looking back, now I'm an adult, I think I used to cry at night not because the world was such a bad place. Well, okay, not just because the world is such a bad place. But also because I wanted the world to come to an end ... But I can't see them. So it hasn't ended and it's not getting better. It's just going on and on and on. (137)

He remembers his Mom's promise told him "We're going to live in a better world." However, now he can't see them. As he says "is not getting /better." "It's going on and on." This is equivalent to what Giddens argue about High or Late Modernity. According to him, living in the High Modernity is similar to riding a juggernaut; "To live in the world produced by high modernity has the feeling of riding a juggernaut" (1991:28). These lines indicate the adult is looking for the signs that the world is getting better, as mother promised it would, but perceives that the world has neither ended nor become better and discovers that he does not feel a thing about it.

## 5.2. Transformation of Intimacy in Sexuality

One of the elements highly peculiar to the In-Yer-Face plays is the way playwrights use sexual themes in their works. These plays include explicit sexual images, rape, and homosexual relations. Ravenhill's plays, similar to the plays of other In-Yer-Face





playwrights, represent such issues clearly. His plays are the best examples to prove the revolutionary changes happened to sexuality in the globalized world. As it was discussed, Giddens claims that sexuality has witnessed revolutionary changes. What I want to argue here is that Ravenhill's plays could be considered as a good source to depict such revolution in that he mostly represents sexual issues in new forms, similar to what happen in the real life.

Giddens introduces the term 'pure' or 'confluent' relationship or love which has appeared in the modern era. Analyzing Ravenhill's characters, it would be obvious that such shift is manifested in the play and the romantic love has been pushed aside, and "pure love" begins to appear. In these plays, characters' relations are not stable and fix, they continue their relationships only insofar as it is thought by both to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within. The prime example is Nick's former partner, Helen, in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Helen and Nick had emotional relationships together before Nick's imprisonment; however, while Nick steps into the new society, Helen tells him she doesn't need him anymore. Characters' relations in this play are the best examples of 'pure love', which unlike 'romantic love', does not involve in a lifelong commitment. Nadia, who is a go-go dancer, is afraid of being alone, and in order to escape from her loneliness, she has sexual intercourse with men. On page 291, Nadia and Jonathan speak about Nadia's boyfriend and how he has attacked her. Nadia is talking about Simon's love toward her:

Nadia: Simon hates me. Loves me in a hating kind of way. Hates me in a loving kind of way. Sometimes hates me

Jonathan: and do you love Simon?

Nadia: no

Jonathan: you are lying to me. Goodbye

Nadia: no please. I don't want to be alone. Please.

Simon's love toward Nadia is represented in an ambiguous way. He loves her in a hating kind of way and hates her in a loving kind of way. And this is not related to the domain of a genuine love. As it is observed in the play, characters are not involved in a true and 'romantic love', as Giddens uses the word. In such relationships, individuals are concerned with body. Clear examples are Victor and Nadia. Victor, all the time, is obsessed with his body and reminds other that he has got a beautiful



body. Likewise, Nadia appreciate her body and tells Jonathan that nowadays 'everyone is interested in bodies.' In both these two plays Ravenhill uses homosexual characters that have love affairs together. For instance, Victor and Tim are homosexual in *Some Explicit Polaroids*. The dialogue below is between Victor and Tim in which they discuss love:

Tim: maybe I need you or I need someone. To stop me being alone. But don't confuse that with love.

Victor: so what is love?

Tim: I never found out

Victor: you never loved me?

Tim: I don't know if I ever loved you because I never knew what love was.

Victor: I want you to love to me. Please make this like an opera. Sing to me.

I hold you in my arms and tell me you will love me forever.

Tim: I can't do that (298).

It is obvious that Tim is only in search of someone to stop him from being alone. Even he mentions Victor that he shouldn't confuse it with love; they are talking in order to find out what love is. However, as Tim says 'I never knew what love was.' In scene four of *Faust Is Dead*, in which Alain is very drunk, it is evident that Pete and Alain, are homosexuals. Pete, on page 114 uses the words "strange world of homosexual". Moreover, in scene ten, he says "I believe in the multiplicity of sexualities within our society" (113). Flourishing of homosexuality is in close association with the concept of Giddens' Plastic Sexuality in that it is free from the needs of reproduction. In both *Faust Is Dead* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*, characters' relations are not based on eternal commitment but an arbitrary one. Family, marriage, reproduction, and a romantic love have no place in their relations.

It is quite true to conclude that the kind of sexuality represented in these two plays is evidently what Giddens calls 'transformation of intimacy.' As Giddens explains in late eighteenth century Sexuality was strictly limited to family size, however, with the spread of modern contraception and new reproductive technologies, Sexuality has been defined differently. The sexuality that is portrayed by Ravenhill is, for sure, free from reproduction, it is not limited to the domain of home and heart as well. Ultimately, what is significant is that Giddens looks at this revolution as risky one. For him, such



transformations have had psychological impacts on the individuals. To sum up briefly, having looked at the characters in this play, it would be seen that how characters have been affected by the psychological impacts of the transformations of intimacy. 'Pure love' relationships, Giddens argues, hold great promise for human freedom and happiness, but are so unpredictable that they also threaten to overwhelm people with anxiety and lead them to engage in compensatory addictive behaviors.

### 5.3. Self-Identity at Risk

A careful reading *Some Explicit Polaroids* affirms the fact that individual's self-identity has been affected by the transformations of the world they live in. As it was argued earlier, Giddens notes that in Late Modernity "individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings" (34). They not only suffer from loneliness but also from 'powerlessness'; characters in these two plays seem to have no control over external agencies appear in their life. On page 290 Nadia and Jonathan's dialogue refers to such powerlessness:

Nadia: you are quite a strong person, aren't you?

Jonathan: Do you think so?

Nadia: And you are quite a powerful person, aren't you?

Jonathan: None of us really has any power.

Here Jonathan tells Nadia that 'None of us really has any power.' Elsewhere, Jonathan tells Nadia "you are a very powerless, lonely, unfocused person. Aren't you?" (292). In *Faust Is Dead*, Donny also is powerless to control his surrounding; the only thing he has control over is his body, however perversely. While he is about to prove Alain and Pete that he is the winner, Donny cuts his body and dies. What Donny does and his act of suicide demonstrate how new experiences of the contemporary society lead an individual to risk. Consequently, such new risks get individuals ruined; just like Donny who ruins his body by the act of cutting. At the end of the play there is another suicide; in hospital Alain refuses to take his pills. He tells Pete: "I don't want the pills. I don't want to get better.", and finally dies. Before his death, when he witnesses Donny's suicide Alain claims: "at a moment at the end of the twentieth century, reality ended. Reality finished and stimulation began" (132). Moreover he



mentions changes taking place and how a few people notice: “maybe few of noticed, or sense that change was taking place, it happened.

There are also several examples within these two plays which show the instability of the world characters live in. For instance, on page ten Nadia mentions her insecure position in society and says “Nothing is fixed for me, which is cool in a way. Sometimes you just have to let yourself be open to possibilities before you can really choose, you know?” What she points out that ‘nothing is fixed’ it is interrelated with the riskiness of such society. A situation in which nothing is fixed leads to existence of many possibilities. Consequently, the existence of many possibilities causes a risky situation for individuals to choose. Moreover, the way characters in the play obsessed with drugs, the way they are suffered from illnesses such as HIV, the way they are obsessed with body, like Nadia and Victor, the way the sexual relationships have been transformed, the way they are addicted with sex, are all used by Ravenhill in order to indicate how individuals live in an insecure and risky world.

Nick, in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, is also confused in a society in which no one and of course nothing is stable; such quality has transferred to Nick himself, he changed his minds several times. At the end of the play, he admits to Jonathan that he felt more secure in prison and tried to be arrested again. He says “I found myself thinking: I wish I was inside. Last few days. I’ve been standing there” (309). Nick considers the world he lives in meaningless and asserts that nothing means anything: “Maybe that’s where I got it wrong. Maybe nothing means anything. Maybe that’s what I was running away from. I’ll be meaningless. Yeah, I’m going and I’m going to be totally meaningless.” (52). On this basis, it is inferred that Nick’s self-identity passes through some stages which are definitely risky and insecure.

All those issues represented by Ravenhill, lead to create a risky society. He attempts to indicate how ‘self’ in contemporary society is imperiled in various situations. Similarly, Giddens focuses on riskiness of Late Modernity; he claims the universe of high modernity is equal to live in an environment of chance and risk. In these two plays, risk penetrates into lives of almost all characters. In other words, all those transformations mentioned based on Giddens’ ideas cause risky situations in which self is imperiled. Accordingly, characters of *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust*



*Is Dead* are confronted with a new world which involves in risks reshaped the way they build up and develop their self-identities.

In *Faust Is Dead*, living in a capitalist society forces the characters bear the cost of the death of God, progress, man, humanity and reality. That's why Alain, on page 118, notes: "Man is dead, you know. And progress is dead. And humanity. Yes, Humanity is dead." This is related to his book introduced in the TV show, *The Death of Man and End of History*. In scene two, when Alain is asked about his book, he notes "I'm talking about man as an idea or construct" (98). Therefore, one of the major issues being expressed in this play is Man's finitude or death; this finitude is what gets individual's self-identity ruined.

Among those four dilemmas introduced earlier, the fourth dilemma, which was *Personalized versus Commodified Experience*, could be traced back in the story of *Faust Is Dead*. For Giddens, commodity Capitalism is an important issue, which affects the project of self in modern era. He endeavors to introduce capitalism as one of the main institutional dimensions of Late Modernity, and how it has become one of the prime driving forces behind modern institutions. As Giddens declares "Capitalism commodifies in various senses" (197). Pete, in *Faust Is Dead*, has been affected by such dilemma and the only things that are 'precious' for him is the camcorder and floppy disc. This clearly proves what Giddens argue: "the project of self" in modern era, has been associated with "desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life" (198). This is, for sure, related to concept of Risk and how this process of commodification, or as Giddens uses the word 'Commodified experience' imperiled the project of the self in condition of Late Modernity. Likewise, Sierz argues that: "When Alain meets Pete, he discovers that both have lost their sense of reality. Pete has more experience of life, but his world is filtered through the Internet and video cameras" (135).

Pete's camcorder demonstrates how a character is concerned with a commodity. In scene ten, on page (113), while Pete is speaking he takes out the camcorder, looks through it and says: "that's better. I kind of feel ok now" Likewise, he stolen a floppy disc from his father. In scene eleven Pete says: "I'm gonna sleep with this disc from now on. This is the only thing that is precious to me" (119). Also, in *Some Explicit Polaroids* Tim, as he uses the word, 'downloads' Victor on the Internet as a sex slave.



He always tells Victor 'I paid you'. It is apparent from the above point that Ravenhill, here, represents the commodification of love and sexuality. Victor as a human being is reduced to a commodity and is downloaded from the internet.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study closely addressed Giddens's major concepts related to High or Late Modernity while applying them to critical reading of Ravenhill's plays, *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Faust Is Dead*. The Major argument of this research is to illustrate how these two plays represent the social changes of the contemporary era. Moreover, it seeks to investigate how the transformation brought by Globalization has affected individual's everyday life. As it was argued, Ravenhill's plays mostly deal with the state of society at the time in which they are set in. He, in fact, acts as an astute observer of the society he lives in; his plays are set in a world in which everything is the subject to change. In these two plays, concepts of Globalization, Risk, Uncertainty, Transformation of Intimacy, and Self-Identity were taken to consideration.

In *Some Explicit Polaroids*, Ravenhill portrays the life of six characters; three of them, Tim, Nadia, and Victor belong to the new generation and three other, Helen, Nick, and Jonathan belong to the old generation. The researcher attempts to indicate how Ravenhill represents the life of each of these characters in the contemporary world and how they are encountered with remarkable changes, which influenced issues like marriage, intimacy, and sexual relationships. In the next play addressed in this study, *Faust Is Dead*, characters have been affected by the transformation within the society. Characters' relations as well as using drugs are considered as two risk and insecure ways that reshape their self-identities. In short, it was observed that there is a close relationship between literature and society in that a dramatist like Ravenhill truly represents the realities within the society through the lives of characters in his plays.



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