NIETZSCHEAN NIHILISM AND THE WAYS TO OVERCOME IT IN TOM MURPHY'S PLAYS "BAILEGANGAIRE" AND "THE SANCTUARY LAMP"

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VICTORIA BİLGE YILMAZ

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_____

Prof. Dr. Sencer AYATA
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

_____

Prof. Dr. Wolf KÖNİG
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

_____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurten BİRLİK
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Dr. Deniz ARSLAN (METU, ELIT) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurten BİRLİK (METU, ELIT) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Bilge N. ZİLELİ ALKIM (ATILIM, ELIT)_____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name: Victoria Bilge Yılmaz

Signature:

ABSTRACT

NIETZSCHEAN NIHILISM AND THE WAYS
TO OVERCOME IT IN TOM MURPHY'S PLAYS
"BAILEGANGAIRE" AND "THE SANCTUARY LAMP"

Yılmaz, Victoria Bilge

MA., Department of English Literature

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik

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Nietzschean epistemology involved many subversive elements and, thus, posed a challenge to the Christian epistemology and to other traditional frames of references which appeared after the Enlightenment. With his philosophy Nietzsche problematised many of the traditional givens like the master signifier (God), the other organising principles, and the traditional binary oppositions on which the Western metaphysics was based. He shattered the previous parameters of existence irraparably when he disconnected the individual from his/her illusions by laying bare a decentered universe devoid of any form of meaning, and the result was nihilism in the beginning. Interestingly enough, Nietzschean epistemology also offered ways to overcome this nihilistic stage in an individual's struggle for a

meaningful existence. This thesis is based on the analysis of two plays by Tom Murphy, “Bailegangaire” and “The Sanctuary Lamp”, against the background of Nietzschean philosophy and attempts to discover the parallelisms between Murphy’s characters and Nietzschean elements in their search for the essence of existence and their desire for a meaningful life. In the plays, self-realisation of an individual, that is, overcoming nihilism, is mainly achieved by means of art and one’s individual strength, which is characterised by the ability to endure abyss, affirm life as it is, forget and forgive one’s enemies, follow instincts, employ one’s will to power, acquire the power and the position of God in one’s personal zone, and combine destruction and creation. The playwright conveys an individual’s loss of purpose and the inevitable chaos in the aftermath of the death of God and, also, the methods to surmount this nihilistic condition. The study comes to the conclusion that all the above Nietzschean elements build a solid background for Murphy’s drama, where the dramatist draws a picture of systematicity of existence of an individual who struggles to attain meaning.

Keywords: Nietzsche, nihilism, abyss, will to power, despair

ÖZ

TOM MURPHY'NİN "BAILEGANGAIRE" VE "KİLİSE LAMBASI" OYUNLARINDA NIETZSCHE NİHİLİZMİ VE ONU AŞMA YOLLARI

Yılmaz, Victoria Bilge

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü

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Nietzsche'nin epistemolojisi daha öncekileri çürütücü pek çok öğe içermektedir, ve bu yüzden Hristiyan epistemolojisi ve Aydınlanma Çağı'ndan sonra ortaya çıkmış olan diğer geleneksel düşünce sistemlerine meydan okumaktadır. Felsefesiyle Nietzsche ana gösteren (Tanrı) gibi geleneksel kabullerin bir çoğunu, diğer düzenleyeci ilkeleri, ve batı metafiziğinin dayandığı geleneksel ikili zıtlıkları sorunsallaştırmıştır. Anlamdan yoksun merkezsizleşmiş evreni çıplak bırakarak bireyi illüzyonlarından kopardığı zaman önceki varoluş parametrelerini tamir edilemez bir şekilde parçalamıştır, ve bütün bunlar başlangıçta bireyi her şeyin anlamsızlaştığı ve sorgulandığı bir süreç olan nihilizme götürmüştür. Ne ilginçtir ki, Nietzsche'nin epistemolojisi bireyin anlamlı bir varoluş çabasında nihilistik aşamayı geçme yolları da sundu. Bu tez, Nietzsche'nin felsefesine göndermeler yaparak Tom Murphy'nin "Bailegangaire" ve "Kilise Lambası" oyunlarını

irdelemektedir, ve varlığın özünü arama ve anlamlı bir yaşam isteme bağlamında Murphy'nin karakterleri ile Nietzsche'nin felsefi göndermeleri arasındaki benzerlikleri ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır. Oyunlarda, bireyin kendini gerçekleştirmesi, ki bu onun nihilizmi aşması anlamına gelir, büyük ölçüde sanat ve kişinin bireysel gücü yoluyla başarılır. Bu güç, düzenleyici ilkelerin yokluğunda kargaşaya tahammül etme, hayatı olduğu gibi kabul etme, düşmanlarını unutma ve affetme, içgüdülerine kulak verme, erk istencini harekete geçirme, bireyin kişisel alanında Tanrı'nın gücünü elde edip onun yerine geçme ve, yok etme ve yaratma sürecini birleştirme yeteneğidir. Yazar, amaç yoksunluğunu ve Tanrı'nın ölümünden sonra ortaya çıkan kaçınılmaz kargaşayı ve ayrıca nihilistik durumu aşma yöntemleri sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, yukarıda belirtilen Nietzsche'ye ait öğelerin Murphy'nin anlama ulaşmaya çabalayan bir bireyin varoluş sistematiğinin resmini çizdiği draması için somut bir zemin oluşturduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Nietzsche, nihilizm, kargaşa, erk istenci, çaresizlik

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Tom Murphy's drama

Existing perceptions of Nietzsche's philosophy fall roughly within the frame of declining previous epistemology, based on religion and moral codes; viewing universe as an alien factor; and identifying methods of attaining the purpose of existence in such a world. The announcement of the death of God, which propelled such a condition of humankind in a Nietzschean universe, exposes man to the realisation of meaninglessness of life and labour. In the light of these major Nietzschean concepts it is possible to accommodate Tom Murphy's plays in a philosophical context since his characters display articulacy in their ambition to realise themselves in this absurd universe. Murphy addresses the questions of nihilism, such as an individual's loss of guidance and aim, his realisation of the greatness of suffering in this world and his spiritual loneliness, in his plays. Thus, an individual is mentally victimised by the authority that he usurped from the metaphysical power that was supposed to govern the universe hitherto. However, the dramatist explores different techniques to overwhelm the despair generated by the guaranteed maxim of disbelief in God that he stridently declares in his works. Hence, together with the establishment of the legitimacy of nihilism in his plays Murphy appears to suggest to his characters several formulations to overcome it: appreciating the possibility of stripping off the conventions of morality, being able to embrace two opposite poles in life, considering the phenomenal world as the sole source of truth, and welcoming the chance to be the authority.

1.1.1. Nihilism in Tom Murphy's drama

Emphasis on despair and absurdity as the main constituents of nihilism is a recurrent theme in Murphy's plays. In "Bailegangaire" (1985) Mommo and her granddaughter Mary feel despondent due to their awareness of meaninglessness of existence. They face many difficulties in trying to reach their purpose in

life because their immediate surroundings do not promise any change. Harry, from "The Sanctuary Lamp" (1975), reveals his nihilistic perspective regarding life with the loss of his spiritual and physical power since he becomes weary of looking for meaning in his life. In this vein, Murphy regards despair as an inevitable factor which triggers meaninglessness in existence.

An individual's inability to achieve meaning in his life foments his loss of identity in Murphy's plays. "The White House" (1972), for example, puts under discussion the loss of identity due to the death of one's idol. JJ, the owner of a pub "models himself, both physically and – or so he would believe – mentally on John F. Kennedy. When the president is assassinated, JJ's self-esteem and his stature as a local quasi-hero are instantly diminished" (Fitz-Simon 197). Seemingly, JJ's identity is lost, and this makes him feel committed to search for one, which he finds in the president. The dramatist portrays an individual devoid of purpose and meaning, and this is the assumption that runs through much of his discussion of the essence of life.

The condition in which the characters are caught without a purpose in life causes the feeling of displacement. For example, despite the fact that "On the Outside" (1961) portrays the differences between the wealthy and the poor, the real theme is one's inadequacy to affirm his present situation and to get accustomed to his immediate circumstances. Like Murphy's other plays, it attempts at describing a man who has lost his place and home, and who feels himself in Limbo. "The Gigli Concert" (1983) is another play which dramatises a man's displacement: the Irishman cannot accept his background and pretends to be the famous Italian tenor, Gigli. In this line of thinking, Mahony outlines Murphy's main ideas in his plays as follows:

> Deracination; the threat or reality of exile; ostracization within small communities; unfilled longings that seem at first merely romantic, but which are much more complex; questions of faith and belief; and the desire of man to strive for the fully realized life – all these are the playwright's thematic markets. (135)

1.1.2. The ways to overcome nihilism

1.1.2.1. Expression of inner feelings

Nonetheless, nihilistic disorientation of Murphy's characters cannot be maintaned for a long time because in his plays there is a belief in human beings' need for a purpose or meaning in their existence. Firstly, Murphy suggests objective standing to his characters, that is, obtaining their independence from religious or conventional perspectives, which should be stripped off, leaving an individual "naked." This form of independence can shed further light on an individual's inner world. In "The Sanctuary Lamp" (1975), for example, Tom Murphy deals with the issue of Christianity versus the death of God, and the play manifests its concern with the inner feelings of a person regardless of his true ideas related to religion. Harry's monologue and Francisco's preaching scenes are the perfect instances to display the profundity of the soul.

In such a context, Tom Murphy values art highly because it can be essential in exposing the inner feelings. It helps the characters to adapt themselves to the stale condition of their lives and to commence a new life. Music, as a category of art, makes Murphy reveal the naked selves of his characters. He believes that particular circumstances of an individual's life come to surface from within the depth of his soul by means of music:

> I'm not jealous of any other writers, but then, in those days, I had an unbearable envy of singers. I thought it was the only possible thing to do in life; it was the only possible way to express oneself – singing rather than being a musician. If you're a fiddler you still have some sort of instrument in your hand, but the idea of song emerging from people. . . .
>
> (qtd. in Billington 105)

The metaphysical power of music overlaps with a violent eruption of the world within a human being. Murphy's language creates "continuous music of the soul" that shows the inside of a person, in Patrick Mason's words (104). Art in general is the most seminal tool of the dramatist, which helps him to construct a play in which the characters envisage their future bliss. Accordingly, Nicholas Grene endorses the conception of art in Murphy's drama as the main channel through which the characters express their value and meaning ("Talking" 74-75).

In “The Gigli Concert” (1983) the characters escape from the routine of life by means of music; two main characters of the play, King and the Irishman, try to overcome the notorious stability of the world by means of opera of a famous Italian tenor Gigli:

> The quest for beauty, for song, for an expression of the spirit beyond the drudgery of every day must be pursued by individuals and communities if they are not to destroy themselves or be destroyed. A song, or a story, may be able to show the mythological shape which expresses life and gives it coherence. (O’Dwyer 36)

The sense of overwhelming meaninglessness and absurdity in life forces the playwright to adapt his characters to this boring universe by means of music. The characters’ faith in the death of God, states Cave, compels them to look for satisfaction of their inner desire for spiritual release in opera. The Irishman focuses on his inner world and realises the possibility of expressing his pain, which colours his present condition; and King’s opening of himself brings forward his newly acknowledged characteristic of attaining the impossible (95).

The chance to express their own feelings coming from within assists the characters in experiencing a new life in Murphy’s plays. As Richards argues, “The Gigli Concert” (1983) gives a depiction of people’s will to “realise their own suppressed desire for beauty” in this sleeping world (2006: 471). The characters try to complete an arduous task, that is, to make the others participate in the same activity of experiencing such a rebirth:

> King has unconsciously created the means and the mood by and in which the man could give voice to his own primal scream. It is a kind of rebirth, a ritual purging of the psyche. When we next see the Man, he is confidently at ease again with himself, his wife, family, and friends and is no longer haunted by the shadow of despair. (Cave 94)

1.1.2.2. Involving binary oppositions

The playwright’s another project, regarding the belief in a meaningful life, involves the affirmation of the necessity of binary oppositions. In such a context, Patrick Mason points out that “The Gigli Concert” (1983) displays characters who want to sing despite the ugliness of the world, despite all the brutality and

cynicism, and this desire to sing is the faith in the play (106). Indeed, in his interview with Concetta Bonaldi, Tom Murphy agrees with the interviewer's statement that in his plays the characters have to combine with each other in order to achieve a whole: "I became aware of the existing duality. I am aware that at the heart of everything there is a contradiction and to every thought there is an opposite and an opposing one" (166). In his plays, he emphasises the significance of accepting both sides to attain the meaning and unity, as in the case of the characters from "The Gigli Concert" (1983), who sing despite the callousness of life. Another aspect related to binary oppositions revealed in this play is that "damnation and salvation are not opposite states of being: the one is a precondition for the other. Only those who are truly damned can be truly saved" (O'Toole "*Homo Ansconditus*" 90).

Other plays dramatising the dramatist's idea regarding the opposites are "The Morning After Optimism" (1971) and "The Sanctuary Lamp" (1975). The former has two characters who meet their idealised selves in the forest. The message Murphy sends through this play is hidden in Rosie's statement: "My brains are danced on like grapes to make abortions!" In the same line of thinking, Stembridge pinpoints the necessity of integration of two poles in order to reflect reality:

> A magnificent image, it combines violence with sensuousness, dancing – a symbol of life – with abortions – a symbol of death. In this image, Rosie's worldview is expressed: life and death exist side by side. Opposites need each other. Therefore Edmund and Anastasia can not be real because there is no evil to balance their awful goodness; what is more they lack the life force. The sterility of their language sees to that. Murphy, then, is aware of the duality in language as in all things; how it can be stultifying and alienating, and how it can be liberating. Through their superior use of language James and Rosie express their acceptance of failure, and so place reality above ideals. (58)

"The Sanctuary Lamp" (1975) is similar to "The Morning After Optimism" (1971) in terms of its grasp of the opposites as parts of the whole being. Francisco's preaching from the pulpit reveals his longing for destruction in order to commence a new life. Murphy's attitude towards destruction deserves attention since the outcome is a new life.

1.1.2.3. Accepting phenomena as the source of truth

Another seminal feature of Tom Murphy's plays, which helps the characters to escape the nihilistic condition of their existence, is the interpretation of an individual's experience and the phenomenal world as the cardinal source of all truth. To illustrate, "The Morning After Optimism" (1971) encompasses the importance of reality over illusions. Despite the attractive qualities of Anastasia and Edmund – the perfect sides of Rosie and James – Murphy prefers the real images. Stembridge focuses on this attitude and argues that:

> James's vision of his 'real beautiful self' is the chief moving force in the play. Both James and Rosie believe that they could be different to what they are; Murphy's hard message is that we can not be. Our essence can not change. (54)

The characters' experience becomes the sole ground for them on which they can depend.

1.1.2.4. Being the authority

Tom Murphy's plays dramatise rejection of metaphysical power with its potential to govern people and an individual's establishment of his own authority. It might be interesting to note that his rejection of religion is marked by his childhood experience at school: "The casual brutality practiced by his instructors left an indelible impression upon Murphy's imagination. The Brothers taught Murphy to distrust religion, which he could not easily detach from the image of a stupid man brandishing a leather strap" (Gleitman 263). Against such a background, the setting in "The Morning After Optimism" (1971) reflects the desire of the dramatist to set the play in a remote place, away from conventions. James' and Rosie's acceptance of the responsibility for their existence emphasises Murphy's quest for the authority of an individual:

> For James and Rosie, however, Godot is dead. Their lives are their own responsibility. They have killed off their illusions, cast out remorse, accepted their actual selves, and now, for better or worse, exit to a life without dreams. They leave the nursery world of kings, heroes, virgins, saints, angels, and gods for sad maturity. (Griffin 67)

The theme of abandonment of God appears in the identity of characters who do not obey any limits, and this is best portrayed in "A Whistle in the Dark" (1961), one of Murphy's plays that brought him international success. It involves characters desiring to establish their own authority. Roche argues that the Carneys, the family of brutal brothers, are in constant conflict with the outside world as they want to exceed the limits of the authority. It is evident even in their use of language:

> The Carneys wreak the same havoc on language as they do on eveything else, essentially wanting the language to work for them, to express an individual sense of themselves, rather than their submitting to the language. (1995: 140-141)

The family is composed of physically and mentally strong people resisting all kinds of constraint which can limit their sense of command. Roche suggests a parallelism between the Carneys' behaviour and Murphy's attitude towards conventions:

> With the Carneys devoting much of their energy to destroying the drawing-room set, I would suggest that this can be taken as Tom Murphy's own rebellion in his playwriting against the constraints of urban bourgeois drama, the type of theatre that has prevailed in England in this century. Refusing to confine passionate speech and action within the polite formalities of middle-class manners and social chit-chat, Murphy is declaring war on the reigning pieties of conventional theatre and attempting to spill some blood in the waxworks museum to break up what Beckett called the 'complacent solidities' into sharper-edged fragments, a theatre of rough edges which can be put to new uses. (1995: 139)

Murphy himself is against the traditional concepts that people cling to and that hang over the humankind.

The realisation of the possibility of rejecting conventional dictates, in Murphy's plays, gives way to characters who attain their identity by means of their strength and authority. Similar to "A Whistle in the Dark" (1961), "Famine" (1968), too, has strong characters who convey their will to be the sole authority. For example, Mother's giving bread to her husband, John, during the famine in their country does not only mean sacrificing herself for her family; according to

Swann, it is her "conscious rejection of dependence on John and his will; in willing him to live, she wills herself and her son to die" (145). Asking her husband to kill herself and her son with a stick does not bring any consequences in the beginning, but it emphasises the Mother's strong will:

> She understands and accepts his defiance, but knows that it is not her way. Her anger is directed against God and government, not any longer against him. There is no chiding now and no irony in her use of the word 'right' – his word, which she accepts on his terms, but without any pretence that those terms apply to her. She sees her situation clearly and wills its consequences; her word is to command her death. She, the Queen and Mother, has been brought low; but, unable to act, unable to provide, unable to live, she accepts her impotence and attains freedom. It is one of the darkest moments in modern drama, but the paradox of that darkness is such that her freedom seems to be transferred and to embrace John. (Swann 145)

Murphy's portrayal of such a character reveals his rejection of fate and belief in its power. Etherton emphasises this point and says that people always face the chance of choosing what to do, as it is obvious in John's case: "He relentlessly pursues the choices he has made and the decisions he has taken" (128). He is the only responsible person for his actions, which is similar to Mother's behaviour. She accepts this world not as a world of religion or fate, but as a world where one power meets another, which is a recurrent idea in Murphy's drama, in Swann's words (146).

These above mentioned features of Tom Murphy's plays distinguish him from other Irish playwrights because he breaks all the conventions of the Irish theatre and creates his own tradition by revealing the ontological weaknesses of his characters, who are typically Irish. Interestingly enough, in his interview with Michael Billington, he accepts his admiration for Lorca and Tenessee Williams because they established themselves as the writers representing otherness (94). Ivor Browne acknowledges this otherness in Murphy as follows:

> To be ordinary is to live without wonder. To be beyond wonder, not to recognise the wonder in others, to be one of the herd and let it all pass, even life itself, without noticing or uncovering the truth, is to be as good as dead. The part of Tom that wrote those plays such as *A Whistle in the Dark* roars, but 'roaring on stage' as it were, helps the rest of us to see and

> interpret and be involved in the experience of being alive. We feel that we have 'roared' too. The overt and sickening violence of the characters in *A Whistle in the Dark* is his way of bringing to the surface the hidden violence and covert aggression in so many Irish families. In the polite middle-class Ireland of to-day our tendency is to say, 'Oh, no, we are not like that', but at a hidden level, in our families, are we not? (136)

These distinguishing characteristics of Murphy's plays – stressing the importance of the inner world of an individual, accepting binaries in life, considering the world of phenomena and experience as the main sources of truth, and declining conventional rules and moral dictates – make Murphy a philosophically conscious playwright. Along with these features, his ability to dramatise an individual's struggle for a meaningful existence in a god-forsaken universe prepares the ground to interpret his plays against the background of Nietzschean epistemology.

1.2. Nietzsche and his philosophy

Nietzsche's philosophy is very wide and complex, but in this study nihilism and the methods to overcome it are going to be examined. His most compelling philosophical concept is nihilism, which is intensified on the meaninglessness of existence generated by the rejection of all metaphysical power:

> Skepticism regarding morality is what is decisive. The end of the moral interpretation of the world, which no longer has any sanction after it has tried to escape into some beyond, leads to nihilism. 'Everything lacks meaning.' (*WP* 1)[1]

In the aftermath of the end of the moral interpretation of the world, an individual finds himself groundless since he loses his values that he respected hitherto, and spiritual loneliness leaves him bereft of hope. Hence, Nietzsche's philosophy encapsulates the disclosure of the elements leading into the death of God and the

[1] The following standard abbreviations to refer to Nietzsche's works are going to be used in this work and the figures in the parenthesis refer to sections, not to pages:
A = *The Antichrist*
BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*
EH = *Ecce Homo*
GM = *On the Genealogy of Morals*
GS = *The Gay Science*
HTH = *Human, All Too Human*
WP = *The Will to Power*
Z = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*
BT = *The Birth of Tragedy*

perception of the world as absurd and alien, which triggers a deep sense of meaninglessness.

Nietzsche's philosophy involves the total annihilation of the previous epistemology after the analysis of its causes creating new truths and values in order to overcome nihilism. The aspiration to understand the main cause of the death of God, that is, morality, brings Nietzsche to examine the roots of it, which are hidden in people's fears and weaknesses. Reno argues that "[t]o inquire into the origin and value of morality is to peer into the hidden recesses of our ambitions and fears, our longings and loathings – to know ourselves" (33). Therefore, in Nietzschean epistemology, moral values should be viewed as an integral part of an individual, rather than as a detached concept, because the generation of morality lies deep in the soul of an individual.

According to Nietzsche, there are two types of morality:

> Two types of morality must not be confused: the morality with which the healthy instinct defends itself against incipient decadence and another morality with which this very decadence defines and justifies itself and leads downwards.
>
> The former is usually stoical, hard, tyrannical (– *Stoicism* itself was such a brake-shoe morality); the latter is enthusiastic, sentimental, full of secrets; it has the women and 'beautiful feelings' on its side (– primitive *Christianity* was such a morality). (*WP* 268)

Nietzsche holds the slave morality, that is the morality of the weak people, responsible for the generation of Christianity. Thus, he reverses the definitions of good and evil; the good individual is the one who is strong and is able to govern the others, against whom the weak, that is, bad, use their weapon of moral codes. In a Nietzschean universe, the creator of morality, an indignant individual, is "corrupted", because he has lost his half. He is not a whole being, who is "noble" in such a context (Reginster 1997: 283).

The importance of Nietzsche in modern times lies in his occupation with the revolution regarding moral values. "For what distinguishes Nietzsche," argues Leiter, "is that he is a genuine critic of *morality* as a real cultural phenomenon, while recent Anglo-American writers are only critics of particular *philosophical theories of morality*" (252). He does not try to change some values, which are not

appropriate for the humanity; he wants an individual to be the originator of these values. Parsons defines Nietzsche's moral revolution as follows:

> But moral reform is not the only sort of moral change. There is also moral revolution. Moral revolution has not to do with making our principles consistent, not to do with greater application of what we now conceive as justice. That is the task of moral reform, because its aim is the preservation of values. But the aim of moral revolution is the creation of values. (57)

The philosopher intends to invite an individual to maturity, so that he can challenge the world by questioning the previous epistemology and demanding new values (Ansell Pearson 2006: 9). The concept of a new man – overhuman – demands the strength of an individual; he should be able to decline conventional dictates and moral codes and establish new values:

> *The greatest advantage of polytheism*. – For an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joys, and rights – that may well have been considered hitherto as the most outrageous human aberration and as idolatry itself. The few who dared as much always felt the need to apologize to themselves, usually by saying: 'It wasn't I! Not I! But *a god* through me.' . . . The invention of gods, heroes, and overmen of all kinds, as well as near-men and undermen, dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils was the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignity of the individual. (*GS* 143)

Overcoming nihilism is possible through the fusion of two opposite gods, Apollo and Dionysus, which suggests the binary oppositions in a Nietzschean universe, and the principle of which is found in the affirmation of life as it is, that is, both joy and pain. This brings the reader to one of the central teachings of the philosopher, that is *amor fati*:

> *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole; some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (*GS* 276)

The callousness of the universe necessitates an individual to be well-disposed towards life and the painful experience it gives; therefore, in a Nietzschean universe human beings should formulate a principle of attaining the meaning of life through integration of both poles, bliss and torment. Nietzsche asserts that:

> [T]errors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as necessary for me and for you as are their opposites. . . . the path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell. (*GS* 338)

Ability to experience fusion of these two opposing concepts is a teaching widely discussed in Nietzsche's works.

Another cardinal concept leading into a healthy surmounting of the meaninglessness is the expression of an individual's innermost feelings and desires as the principle of a meaningful life, which demands the Dionysian attitude. Nevertheless, the philosopher poses a question on delivering this eruption of the inner world in an artistic manner, which requires Apollonian aesthetics. A brief definition of both gods as offered by Ansell Pearson underlines the difference between their characteristics:

> Apollo is conceived as the 'transfiguring genius' of the *principium individuationis* through whom 'redemption in appearance' (*Schein*) can be attained. Dionysus, by contrast, stands for the bursting apart of the spell of this principium that provides the path to the innermost being of things. (2006: 5)

Despite the sharp differences between the two it is essential to integrate them in order to have one adequate personality, as Nietzsche summarises in his extract:

> Schopenhauer has depicted for us the tremendous *terror* which seizes man when he is suddenly dumfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception. If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. (*BT* 1)

Another cardinal teaching of Nietzsche is his assertion that all truth comes from the senses. Even science that was supposed to cause the death of God and to provide sufficient explanations regarding the essence of existence could not posit

itself beyond an individual's experiences of the phenomenal world. Ansell Pearson summarises the philosopher's perception of the source of reality as follows:

> In his early writings we find Nietzsche arguing that although science can probe the processes of nature it can never 'command' human beings: 'science knows nothing of taste, love, pleasure, displeasure, exaltation, or exhaustion. Man must in some way *interpret*, and thereby evaluate, what he lives through and experiences.' (2006: 9)

In a Nietzschean context, God does not exist and reality is the present; therefore, there is a rejection of any idea pertaining to the other world. Thus, people have to find meaning in this world rather than ascribe it to a metaphysical one. Nietzsche's idea of the death of God triggers a revolution in the world of ideas because in traditional sense human being has become the reflection of God. He renders himself valuable as far as he has faith in God. He obeys the dictates of religion, and hopes that all his wishes will come true in heaven. However, Nietzsche eradicates these hopes simply by stating that God does not exist.

Nietzsche's philosophy constitues a major source for Tom Murphy because he mainly deals with the purpose of existence. Nietzsche questions humankind's existence and tries to find a solution by leading people to luminosity and by making them believe that nihilism should be overcome. Nietzschean denunciation of morality and religion prepares the social context within which Murphy's characters act and, again, Murphy calls for Nietzschean concepts to rescue his characters from the horrendous meaninglessness they fall into. The present study proposes to look at the dialogue between Nietzsche and Tom Murphy in "Bailegangaire" and "The Sanctuary Lamp," against the background of the Nietzschean concepts concerning nihilism and the ways to overcome it.

CHAPTER 2

NIETZSCHEAN NIHILISM IN TOM MURPHY'S PLAYS "THE SANCTUARY LAMP" AND "BAILEGANGAIRE"

> The end of Christianity –
> at the hands of its own
> morality.
>
> Nietzsche [2]

The concept of nihilism, as the denial of morality and metaphysical truth, finds support in Nietzsche's discussion of the meaninglessness of existence as he "brings a new intensity to the examination of the phenomenon of metaphysical groundlessness, which, despised and welcomed in equal measure, had gone under the name of 'nihilism' since the late Enlightment" (Sommer 252). In his works Nietzsche scrutinises people's belief in the discredit of God's authority and their loss of purpose in life in traditional sense and shatters the supposed symmetries in the previous epistemology irreparably. Many playwrights in the 20th century could not help viewing the modern civilisation through Nietzschean filters, and Tom Murphy is one of them: his plays concern the characters who desire to be independent of any authority, who consequently establish a desolute universe without God, and who temporarily and unconsciously despair due to the feelings of dislocation after the death of God. In his plays he problematises Christianity, which seems to have caused its own downfall and left people bereft of purpose and meaning. It is because of this reason that Murphy's plays open up more when they are given a Nietzschean hearing to them. This chapter will discuss the elements of Nietzschean nihilism in Tom Murphy's two plays: "The Sanctuary Lamp" and "Bailegangaire", respectively, according to the degree of nihilistic elements in the plays.

[2] Nietzsche. *The Will to Power* 1.

2.1. Nihilism as a philosophical concept

As Bernard Reginster states, the systematicity of Nietzsche's philosophy "is determined not by a central philosophical doctrine, but by the requirements of his response to a particular crisis in late modern European culture, namely, the crisis of nihilism" (2006: 4). Nihilism is a stage when people experience lack of aim and frustration because they cannot realise their values, and it is the situation in which the individual encounters nothingness when s/he is left bereft of meaning. Nietzsche's ideas regarding nihilists are clearly given in *The Will to Power*, published posthumously:

> A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of "in vain" is the nihilists' pathos – at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists. (585)

Inability to find any meaning in life leads into the nihilists' awareness of the absurdity of the world; moreover, according to Nietzsche, they see that "we cannot reach the sphere in which we have placed our values" (*WP* 8). In other words, nihilism "is the conviction that our highest values cannot be realised in this world, and that there is no other world in which they can" (Reginster 2006: 8). The acknowledgement of the idea that this world is alien for individuals results in despair because they need to adapt themselves into a homely place to feel secure.

Belliotti divides nihilists into two, as passive and active. Passive nihilists believe that they need a metaphysical power to guide them as after the announcement of the death of God they feel anguish. Active nihilists, on the other hand, are courageous since they are happy to have the chance to be the authority; their strength marks their burning desire to depose the metaphysical power and take its place (52). Active nihilists are the ones who are successful in overcoming nihilism; therefore, in order to comprehend nihilism it is better to analyse desolate nihilists, whose feelings and experience unveil the depth of nihilism. Nietzsche portrays pessimistic nihilists in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where they express feelings with reference to the death of God:

> – And I saw a great sadness descend upon mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been!' And from all the hills it echoed: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been!' Indeed we have harvested: but why did all our fruit turn rotten and brown? In vain was all our work; our wine has turned to poison; an evil eye has seared our fields and hearts. We have all become dry; and if fire should descend on us, we should turn to ashes; indeed, we have wearied the fire itself. All our wells have dried up; even the sea has withdrawn. All the soil would crack, but the depth refuses to devour. 'Alas, where is there still a sea in which one might drown?' thus are we wailing across shallow swamps. Verily, we have become too weary even to die. We are still waking and living on – in tombs.
>
> (II "The Soothsayer")

The degeneration of humankind's existence due to the futility of labour gives rise to despondency. Additionally, being part of an alien universe, nature is indifferent to people's troubles, which creates difficulty in their adaptation to this world.

In short, the death of God marks the commencement of nihilism as it leads to the humankind's entanglement in the struggle for a purpose in life. A detailed discussion on the background of nihilism would prepare the ground for a more comprehensive analysis of the term: Nietzsche outlines the weaknesses of religion, people's inability to find meaning, science and modernity as the major factors leading into nihilism.

2.1.1. An overview of nihilism

2.1.1.1. Devaluing the highest values

Christian doctrines are based on values that abjure life and its tenets; and in a Nietzschean context this leads to the questioning of the meaning of existence, that is, nihilism. Nietzsche asks himself "'[w]hat does nihilism mean?'" (9) in *The Will to Power* and then, he shortly answers the question: "*That the highest values devalue themselves*. The aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer" (9). For Nietzsche, nihilism is not a concept against morality, but a concept generated by morality itself: "You see what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself" (*GS* 357). Here, he claims that God has been destroyed by morality. As Michael Allen Gillespie says, in a Nietzschean context Christianity is one of the sources of nihilism because it rejects all the essential elements of life such as procreation, sexuality, desire for glory and power (225).

Christian God repudiates life because he promises a life beyond, which is impossible to prove; in other words, Christian religion is faith in nothingness. Furthermore, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche resembles the faith in Christianity to sacrifice: "From the start, the Christian faith is a sacrifice: a sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit; at the same time, enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation" (46). When Bernard Reginster interprets Nietzsche's statements concerning life-negating values of Christianity, he argues that these values were designed deliberately, and they mark the hostility of morality towards life (2006: 47).

Moral codes tend to annihilate man's distinguishing characteristics, that is, his individual power, which encompasses the true feelings of humankind such as freedom, socialising, sex, pride, and self-confidence. Nietzsche finds it perilous since this prohibition leads to a resistance in the humankind: "Wherever on earth the religious neurosis has appeared we find it tied to three dangerous dietary demands: solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence" (*BGE* 47). Morality robs people of their nature; religious dictates create robots who abstain from enjoying life. Therefore, Ansell Pearson drives the nail home when he states that in a Nietzschean universe "God has been the greatest objection to existence so far" (2005: 92). The advent of nihilism and people's affirmation of the death of God imply the fact that people's nature is stronger than God's doctrines and, accordingly, Nietzsche is proud when he says that people are not suitable genetically to follow the rules of Christianity: "We northerners are undoubtedly descended from barbarian races, which also shows in our talent for religion: we have *little* talent for it" (*BGE* 48). Nietzsche's claim here is that the more barbaric people are the less religious they are since barbarism is the sign of naked personality which follows its instincts. This energy and need for freedom mark the profundity of the individual power in Nietzsche's philosophical doctrines. In such a context Warren concludes that "[i]f we follow Nietzsche's critique of Western culture, we find that these desires for agency mostly have been displaced and dislocated by the cultural and phenomenal conditions of practices, and this has given rise to nihilism" (198).

Additionally, religion educates people in such a way that they start to be ashamed of their dissolute behaviour. Nevertheless, for Nietzsche these people are

not far away from nihilism: "To be ashamed of one's immorality – that is a step on the staircase at whose end one is also ashamed of one's morality" (*BGE* 95). The philosopher believes that instincts are the only true way and that nature is stronger than moral and social codes. For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil* he asserts that it is difficult to control one's instincts: "*Instinct*. – When the house burns one forgets even lunch. – Yes, but one eats it later in the ashes" (83). Similar to hardship, which is insufficient to eradicate people's senses, religion cannot limit people's feelings and passions. Together with the victory of innate characteristics of humankind there is also another very important feature of the senses, that is, composing the fundamentals of truth: "All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses" (*BGE* 134). Nietzsche is the greatest supporter of people's natural behaviour because he believes that this is the only way to truth.

Another aspect that leads Nietzsche to think that the highest values devalue themselves is the theory that God is the product of man: "So let us make bold to say that religion is a product of the normal man, that man is closest to the truth when he is most religious and most certain of an infinite destiny" (*BGE* 48). People have created morality to have certain truths, because people cannot lead a life devoid of values and in a Nietzschean context, such people are called weak: "The weak need certainty and clarity if they are to avoid perishing" (Glenn 575). What is more, Nietzche believes that morality was produced in order to satisfy the needs of the weak people because they could not withstand the power of the strong people:

> It is *we* alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed "in itself", we act once more as we have always acted – *mythologically*. The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills.
>
> (*BGE* 21)

Reality is a struggle between the strong and the weak people, who create different methods of overcoming each other. In such a context, Christian morality appears to be a technique to subdue the strong people, who tend to rule the weak. Because of this, Nietzsche specifies the origin of morality as follows: "fear is again the

mother of morals" (*BGE* 201). So, religion is inadequate to provide strong explanations regarding its history or justify its assertions of metaphysical power, and this triggers people's doubts about the object of their faith.

Nietzsche claims that another thing that leads the highest values to devaluing themselves is the cruelty of religions. He discusses three cases of cruelty in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Once one sacrificed human beings to one's god, perhaps precisely those whom one loved most. . . . Then, during the moral epoch of mankind, one sacrificed to one's god one's own strongest instincts, one's "nature". . . Finally – what remained to be sacrificed? At long last, did one not have to sacrifice for once whatever is comforting, holy, healing; all hope, all faith in hidden harmony, in future blisses and justices? didn't one have to sacrifice God himself and, from cruelty against oneself, worship the stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, the nothing? (55)

Religious cruelty forces humankind to accomplish impossible tasks because it is against human nature. Therefore, people digress from piety not to face nothingness.

People stop believing in God because this faith compels them to sacrifice themselves for the others. Nietzsche finds it hypocritical, and because of this, he states that love of God is not as self-denying as it seems: "Love of *one* is a barbarism; for it is exercised at the expense of all others. The love of God, too" (*BGE* 67). Although religious morality does not allow people to be egoistic because they have to think about the others, it forces people to love God, which also leads to ignoring the others. That is why Nietzsche castigates morality and says that "[t]here is no other way: the feelings of devotion, self-sacrifice for one's neighbor, the whole morality of self-denial must be questioned mercilessly and taken to court" (*BGE* 33). To put all these into a nutshell, Nietzsche invites people to get rid of morality as it is hypocritical.

God's inadequacy to deal with people's hard experiences results in nihilism; and people find themselves alone in this absurd universe. Nietzsche discusses the reasons of atheism and people's frustration in relation to God's power as follows:

> Why atheism today? – "The father" in God has been thoroughly refuted; ditto, "the judge," "the rewarder." Also his "free will": he does not hear – and if he heard he still would not know how to help. Worst of all: he seems incapable of clear communication: is he unclear?
>
> This is what I found to be causes for the decline of European theism, on the basis of a great many conversations, asking and listening. It seems to me that the religious instinct is indeed in the process of growing powerfully – but the theistic satisfaction it refuses with deep suspicion.
>
> (*BGE* 53)

According to Nietzsche, there is a communication gap between people and God. Although religious doctrines announce God as the only power and the Church as the strong representative of this power, people still have difficulties because they can be consoled neither by God nor by its representatives. People undergo frustration as they lose the power of God, in which they believed. As Karl Löwith claims, "[w]hat is left of God is only his shadow" (1997: 40).

2.1.1.2. Individual and meaningless existence

In Nietzschean epistemology, people's experience makes them believe that God's dictates and reality do not overlap because no matter how hard they try to find meaning in this world they cannot:

> Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, *first*, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged. Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the "in vain", insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure. (*WP* 12A)

Firstly, people comprehend the futility of their existence. Secondly, they understand that neither God nor the unity that they have been the part of exists:

> Some sort of unity, some form of "monism": this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity. – "The well-being of the universal demands the devolution of the individual" – but behold, there is no such universal! (*WP* 12A)

People understand that in reality they are in an absurd universe and that religion was fabricated in order to make them believe that there is purpose in life:

> But as soon as man finds out how that world is fabricated solely from psychological needs, and how he has absolutely no right to it, the last form of nihilism comes into being: it includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a *true* world. (*WP* 12A)

People lose their faith in God because they become aware of the fact that they are alone in their search for meaning. Thus, they become nihilists; they end up in believing in nothing as they see there is nothing to believe in.

2.1.1.3. Science versus previous epistemology

The development of science strengthened people's doubts regarding the inadequacy of metaphysical power and according to Elbe, Nietzsche was aware of this: "With the rise of modern science, Nietzsche observed towards the end of the nineteenth century, Christianity was finally losing its control of the European imagination, and it is much in this vein that he had Zarathustra famously proclaim that 'God is dead'" (44). Nietzsche notices this change of ideas in society and in his works he reflects the zeitgeist:

> But among the forces cultivated by morality was *truthfulness*: this eventually turned against morality, discovered its teleology, its partial perspective – and now the recognition of this inveterate mendaciousness that one despairs of shedding becomes a stimulant. Now we discover in ourselves needs implanted by centuries of moral interpretation – needs that now appear to us as needs for untruth; on the other hand, the value for which we endure life seems to hinge on these needs. This antagonism – *not* to esteem what we know, and not to be *allowed* any longer to esteem the lies we should like to tell ourselves – results in a process of dissolution.
>
> (*WP* 5)

Modern world has made human beings change their attitudes towards their existence; if the concepts that they have believed in for centuries are true, they have started searching for "untrue" values. Mark Warren underlines this lack of unity between Christian dictates and humans' experience when he utters that "individuals in the contemporary world increasingly are unable to relate the truth claims inherited from Christian culture to their lives and experiences." He also emphasises once more that in a Nietzschean universe, human beings do not need metaphysical concepts such as God (190).

The advance of science makes people acquire a tendency towards loss of faith in God also because science attempts to explain people's existence in a more rational way than religion does. In addition, people become aware of the fact that Christianity rejects science, which Nietzsche explains in *The Antichrist*: "The beginning of the Bible contains the *entire* psychology of the priest. – The priest knows only one great danger: that is science, – the sound concept of cause and effect" (49). That is to say, there is a rivalry between the priest and science; the former is against science because it provides better and more justifiable explanations for the human beings' experience.

However, as Elbe states in his article, despite its success in struggle with morality, science has proved to be ineffective to add meaning to people's lives, too. In fact, it even could not reach the level of Christianity in people's trust (44). Nietzsche is aware of this and argues that science is also one of the causes of nihilism since it leaves people bereft of aim. He also adds that science and morality are of the same origin:

> No! Don't come to me with science when I ask for the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal, when I demand: "where is the opposing will expressing the *opposing ideal*?" Science is not nearly self-reliant enough to be that; it first requires in every respect an ideal of value, a value-creating power, in the *service* of which it could believe in itself – it never creates values. . . . This pair, science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation – I have already indicated it: on the same overestimation of truth (more exactly: on the same belief that truth is inestimable and cannot be criticised). Therefore they are *necessarily* allies, so that if they are to be fought they can only be fought and called in question together. A depreciation of the ascetic ideal unavoidably involves a depreciation of science: one must keep one's eyes and ears open to this fact! (*GM* III 25)

Since science cannot create values, it cannot explain the essence of existence and this makes it similar to religion. Accordingly, after the decline of religion and a short reign of science, the latter starts to decay. Science challenged the moral codes and freed people from them; however, it could not satisfy their need for meaning leaving them with nihilistic consequences.

2.1.1.4. Modernity versus religion

As Bell expounds, nihilism is the last step of rationalisation when an individual consciously wills the destruction of his past and his own authority. Moreover, he adds that nihilism is profound modernity (qtd. in Bowers 470). In a context where people find themselves in the rapidly developing states such as social affairs, trade, and science, Nietzsche pinpoints the significance of the modern world in destroying faith in God:

> *The madman.* – Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed. (*GS* 181)

The setting of this extract strengthens Nietzsche's affirmation of the death of God. More to the point, market place is a symbol of the developing world, the maintenance of which is hidden in trade, and which marks the decline of the metaphysical concepts. Very suitably, Raymond Angelo Belliotti sees this market as a "centre of commerce and the focus of modern life" (51). By inserting his context into a market place and emphasising the development of the world Nietzsche tries to assert that in a progressive world people lose their faith in God. People gradually forget their spiritual existence and deal with everyday activities because they cannot feed themselves with spirituality; instead, they have to trade in order to survive. Moreover, as Ansell Pearson argues, "Nietzsche does not simply say 'God is dead' but has a madman declare this *and* that 'we have killed him'. The statement is not a metaphysical speculation about an ultimate reality, but a diagnosis of the state of European culture and its direction" (2005: 31).

Nietzsche declares that modern life style, too, leads into nihilism since people have no time for religion. There are people who do not even know what religion is since the older generation did not have enough time to spare for the introduction of religion to their children:

> And that consequently our modern, noisy, time-consuming industriousness, proud of itself, stupidly proud, educates and prepares people, more than anything else does, precisely for "unbelief."
>
> Among those, for example, who now live in Germany at a distance from religion I find people whose "free-thinking" is of diverse types and origins, but above all a majority of those in whom industriousness has, from generation unto generation, dissolved the religious instincts, so they no longer even know what religions are good for and merely register their presence in the world with a kind of dumb amazement. They feel abundantly committed, these good people, whether to their business or to their pleasures, not to speak of the "fatherland" and the newspapers and "family obligations": it seems that they simply have no time left for religion, the more so because it remains unclear to them whether it involves another business or another pleasure – for it is not possible, they say to themselves, that one goes to church merely to dampen one's good spirits.
>
> (*BGE* 58)

It seems that modern life kills faith in God and, according to Nietzsche, spare time is a very important element that makes people believe in God and follow the religious dictates. However, since modernity leaves no time for people, they decline morality.

Bowers presents another problem of modernity: individualism and its effects. Modern culture generates individuals who tend to be alone rather than socialise. Therefore, a person develops craving for something new that can excite him. The more he encounters such excitement the more he finds himself in a futile and endless search for the newer excitement. This leaves him desolate and weary of life, which does not have any other meaning than trying to find entertainment (472). In other words, this individual experiences nihilism.

2.1.2. A nihilistic perception of reality

2.1.2.1. A decentered universe

As Richard Schacht claims, "'Nihilism' in the philosophical sense of the term may be defined either as the doctrine that nothing true can be said about reality, or (more narrowly) as the doctrine that there are no objectively valid axiological principles" (65). The lack of any fundamentals for people suggests also the lack of authority and Nietzsche accepts this condition of being free as part of humans' existence. He clearly describes the death of God and the results of this

situation in *The Gay Science*. In a famous passage the madman looks for God in a market place and rouses a crowd of unbelievers, who jeer at him:

> The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? (125)

The madman declares the meaninglessness of the universe without God, where people are left without the horizon. Ansell Pearson echoes the idea that "[n]ihilism chiefly signals a crisis of authority" (1994: 102). Arthur Danto describes this loss of authority as a horrible feeling of emptiness and goes on by saying that people confront the harsh fact that there is not an ultimate reality in the world. The impression of attachment to something in life is just an illusion (28). So, the death of God compels people to experience hard sides of meaninglessness and emptiness.

2.1.2.2. The sense of displacement and dislocation

One of the results of nihilism is man's loss of home and identity: "At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order *to be able to believe in his own value*" (*WP* 12a). People are stuck in religion and morality, which they have acknowledged as a whole and as a part of their body. Therefore, the situation of separation from this whole results in a man's loss of value and home: "Nihilism includes a loss of conceptual orientation toward the world, a loss of selfhood and meaning, a sense of displacement, an inability to regard the world as a home" (Warren 189). Moreover, as Belliotti asserts "[w]ith the further recognition that there are no foundations for inherent meaning, values seem arbitrary, goals lack purpose, and horizons of understanding dry up" (51). Thus, man loses his identity since he is not able to judge anything, since everything has lost its essence, and

since he has no more fixed parameters to give him back a unified sense of his own identity.

2.2. Tom Murphy and nihilism

Tom Murphy explores the theme of repudiation of all metaphysical power and truth in his plays, which leaves his characters devoid of any guidance and of any guarantee of a meaningful life. The portrayal of his characters is marked by his thoroughgoing analysis of people's disorientation in the universe after the acknowledgement of the death of God. This idea of a decentered universe and spiritually lonely humankind suggests parallelisms between Tom Murphy and Nietzsche; and "The Sanctuary Lamp" and "Bailegangaire" are good examples of such a parallelism. "The Sanctuary Lamp" dramatises the theme of nihilism, which marks the characters' existence in a god-forsaken universe. It was written in 1975 and when it was staged for the first time, it was received with rage due to its content. However, after its staging in 2000 and 2003, it was affirmed as one of the playwright's best plays. "Bailegangaire" was written ten years after "The Sanctuary Lamp", in 1985. This play, too, revolves around the theme of nihilism, leading into the characters' desperate attempts to add meaning to their lives.

2.2.1. "The Sanctuary Lamp"

"The Sanctuary Lamp" is "at one and the same time, a response to Nietzschean Romanticism and yet firmly located in the Dublin of here and now. The Nietzschean death of God and Derrida's death of the European imagination are elided in a Dublin which, in its paradoxes of Church and materialism, reflects the European psyche *in extremis*" (Etherton 141). The play is mainly based on nihilistic views such as announcing the death of God and overturning the old traditions. Murphy painstakingly examines these cardinal issues and pronounces his views on nihilism through Francisco, Harry and Monsignor's characterisation. O'Toole notices this and states that this play "plunges into death and guilt and religion and seeks to exorcise them" (1987: 144). Murphy, by proclaiming the death of God, elevates man. As Shaun Richards rightly says, "'authority' must be overthrown" in this play (2002: 59). Therefore, this play can be examined as a brief dramatisation of Nietzsche's main maxims.

The play underscores the idea that God is the product of human being and "questions the Catholic belief that the presense of God is indicated by the burning flame of the sanctuary lamp" (Mahony 138). So, the lamp is the symbol "signifying the constant presence" (106); hence, the burning of this lamp depends on people's continuous care and attention. If they ignore it and leave it to extinguish, God's presence will be eliminated. Moreover, the beginning of the play, where Murphy describes the setting, is also symbolic in terms of nihilism: "*Great columns to dwarf the human form*" (101) implies the strength of the physical appearance of a church. There is a reference to the insignificance of the human form in comparison to the artificial magnitude of the Church. Murphy tries to attract the attention of the audience to the fact that there is physical power of the institution rather than the spiritual one. In other words, the Church takes one under its control just from the beginning because it frightens him by its huge walls and columns. The physical symbols of the stage, too, say a lot about Murphy's attitude towards religion: "The physical objects of the set – the overturned confession-box used as a bed, the shaken pulpit, the lamp itself – operate as pure theatre symbols." They symbolise Murphy's desire to avoid Church (FitzGibbon 41-42).

Furthermore, in the play Murphy expresses his point of view concerning the society generated by Christianity; in fact, he attacks the modern civilisation due to its hypocrisy. He makes it clear when Francisco describes their last engagement:

> But we were enjoying ourselves. And why not? And everyone was secretly congratulating himself on fitting in so well in such manifest civilization. And one wondered what could possibly go wrong.
>
> Well, in the most civilized of manners, Olga, not in our circle, but following the usual pattern that we'd all agreed upon, was smiling 'cross the crowded room at our host and employer. Whose expression betrayed the double meaning that he would not have minded the slice at all, but that he found something in old Olga a trifle frightening. So, the seignorial right was waived and, to make a long story shorter, a first sub, an impetuous, squat and sweaty standby led old Olga to the kitchen where, tugging at his zip, he tried to have her half way on-and-off the Sir Basil Wedgewood kitchen table. It was then of course that Madame Standby, his good wife, made an unfortunate and untimely entrance – unfortunate for herself that is. For she was incapable of throwing more than a look of outrage in such a circumstance. For which silent pacifism she recieved a puck in the eye from her hubby, the Lord of the flies. (148)

The way people act at the party tells about the direction towards which the civilisation moves: people are cynical, which marks their hypocrisy. Despite the fact that the host wants to have sexual intercourse with Olga, he still tends to be careful because he finds her a little bit frightening. This is the beginning of the depiction of civilisation that Murphy despises because these people force Francisco, Sam and Olga to leave the house due to their squalid behaviour. Francisco goes on:

> Because it was then, suddenly, in mid-anecdote, that the famous favouring hand was withdrawn, and the deep rich resonant voice said sternly down at Sam. 'I'm afraid I must ask you to leave.' 'Pardon?' said Sam. From his vantage point he had been clocking nothing, so his amazement was clearly understandable. 'Pardon?' he said again, and I thought he was going to faint. 'Leave, leave, leave!' screamed the great man shrilly, revealing that the deep rich resonance all along was – falsetto. And, simultaneously, as I'm seeing out of the corner of my eye, the randy Monsieur Standby hurrying 'cross the crowded room bent on doing me a damage, I got a puck in the back from another quarter which sent me sprawling towards our host. 'Just a moment, please' – I was very polite – but the next thing, I was looking at a fistful of my hair in the hand that could turn an artist into a cult. (148-149)

People's desire to hide their inner feelings towards each other marks their hypocrisy. Their true characteristics range from homosexuality to violence, and what Murphy tries to criticise is not people's choices, but their tendency to conceal them. Murphy's attitude towards this behaviour is negative, and he stresses that even the western civilisation is without any purpose in life; it is rotten. Murphy gives an example for these hypocritical and odious people. When Harry talks about his wife with Maudie, he unveils her real nature: "And she was a Catholic too. But of course it was all a front to conceal a very highly-strung neurotic nymphomaniac" (115). Olga, who does not appear on the stage, pretends to be Catholic because she thinks she can hide her sexual drives by means of pretending pious.

2.2.1.1. Francisco as a nihilist character

When Nietzsche discusses the reasons leading to nihilism, he pinpoints the most influential one, that is morality itself: "Rather: it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted" (*WP* 1). Nietzsche argues that Christianity has been forcing people to lead a life that fits into the religious precepts. As Ansell Pearson agrees, "[i]ronically, what triumphs over God is Christian morality itself and its concept of truthfulness, that is, its pursuit of intellectual and moral cleanliness" (2005: 36). Christianity starts to crumble from within, and Tom Murphy reflects and confirms this through Francisco, whose speeches accuse religion of its diminution.

Despite being educated by Catholics, Francisco declines Christianity, which emphasises Nietzschean statement on the highest values' devaluing themselves. Francisco's upbringing and education have played a great role in shaping his beliefs, which were anticipated to be for a religious life style because he was educated by the Jesuits, the strictest members of the Roman Catholic Church. However, as Fintan O'Toole argues, "Murphy's Francisco is not so quick to forgive the gods. He prefers to beat them at their own game" (1987: 145). Ironically, the depth of his knowledge of Catholicism has assisted him in denunciation of Christianity. Alexandra Poulain makes a connection between Francisco and Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

> Francisco is an Irish Zarathustra who uses the tropes of pulpit, rhetoric to preach the death of God. Like Nietzsche's poet-prophet, he denies the existence of a superior being that might hold the cosmos together, and pass a judgement on men. (53)

Francisco is well-equipped in matters of religion, and perfectly knows all the dictates and the philosophy of the Roman Catholicism, which assists him in finding the weaknesses of religion. He says:

> I was educated – brought up you could say – by the Jesuits. Give me a child until he is seven they say, and then you can have him back! If there's one thing my life disproves it's that. And that's what I aim to go on disproving. (135)

Francisco is against the core of the Roman Catholicism, that is, employing children to attain the highest aim of religion, and thus, having an effect on wider population. He argues that God has escaped pious people, which implies the idea that institutionalised religion makes God powerless:

> God made the world, right? and fair play to him. What has he done since? Tell me. Right, I'll tell you. Evaporated himself. When they painted his toe-nails and turned him into a church he lost his ambition, gave up learning, stagnated for a while, then gave up even that, said fuck it, forget it, and became a vague pain in his own and everybody else's arse. (128)

Francisco believes that God created the world to play with it; nevertheless, he has become nothing since people materialised him. Here one cannot help refering to Richards, who claims that God is not the authority anymore because people have overcome him and turned him into a church (2002: 60). The members of the Church have been able to change God's condition and force him to leave his throne. The play is full of Francisco's blasphemous speeches on the decay of religion from within. For example, when Maudie asks him about the Jesuits, he evinces his hatred of them; he mockingly states:

> It is a distortion of a Jesus with sex in the head and tendencies towards violence! (*He laughs*.) I have a dream! I have a dream! The day is coming, the not too distant future! The housewives of the capitals of the world – Yea, the housewives of the very Vatican itself, marching daily to the altar-rails to be administered of the pill at the hands of the Pope himself! (136)

According to Francisco, religion is the main source of sex and violence. If people continue to believe in God, sex will reach its peak, and the women will need medicine to prevent pregnancy. He ridicules this situation by imagining the Pope approving sex by delivering the pills for the housewives to prevent reproduction. He is tenacious in his disrespect for morality and goes on by calling the members of the church squalid. Francisco names three main characteristics of these people:

> All Christianity! All those predators that have been mass-produced out of the loneliness and isolation of people, with standard collars stamped on! And what do they give back? Those coonics! They're like black candles, not giving, but each one drawing a little more light of the world. (154)

Here, he implies that the members of the Church destroy luminosity and leave people in dark by declining the rules of nature.

The second feature of religion and pious people is their tendency to turn religion into trade. Francisco claims that the priests wander around "[h]opping on their rubber-soled formulas and equations! Selling their product: Jesus" (154). He stridently expresses his ideas about religion as a trade concept because he believes that it is the product of people who try to earn money and respect. Furthermore, Francisco is able to understand that in reality the priests are profoundly interested in the worldly activities. And this is the last and maybe the most important and at the same time repellent feature of religion for him:

> Black on the outside but, underneath, their bodies swathed in bandages – bandages steeped in ointments, preservatives and holy oils! – Half mummified torsos like great thick bandaged pricks! Founded in blood, continued in blood, crusaded in blood, inquisitioned in blood, divided in blood – And *they* tell *us* that Christ lives! Nothing to live for but to die! They arrive at their temporary sated state, these violence-mongering furies, and start verily wanking themselves in pleasurable swoons of pacifism, forgetting their own history. And then insist – Insist! – that Jesus, total man, life-enchancing man, Jesus! – should be the only killer of life! Die to self? I doze father, I doze! Peace, Ecumenism? – I doze, father, I doze! They cannot agree among themselves on the first three words of the Our Father! Get the police in! – (*He laughs.*) Get heavy mounted police in with heavy mounted batons and disperse them, rout them, get them back from the round tables before they start the third and final world war we've all been dreading! (154)

The members of the church depict themselves as not interested in the worldly affairs, but according to Francisco's speech, they pay great attention to their bodies, which they hide underneath their black dresses. This hypocrisy exists in their dictates, too, as they propagate brotherhood and peace. Shedding blood is their means to achieve their present condition, and they perpetuate this business while they divide people into those who believe and who do not. They also propagate the necessity of abandonment of all passions of life; nevertheless, they follow their instincts when they are away from public. Then, Francisco goes further by accusing the moralists of the most violent war. He states that these priests are going to inaugurate the third world war which might be the most

devastating catastrophe. They are extremely violent and lack tolerance, which causes disagreement among themselves. It shows that reality sometimes is not what it should be. Griffin reminds Blake's axiom, "[p]risons are built with the stones of law; brothels with the bricks of religion", when he analyses "The Sanctuary Lamp" (66). Reality is very different from what people anticipate. Francisco urges the audience to recuperate from their sleep.

Another parallelism between Nietzschean nihilism and Tom Murphy's play lies in the fact that Francisco's speeches emphasise insuffiency of God for a human being when the latter has trouble. When Francisco tries to remember a prayer he tells only a small part of it: "Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I .... See? I can't remember" (160). According to Mahony, this is "The Act of Contrition", which Catholics say after the confessional, and it is not finished because the playwright wants to underscore God's insufficiency in solving a man's problems (141). Hence, people do not need to complete their prayers to God since there are not any results: God cannot help.

Meaningless universe is another thing that this play deals with. In Nietzschean epistemology, Christianity moulds a man's personality as "ignoble and cowardly. It is preoccupied with questions of sin and guilt which rob human character of its innocence" (Ansell Pearson 1994: 133). People's faith in false values gives way to the absurdity of their existence and humankind is forced to believe in and follow the precepts which do not reflect reality. What is more, when these people realise that God is dead, they lose all values since their lives have been dependent on God and his dictates. Nietzsche argues that "[n]ow that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems 'meaningless' – but that is only a *transitional stage*" (*WP* 7). Nietzsche is sure that morality loses its strength in the eyes of people. So, these people disqualify their efforts to attain the meaning that religion has promised and face the forlorn existence.

Nietzsche's point of view in reference to the absurd universe is reflected in Murphy's play through the characters' speeches about the futile existence. Francisco is the main character who denounces people waiting for God's attention. When he talks to Maudie, he maintains that "there's no one to bless you. And, worse, there's no one to curse you" (156). God has evaporated himself, and people

are utterly bereft of meaning and hope because the future is unknown, and there is nobody to guide them. Richards reminds Alexandra Poulain's article, where she concludes that Francisco's statement about the lack of metaphysical control implies disintegration of wholeness, which is relentless and leads to the feeling of meaninglessness (2002: 60).

In the world of Tom Murphy's characters, too, there is a renunciation of God leading to nihilism. God's power is lame, which marks his inability to forgive a man for his actions. When Maudie says that she needs forgiveness from God, Francisco becomes angry:

> What? So how are you going to get forgiveness from that lot? Have you ever thought who's going to forgive them? Who's going to forgive the Gods, hmm? (*Laughs*). So the state they must be in! What? There's no such thing as forgiveness. (129)

Maudie, shrewd and candid, becomes Francisco's public, whom he preaches and who have entrenched ideas about the strength of God. Francisco's job is to annihilate these implacable opinions, and he is conscientious enough since it demands a lot of effort. He invites Maudie to develop resistance to God's power and thus to acknowledge the idea that God is not higher than a man.

2.2.1.2. Harry and nihilism

The announcement of the death of God is foreshadowed at the beginning of the play when Harry is seen "lowering the confessional to a horizontal position on the floor" (123). In fact, he prepares a bed for Maudie, who does not want to go to her grandparents because they beat her. However, Roche claims that Harry's "act is an overthrow of the old, outmoded aspect of doing things, but also a setting free, a liberation of the confessional space out of that confining box into the space of the theatrical frame" (1995: 166).

Harry's conversation with Monsignor also signals Harry's paltry belief in God. By means of his statement that "the roof is falling in!" (126) he alludes to the degeneration of religion. People become isolated from religion, and according to Poulain, "[i]n modern times the traditional world picture is crumbling down, and the role attributed to the figure of God needs to be re-assessed" (51). Here Murphy

implies that people should reevaluate God's dictates because he sees the youth wanting "to bloom – to blossom – but being stalemated by a nineteenth century mentality" (qtd. in O'Dwyer 33). People should change their opinions about life, and the playwright suggests it by Harry's statement.

Mahony argues that Francisco "seems no more convinced that God exists than does Harry" (139). Harry is similar to Francisco in declining God's forgiveness. However, Harry acts as if he were a pious Catholic due to practical reasons; he needs a job in this church to have a place to stay at nights. Therefore, he does not hesitate to fulfil his duties as a clerk. Regardless of his efforts, his primal thoughts about God and Jesus are revealed when he talks with Maudie, who believes that God "gives forgiveness":

> (*sharply/defensively*). How do you know? He doesn't have to forgive me. I did nothing wrong. I don't reproach myself. So, y'see? You have to commit sin first to get that. But, properly approached, of course, he can still do other things. (114)

Harry's priority is a man's belief in his strength; he is remote from the feeling of spiritual attachment to and dependence on God.

Conversation between Harry and Maudie reveals some facts about Harry's attitude towards Jesus. When Maudie asks about Jesus's throne, Harry reveals his pragmatism: "(*off*). Do you see a throne? (*Returning*.) Well then. No, more like a wheelchair, if he's sitting on anything" (123). Harry subverts religious statements because he tries to make Jesus conform to his condition. Jesus, who has been marked by the inaccessability and holiness, becomes an ordinary mortal being; thus, Harry is "constructing an image of Jesus which reflects his own position. He, too, is 'locked up here at night', crippled and dimly reflecting his former glory" (O'Toole 1987: 151). It inaugurates a new beginning and a new life for Harry as he has declined the previous traditions and moral dictates.

God's power seems very limited when Harry's speeches are analysed. He belittles God by taking the responsibility of punishing Francisco for stealing Olga: "And soon you will be punished more. . . . by me. And then by God" (150). Harry is sure that he is strong enough to punish Francisco, who does not accept this

challenge. Thus, there is a struggle of forces between the two since neither of them acknowledges any other power superior to themselves.

2.2.1.3. Monsignor as a nihilist character

Nietzsche's statement that Christianity decays from within is reiterated in Murphy's play when the dramatist characterises Monsignor, the Priest of the church. Monsignor's acts and attitudes make the audience believe that he is not sincere in his religious faith. Fintan O'Toole believes that Monsignor is "a clearly disillusioned man, more interested in reading Herman Hesse than in tending to his clerical duties" (1987: 147). The playwright's introduction to the play expresses his opinion about the priest: "*An elderly priest, a* MONSIGNOR*, is pacing slowly up and down reading a book. A touch of cynicism (his recurring invitatory short laugh: 'What?'), disillusioned, but a very humane man*" (101). His reading a book by Hermann Hesse implies his remoteness from religious affairs as Herman Hesse was influenced by Nietzsche ("Nietzsche" 5). Murphy's attitude towards the priest becomes obvious when he implies that there is a touch of cynicism in Monsignor's behaviour: there is a lack of trust in man in most of the members of the church. Monsignor's disillusioned state also suggests his feeble faith in God since it seems that he has questions related to his life. On the other hand, Murphy adds that he is a very kind person. The playwright seems to suggest that to be a good person, one does not have to be fervid.

Later on, when Monsignor explains to Harry what to do, he unveils his real thoughts about his profession:

> Oh! Silly sort of name for it, really. No, the sort of thing that if someone comes along and wants a Mass said, you write in the diary Mass for N on such-and-such a day, Baptismal Cert for so-and-so. I'd hardly call it clerking. Soon get used to it, soon get bored by it. (105)

It is apparent that Monsignor does not have much respect for this job and the other religious matters at all. He does it just to have it done and believes that everybody feels the same. As Poulain states:

> Although the Monsignor displays a true Christian spirit, spontaneously offering to help out Harry and providing a dramatic counterpoint to the 'Furies', he has become alienated from the Church he represents, which tends to give precedence to ritual, and forget the Christian ideal of charity and tolerance. (52)

Monsignor's lack of entwining bond to religion is also revealed when he leaves the most important question to the end and when he talks about his ambition in relation to the position. He asks Harry whether he is a Catholic or not after they agree about the job: "Oh, by the way, you are a Catholic, aren't you? (*They are looking at each other: mutual dismay beginning to appear.* HARRY *gives a single nod, hopefully, in the affirmative*)" (107-108). Then, when Harry and Monsignor meet for the second time, the latter talks about his background:

> Was led to expect a certain position some years ago, and when the seat – position – became vacant, I was passed over in a regular piece of church jiggery-pokery, and fobbed off with one of the new semi-detacheds – detacheds – that were built with the new school. What? . . . No, of course I had no right to allow myself to be led to expect anything, had I? No, the real reason: lost my humility. If I ever had any. (126)

Monsignor has been expecting a position in his Christian career. However, since he has not been able to attain it, he has to fulfill the duties of a priest, which he does not approve of. He also admits losing his humility emphasising his distance from piety. All these details depict Monsignor as a man of nature, who has got usual feelings and opinions about life, his own desires and passions. Murphy tries to show that religion is insufficient to erase these feelings in a man. Despite the existence of the moral dictates that were generated to curb people's passions, it is impossible to deprive human beings of their instincts.

2.2.1.4. Spiritual and physical homelessness

Nietzsche regards people at the stage of nihilism spiritually homeless because they have lost their hopes after the death of God:

> *We who are homeless.* – Among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honorable sense: it is to them that I especially commend my secret wisdom and *gaya*

> *scienza*. For their fate is hard, their hopes are uncertain; it is quite a feat to devise some comfort for them – but what avail? We children of the future, how *could* we be at home in this today? We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home even in this fragile, broken time of transition; as for its "realities," we do not believe that they will *last*. The ice that still supports people today has become very thin; the wind that brings the thaw is blowing; we ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin "realities." (*GS* 377)

Tom Murphy, following the footprints of Nietzsche, chooses spiritually homeless people to characterise in his play, where the characters announce the death of God. It is obvious from the above passage that according to Nietzsche, the concept of home is close to the concept of meaning of life. Similarly, Murphy manifests his characters bereft of purpose and aim, and integrates their homelessness and loneliness with their futile existence. Moreover, Nietzsche claims that these homeless people are strong enough to refuse the reality that has been presented by Christian religion. These lonely people are the ones who desire to reveal the inadequacy of any other reality that does not coincide with people's real experience. The characters in the play display the same characteristics; despite their homelessness and loneliness, they become the ones who devalue religion.

The play focuses on the isolated characters, who are homeless and lonely both literally and metaphorically: "Murphy had already essayed an exploration of the search for meaning in a world without faith in 'The Sanctuary Lamp' which focused on the situation of three marginaux becalmed in an empty church" (Richards 2006: 471). And O'Toole adds that Murphy's characters are usually the reflections of the disintegration of a family, which is broken by violence or loss. The characters' relation to their families, or their disintegration, depicts God's relation to them (1987: 146). The first character, who profoundly experiences homelessness and loneliness, is Harry, who

> *Is seated hunched in a pew. He is in his forties; unshaven; we recognise him as a down-and-out; his rumpled suit/overcoat, though the worse for wear, gives some indication of his childish vanity and reflect former better years.* (1)

Harry's physical appearance renders him homeless and thus without any hope or meaning, and O'Toole interprets this condition literally and metaphorically: Harry

is homeless and because of this he needs his job as a clerk in the church, and he does not have a particular purpose in life pertaining to his future (1987: 151).

Maudie does not want to go home because there is violence. She gives an example of her grandad's treatment of her: "And grandad gave me a hiding" (117). She lives with her grandparents and thinks that it is better to leave her home. Csilla Bertha notes that Murphy problematises the concept of home: the house has become distant from the serene atmosphere that people need for feeling of security (64). Harry and Maudie are not the only homeless people as Francisco, too, plays a great role in the portrayal of destituteness, which marks his physical appearance: "*He is in his thirties; Irish, self-destructive, usually considered a blackguard, but there are reasons for his behaviour. Greasy hair, an earring, and the faded flash of zip-jacket over dirty slacks and plimsolls. Unshaven"* (128). As Mahony states, these characters live in "the world of the travelling circus", which means that they do not have a stable place in this world. Constant journeys cause them to look homeless both literally and metaphorically (138). These homeless and lonely characters are gloomy reflections of family severance:

> The way all of this is expressed and made concrete in the plays is through the image of the family, and in particular of the disintegration of the family, the dismemberment of blood relations implicit in the metaphor of the orphan. (O'Toole, 1987: 146)

Against such a background, Murphy's characters exhibit frailty in dealing with their troubles. To illustrate, Harry always procrastinates his revenge on Francisco and Olga for their squalid behaviour. When Harry remembers Olga's sneaking with Francisco, he also calls to mind his solitude: "Then, me in the bank, Teresa in the cot, eyes open to the night, through the night, every night. As if no one else in all the world" (111). Harry was belittled by his wife when she left him. Therefore, he feels lonely and, worse, there is nobody to console him.

2.2.2. "Bailegangaire"

Tom Murphy puts under focus the concept of nihilism in his "Bailegangaire", which is a play about three lonely women, who are stuck in a small room and who try to find a way out of this meaningless existence. Mommo,

an old and senile woman, is portrayed as a character frozen in her past. She cannot proceed with her life as she cannot get rid of her pain and guilt in the past, which is reinforced by her meaningless life at present. It is reasonable to regard Mary, Mommo's granddaughter, as a disoriented character because she is metaphorically homeless. Both Mary's inability to find a home and Dolly's inability to furnish her home with serenity herald nihilism. As Llewellyn-Jones states:

> Through intertwining narratives, it is gradually revealed that all three women have suffered emotional and sexual deprivation, while the repressed element in Mommo's story was the fatal burning of Tom, her other grandchild when both grandparents lingered too long at a pub. (75)

These women undergo pain and the feeling of being left out, and as Grene states, "these are lives that no one is watching" (2000: 219).

2.2.2.1. Mommo and her encounter with meaninglessness

Murray's interpretation is an accurate reflection of the play: Mommo is ensnared in a time and goes on retelling her stories about pain and suffering while the time passes by and technological advances outside her room whizz by outside (226). Mommo cannot progress into her future because she feels stuck in her past, which marks the significance of her incessant storytelling. One of her granddaughters, Dolly expresses her boredom with Mommo's persistent repetitions of her tale: "Jesus, Bailegangaire – D'yeh want a fag? – night after night, can't you stop her? A fag?" (99) Mommo's story unveils her situation. She is hopeless about future because she is entrapped in her past.

Mommo's life in a small room is stale since she cannot change her environment. Murphy's directions project this stillness: "A car passes by outside" (118). A car is a result of advancing technology in 1984; however, Mommo's position is stable. There are no signs of any progress. Nobody visits them except Dolly. The playwright reiterates the depiction of the difference between the situation in Mommo's room and the rapidly flowing world outside: "The silence is now being punctuated by another car passing outside, again leaving a vacuum in

its wake, making the place lonelier" (118). The noise of the changing world outside sharpens the dumbness and the inflexible state of the room.

Mommo's last words provide evidence for the playwright's reference to nihilism: Mommo acknowledges her grief and states that her family is "[m]ourning and weeping in this valley of tears" (162), which puts the emphasis on people's existence in an alien universe where they have to survive alone.

2.2.2.2. Mary and her nihilistic condition

Mary's nihilistic condition is evident from her acts; and the playwright's stage directions emphasise her loneliness:

> Mary. (*Deflated. And sits*).
> *We get the end of the news in Irish on the radio, then Tommy O'Brien's programme of light classics,* Your Choice and Mine. *The candlelight, the table neatly laid, the silver teapot, the simple line of* MARY's *dress becomes her, a book beside her, sipping tea, the grave intelligent face, a picture of strange, elegant loneliness.* (93)

Mary is alone. Although she tries to overcome her grief by listening to the radio, reading books and creating a cosy atmosphere, it is evident that it is beyond her strength to add meaning to her life. Her loneliness is underlined once more when Dolly comes to visit them because the relationship between Dolly and Mommo is better than that between Mommo and Mary as the former pretends not to recognise the latter:

> MOMMO (*recognising her*). Is it Dolly? Aw is it my Dolly! Well, d'yeh know I didn't rec'nise you. Sure you were always the joker. Aw, my Dolly, Dolly, Dolly, come 'ere to me!
> DOLLY *hesitates, is reluctant, then succumbs to the embrace; indeed, after a moment she is clinging tightly to the old woman.*
> MARY *stands by, isolated, watching the scene. She would love to be included. The smallest gesture of affection or recognition would help greatly.* (108-109)

Mommo is the only person whom Mary sees everyday, and when she does not want to recognise her, Mary feels utterly lonely. She seems to lose her worth as a granddaughter and as a person.

Furthermore, when Mary contemplates her present situation, she asks Mommo an important question: "What am I looking for?" (112) Mary comes home from England, where she has had a good job and a good life. However, returning home does not bring her the happiness she has anticipated. Thus, Mary has lost her identity as she cannot find her place. Being without a particular place, homelessness, implies the meaninglessness of a human being's existence on a wider plane. According to Elbe, this feeling of forlorn existence, too, is the result of the death of God: Christianity had been a traditional belief which comprised the meaning of existence for people; thus, after the decline of religion the purpose of existence vanished (44). Murphy creates a Nietzschean context where he announces the death of God in this play and portrays his characters in a universe where they have to survive and where there is nobody to help them. What is more, he stresses the importance of being an individual so Mary finds herself lonely since she is not a part of the whole. This unity has evaporated and has left individuals without guidance. Cave underscores Murphy's nihilistic tendencies when he analyses Murphy's characters, as for him, many characters from Murphy's plays are portrayed in a godless universe (88).

2.2.2.3. Dolly's loss of home and identity

As stated above, the concept of home represents meaning in a Nietzschean universe, and people who are devoid of home are nihilists. Murphy transfers this parallelism into the play and dramatises it in the characterisation of Dolly, who is another woman in this play whose life is meaningless: despite the fact that she has got a family, she seems to lack any purpose in life. Dolly is metaphorically homeless since she does not espouse returning home despite her children waiting for her. Her husband, Stephen, gave her an unforgettable lesson as a pledge of the insecurity of her home for her. Dolly clearly explains the reason of her hatred for her home when she has a conversation with Mary:

> Last Christmas an' he was hardly off the bus, Old Sharp Eyes whisperin' into his ear about me. Oooo, but he waited. Jesus, how I hate him! Jesus, how I hate them! Men! Had his fun and games with me that night, *and* first thing in the morning. Even sat down to eat the hearty breakfast I made. Me thinkin', still no warmth, but maybe it's goin' to be okay. Oooo, but I

> should've known from experience about-the-great-up-standin'-Steph-en-evrabody's-fav-our-ite. Because, next thing he has me by the hair of the head, fistin' me down in the mouth. Old Sharp Eyes there, noddin' her head every time he struck an' struck an' kicked an' kicked an' pulled me round the house by the hair of the head. Jesus, men! (*Indicating the outdoors where she had sex.*) You-think-I-enjoy? I-use-*them*! Jesus, hypocrisy! An' then, me left with my face like a balloon – you saw a lot of me last Christmas, didn't yeh? – my body black and blue. (144)

Despite her husband's absence from home, Dolly tries to abstain from staying at home for a long time because there is incontestable evidence that her home is not safe for her. As a result of her husband's malicious treatment, she has taken a vow to revenge men. Henceforth, she uses men sexually and earns money in this way. Her decisions depict her as a woman who has lost her identity; her behaviour is the result of the others' treatment of her because she is insufficient to mould her own life.

Actually, Dolly is a prosperous woman and does not have any financial insecurity. To underline her disgust at the conventions of the society and revenge on men, she has chosen the job of a prostitute. She despises her affluent house for its lack of affection and verbalises her feelings to Mary: "Jesus, how I *hate*! I hate her (*Mommo*) – I hate this house – She hates you – I hate my own new liquorice-all-sorts-coloured house –" (145). Dolly is absolutely exhausted with searching for her home and is well aware of the fact that her present situation does not imply a great promise. Through her Murphy seems to endeavor in this play to convince the audience regarding the importance of a home for a person. Toibin puts it correctly when he states that opulence is not enough to solve spiritual troubles. A person's primary need is his home, which is attractive in both ways, physical and psychological (28). As it appears in Dolly's case, physical discouragement can cause psychological remoteness. Dolly's financial comfort offers minimum assistance in meeting her psychological needs.

Thanks to the conversation between Mary and Dolly the conceptual antithesis between their ideas of home becomes more apparent. Since Dolly has seen only harm from her home, she cannot affirm the importance of home as a place for a new beginning. She angrily states:

> I'*m* running round in circles? Suitcase packed – How many times? Puttin' on airs – look at the boots, look at the lady! You're stayin', you're goin', 'I need to talk to someone' – Fuck off! 'I wanted to come home, I had to come home' – Fuck off! (146)

Dolly is angry with Mary's aspiration concerning home since she has been exposed to one of such homes. It is her personal conviction that home is hell. She generalises the concept and wants Mary to acknowledge the reality behind the word "home". Dolly's home reveals her primordial yearnings to destroy human beings as violence at home has woken a great monster inside her: "We filled half that graveyard. Well, I'll fill the other half" (147). She is full of rage not only against men, but also against all humanity that allowed such bestiality. For instance, her mother-in-law is one of the members of community who is partly responsible for her suffering. On the other hand, the converse of this negatively directed idea about home may also be true. Mary's concept of home provides more positive associations as she tries to persuade Dolly when they talk about their abode:

> She may hate me, you may hate me. But I don't hate her. I love her for what she's been through, and she's all that I have. So she has to be my only consideration. She doesn't understand. Do you understand, Dolly? Please ... And I'm sorry. (148)

Mary has been attached to her home by a profound feeling of gratitute, and her coming home is a reflection of her gratitude to her grandmother. The idea of home has divulged Mary's real personality; she struggles to unite her family and start a new life.

However, Murphy sometimes pronounces the sentences slightly hinting at the characters' beliefs in God. For instance, in the end there is Mary's reference to the idea of God: "To conclude. It's a strange old place alright, in whatever wisdom He has to have made it this way" (162). Mary believes that there is somebody who has decided this way of life for them. Nonetheless, Murphy's intention is not to share his disbelief in God with the audience, but to emphasise Mary's will to decide on everything on her own. As Cave argues, Mary does not mention God until the end of the play, which means that she is responsible for everything that

happens to her (99). She builds her life and there is her signature under every event in her life. Mentioning God only at the end sharpens Mary's desire to command herself.

CHAPTER 3

THE WAYS TO OVERCOME NIHILISM IN "BAILEGANGAIRE" AND "THE SANCTUARY LAMP"

> Only artists, and especially those of the theatre, have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself, experiences himself, desires himself....
>
> Nietzsche[3]

As is explained in the previous chapter, nihilism constitutes the core of Nietzschean epistemology, and the philosopher attaches as much importance to the methods to overcome meaninglessness after the death of God as he does to nihilism. In a Nietzschean context, surmounting nihilism is possible only when a human being is strong, which relates to his ability to exist in chaos, affirm grief, forgive and forget his enemies, follow his instincts, employ his will to power, become God, and destroy and create. These actions signify the characteristics of a superhuman in Nietzsche's epistemology. Another significant concept by which people add meaning to their existence in a Nietzschean universe is art, which reflects people's inner world and reveals their true feelings and through which people abandon the veil of traditional dictates and have access to their innate nature. This essence of life that is hidden in people's inner world has become one of the main themes of the modern playwrights like Tom Murphy, who contemplates the significance of life and tries to add meaning to it.

Although Christie Fox argues that there is "Murphy's relentless pessimism and stagnation in the sins of the past" (145), there is always a tiny hope for transcendence and his plays encapsulate the examples of overcoming pain and despondency by means of Nietzschean concepts. Therefore, it would not be erroneous to say that "[t]he atmosphere of his work is electric, poised somewhere between hilarity and despair" (Gleitman 264). Hence, the dramatist is optimistic because he thinks that pain and hilarity always come together. "Bailegangaire" and "The Sanctuary Lamp" are among these plays which have the theme of hope

[3] Nietzsche. *The Gay Science* 78.

in a god-forsaken universe. While presenting the theme of nihilism, they, at the same time, provide the audience with the methods of overcoming this stage against the backdrop of Nietzschean concepts.

At this stage of the thesis, it might be useful to note that elements in the plays make it necessary to reverse the order of the plays. The forthcoming pages will explore first "Bailegangaire" and then "The Sanctuary Lamp" for the smooth flow of the argument.

3.1. Overcoming nihilism

Nietzsche believes that nihilism should be overcome because, in his context, reality is not fixed; nihilism is part of the fluctuating existence. Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* includes Nietzsche's elaboration of the fluctuating nature of reality: "O my brothers, is not everything in flux now? Have not all railings and bridges fallen into the water? Who could still cling to 'good' and 'evil'?" (201) As he states in *The Will to Power*, there will be "a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism" (3). Declining traditional morals is part of the process of reaching the summit of human's existence. Schacht clarifies Nietzsche's pondering about nihilism as follows:

> It constitutes progress; it is a step in the right direction, in relation to the traditional world-view. But it is *only* that; *only* a "transitional stage." Nietzsche himself does not want to stop there, with a No to traditional morals and values and a denial of traditional metaphysics; and he is anxious that *we* do not stop there either. (71)

3.2. Two types of people

People's ideas related to the death of God categorise them into two: those who regard it positively are strong, (they are superhumans,) and those who despair are weak. Therefore, nihilism encompasses both sides and Belliotti tries to account for this duality:

> Although the nihilistic moment – during which the death of God is seen as the termination of all foundational meaning and fixed interpretive horizons – generates immediate chaos and social breakdown, it also offers fruitful possibilities for personal and cultural reimagination and re-creation. (53)

Nietzsche himself admits the ambiguity of nihilism:

> Nihilism. It is *ambiguous*:
> A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism.
> B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism. (*WP* 22)

Here, Nietzsche clearly outlines the dualism in nihilism, which categorises people according to their attitude towards the death of God. Some of them can benefit from the death of God since they wish to proclaim the absolute authority of their identity. Some others can despair because they feel the loss of identity. Ansell Pearson, too, divides nihilism into two; however, for him, both are negative attitudes towards the death of God: firstly, the stage of nihilism is so colossal that human beings should overcome themselves to be able to tolerate it. Secondly, it takes so much time that the meaning of everything changes. People have to find new meanings for their existence (1997: 165). So, Nietzsche's assertion that nihilism implies an ability to increase people's power is confirmed since human beings should rise beyond their present condition.

While dividing people into two Nietzsche categorises people as strong and weak: "What is good? – All that increases the feeling of power, will to power, power itself, in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness" (*A* 2). Strong people are the ones who can accept reality of the world; they can affirm both positive and negative sides of life. On the contrary, the weak are the ones who do not want to see reality because it is arduous. So, Nietzsche suggests that people should be categorised according to their ability to bear reality:

> Something might be true while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree. Indeed, it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish, in which case the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the "truth" one could still barely endure. (*BGE* 39)

In this line of thinking, Joshua Foa Dienstag argues that Nietzsche admires tragedy because it reflects and describes actuality. He states that, for Nietzsche, reality is a constantly changing concept and as a result of its nature, it has the tendency to destroy everything (927). Everything changes and it is difficult to follow these

transformations and adapt oneself according to the needs of the newly arrived situation. Only the strong people are able to accomplish this task.

Paul Glenn discusses the difference between the strong and the weak in terms of their acceptance of suffering in life:

> It is not that the nature of reality is less frightening for the strong. Instead, the powerful have the courage to face the truth. One could argue that the nature of reality poses more danger for the strong than for the weak, for they are much more likely to look into abysses and be affected by them. But the healthy have the ability to look into abysses and not turn away from life; they affirm life despite ugly and painful truths. This is Nieztsche's definition of a Dionysian person. (579)

An integration of the characteristics of the strong and the Dionysian person makes the god of passion a prototype of a powerful man. Strong people, or Dionysus, accept suffering and, in this way, they make the others believe that their reality includes less pain. However, the way the strong live makes them appear happier. The weak, on the other hand, as Nietzsche brings forward, avoid grief, and this makes them enslaved by suffering:

> The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (*GS* 341)

Kain provides a clear process of such enslavement:

> If we do not love *every* moment of our present life for its own sake, those moments we do not love, those moments we accept for the sake of one grand moment, I suggest, will begin to wear on us. We will begin to wish we did not have to suffer through so many of them, we will try to develop strategies for coping with them, we will worry about them, they will start to reassert themselves, they will slowly begin to dominate us, and pretty soon we will again be enslaved by them. Our attitude toward any moment cannot be a desire to avoid it, change it, or reduce it – or it will again begin to dominate us. (58)

3.2.1. Weak people versus strong people and stability versus abyss

Nietzsche argues that the weak try to avoid seeing the flux of reality and try to stabilise it by giving stable names to fluctuating reality: "It will do to consider science as an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible; as we describe things and their one-after-another, we learn how to describe ourselves more and more precisely" (*GS* 112). People give names to certain things and, in this way, they ensure that these things will stay in this condition forever. If something new occurs in their lives, people give names to these things according to their experience and moral codes:

> *How far the moral sphere extends*. – As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences, *depending on the degree* of our honesty and justice. All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense perception. (*GS* 114)

Nietzsche adds that there is a reason for people's categorisation of the concepts. They do not have enough time to explain all their experiences in different terms; therefore, they have to economise on time to survive:

> In order that the concept of substance could originate – which is indispensable for logic although in the strictest sense nothing real corresponds to it – it was likewise necessary that for a long time one did not see nor perceive the changes in things. The beings that did not see so precisely had an advantage over those that saw everything "in flux." At bottom, every high degree of caution in making inferences and every skeptical tendency constitute a great danger for life. (*GS* 111)

Thus, they are responsible for the limited ability of language to express people's various experiences.

Nietzsche underlines the impossibility of replacing the limited and inadequate terms people generated for their experiences because they have become part of their lives:

> *Origin of knowledge*. – Over immense periods of time the intellect produced nothing but errors. A few of these proved to be useful and helped to preserve the species: those who hit upon or inherited these had better

> luck in their struggle for themselves and their progeny. Such erroneous articles of faith, which were continually inherited, until they became almost part of the basic endowment of the species. (*GS* 110)

Apparently, although the incorrect terms have helped people for a long time, Nietzsche does not accept them as truth because he appears to think that reality is not stable. The philosopher conceives of life and reality as colours, which have to be enjoyed in variety: "Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its *rich ambiguity*" (*GS* 373).

The strong, on the other hand, do not need stability as they are happy even in the chaos of existence. Nietzsche suggests that the freedom of the will and the strength of a person put him into an uncertain situation:

> One could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses.
> (*GS* 347)

Nihilism makes strong people happy because they become free from any kind of restriction and control in their own being: "Convictions are prisons. . . . An intellect which wills what is great, which wills also the means to it, is necessarily sceptical. The freedom from every kind of conviction, the *ability* to look freely, *belong* to strength" (*A* 54). Marinus Schoeman claims that only strong people can control themselves and enjoy this authority. When a person controls his own power and actions, he creates his own individuality, a signature (21). Human being is unique and it is impossible to categorise him into particular terms. Every one should be considered as an individual and an original being. In traditional terms, the larger number of individuals causes instability, but this is the greatest characteristic of the strong.

3.2.2. Affirmation of life

The analysis of Nietzsche's concepts offers a fascinating glimpse of his admiration for the Greek tragedy because of its depiction of the affirmation of suffering in life. Dionysus, the god of passion, is one of the priorities of a

meaningful life, but Apollo is also of paramount importance because he harmonises with Dionysis:

> The Apollonian and Dionysiac must exist in a mutually defining relationship with each other. . . . Apollonian aesthetic forms are required to structure Dionysiac energies. . . . it offers a 'restraining boundary' that prevents man's 'wilder impulses' from 'becoming pathological.'
>
> (Spinks 21)

The integration of these two gods implies the significance of destruction and creation since the former is the characteristic of Dionysus and the latter is the feature of Apollo. This unity also suggests the acceptance of both joy and grief because, according to Nietzsche, life should be balanced due to the presence of these two oppositions:

> Whoever approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, searching among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for disincarnate spirituality, for charity and benevolence, will soon be forced to turn his back on them, discouraged and disappointed. For there is nothing here that suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty. We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, whether good or evil, are deified. (*BT* 3)

The affirmation of only one pole does not promise any kind of renewal. Nietzsche is surprised by the Greeks' awareness of this reality and acquiescence to pain. He welcomes their acceptance of life in its totality since this is the only way to redeem the future.

In a Nietzschean context, suffering is the main element of reality. Dionysus's importance for Nietzsche is hidden in the former's ability to affirm life as it is:

> The tradition is undisputed that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself. But it may be claimed with equal confidence that until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero; that all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage – Prometheus, Oedipus, etc. – are mere masks of this original hero, Dionysus. (*BT* 10)

Dionysus is the main sufferer for Nietzsche and Dienstag reminds the reader that "the Athenian public theatrical festivals were known as the Dionysia," which confirms the fact that in a Nietzschean context, this god of passion is the prototype for all suffering people (927).

Affirming life and pain is called *amor fati* in Nietzschean philosophy; and loving his own life requires a human being to accept his life in its totality:

> My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it – all idealism is untruthfulness in the face of necessity – but to *love* it... (*EH* "Why I am So Clever")

Amor fati is not justifiable when a person selects particular elements of his life. Schoeman provides a clue to attain *amor fati* and says that affirming life in its totality is the same as to be satisfied with oneself. He clarifies this by stating that people should not be resentful (17). Thus, for Nietzsche contentment is of paramount importance to love one's life:

> For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight. For the sight of what is ugly makes one bad and gloomy. (*GS* 290)

The strong people are able to accept life as it is. As Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, strong people are optimistic about their fates regardless of the painful content:

> The ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo* – not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle, and not only to a spectacle but at bottom to him who needs precisely this spectacle – and who makes it necessary because again and again he needs himself – and makes himself necessary – What? And this wouldn't be – *circulus vitiosus deus*? (56)

3.2.3. Forgiveness/forgetfulness

Another important characteristic of the strong is their ability to forgive. It is self-evident from Nietzsche's writings that forgiveness plays an essential role in establishing a healthy personality:

> To be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget (a good example of this in modern times is Mirabeau, who had no memory for insults and vile actions done him and was unable to forgive simply because he – forgot). Such a man shakes off with a single shrug many vermin that eat deep into others; here alone genuine "love of one's enemies" is possible – supposing it to be possible at all on earth. How much reverence has a noble man for his enemies! – and such reverence is a bridge to love. – For he desires his enemy for himself, as his mark of distinction; he can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and very *much* to honor! (*GM* I 10)

Forgetting is advantageous for man since he becomes stronger than his enemy. Forgiving an enemy means accepting the fact that the enemy is not strong enough to offend him. However, Schoeman claims that Nietzschean concept of forgiveness should be distinguished from moral forgiveness because the latter presupposes guilt or sin, which is an antidote to Nietzsche's philosophy. He also adds that forgiveness for Nietzsche comes from the idea of forgetfulness (27). Nietzsche's extract pinpoints the philosopher's rejection of religious forgiveness:

> *Against remorse*. – I do not like this kind of cowardice toward one's own deeds; one should not leave oneself in the lurch at the onset of unanticipated shame and embarrassment. An extreme pride, rather, is in order. After all, what is the good of it! No deed can be undone by being regretted; no more than by being "forgiven" or "atoned for". One would have to be a theologian to believe in a power that annuls guilt: we immoralists prefer not to believe in "guilt". We hold instead that every action is of identical value at root – and that actions that turn *against* us may, economically considered, be nonetheless useful, generally desirable actions. (*WP* 235)

Firstly, Nietzsche rejects feeling of regret and regards it as useless since the things done in the past cannot be changed. Secondly, he refuses religious forgiveness because a man is a pre-eminent authority in his deeds.

Forgetfulness is helpful for musing, too, since it opens a space in a man's mind for brand new and salient ideas:

> To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and struggle of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another; a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation (for our organism is an oligarchy) – that is the purpose of active forgetfulness, which is like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette: so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness. (*GM* II 1)

For Nietzsche forgetfulness is the best way to keep psychological order. Active forgetfulness prevents a human's mind from wasting its space for the past events. It serves to reserve a room for the new things which are more important than registering insolence.

3.2.4. Instincts

Nietzsche rejects Christianity because it imposes some moral rules on people and, maintains that human beings should live without those rules. He admires Dionysis because of his wide capacity to reflect his primal desire, which causes the victory over the absurdity of life. Humans should recover from the decadence of morality and should leave aside all the moral rules and come back to their real cravings:

> Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. (*BT* 1)

Dionysus, the god of chaos, represents "primary man;" and human beings should come back to their primal condition, and should "enter an ecstatic dance" (Appignanesi 13). Dionysus is the symbol of the strongest form of will since he is able to transcend all the limits of society. A man can manage to affirm life by virtue of his strong will and of his ability to unveil his innate characteristics.

3.2.5. Will to power

Individualism is an essential aspect of humans' existence because a person should be free to practise his authority on himself. However, if his rights are violated, he cannot see any reason in existence. His inborn abilities to decide on his actions or to choose his own life style characterise his individualism. Nietzsche calls this system of authority as "will to power," which is of great importance in his philosophy. Warren's consideration about Nietzsche's authority of a human being deserves careful analysis:

> For Nietzsche power is not descriptive of classes of observable events that might be seen as the aim of all human acts, events such as political domination over others. Instead, he is interested in the meaning that behaviours have for individuals in terms of their experiences of agent-unity. Put otherwise, to claim as Nietzsche does that humans are universally motivated by power is not to make a claim about what kinds of acts they are likely to engage in if only given the chance but, rather, to claim that human motives necessarily are self-reflective in nature: Humans are fundamentally motivated by a desire to experience the self as autonomous, as a free-will. The *telos* of action is to experience the self as an agent. Autonomy of the self in this sense is, in Nietzsche's view, the universal motive and thus the universal value of self-reflective beings.
>
> (197)

Nietzsche's concept of power is not directed towards other people. On the contrary, it is marked by his control of himself. Bowers supports this idea of power as a vital element of individualism. Popular culture and modern world have brought about individualism, which is very essential to reach self-realisation and personal fulfilment. Individuals ruled by a certain moral code use their energy for a social mission and, therefore, they cannot spare their energy for themselves. Individualism, on the contrary, deals with values of private experience, self-respect and dignity (470-471). Social norms bring people together and limit their authority over themselves.

According to Nietzsche, will to power is the only governing force of existence and the main energy of the world: "Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but – thus I teach you – will to power" (*Z* "On self-Overcoming"). Will to power is a wide concept because there is a tendency in Nietzsche's writing to make the equation between life and will to power. Linda

Williams interprets this Nietzschean extract and maintains that his concept of will to power is linked not only with human beings' nature, but also with all living beings. It is not necessary to be consciously willing to practise will to power; it is not related with consciousness (452). Karl Löwith analyses Nietzschean concept of will to power and says that "[t]he death of God by which life loses its traditional ballast and standard of evaluation means that we have to replace the faith in a purposeful will of God by our own will" (1944: 171). Will to power in man should overcome God's will, in other words, people should obey only their own power in order to realise themselves.

According to Nietzsche, will to power is a primordial fact, with which people are born and which generates desire to control themselves and the others:

> Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation....It will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant – not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power. (*BGE* 259)

Will to power is an inborn quality, hence, does not need to be generated by any kind of ideology. People's unconscious awareness of the fact that their will to power is the strongest weapon gives them self-confidence.

3.2.6. The power to become God

In a Nietzschean universe, will to power helps human beings to execute power, and makes people happy since they realise their strength; and assists them in gaining back their faith in themselves:

> "Freedom of the will" – that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order – who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them. (*BGE* 19)

The process of directing his own actions and the idea of his own order enable man to overcome all kinds of difficulties. So, it is indisputable that will to power gives

man an absolute control over himself and also makes him jubilant because of his authority. What is more, Gillespie says that, in a Nietzschean universe, being the authority – God – is possible by means of the will to power. And vice versa, following the principles of Christianity makes man an automaton (183). God, who used to be the only authority for people and who used to be at an unreachable level, has become the top to which every person can climb up if he employs his will to power: "The best of us can become our own gods" (Belliotti 52).

According to Nietzsche, will to power characterises the strengths of people, by means of which man can become a master and can be strong enough to govern the others: "Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to master" (*Z* "On Self-Overcoming"). Will to power is the ability to rise from the level of a slave to the level of a master. He also emphasises the significance of free will in choosing what to do. According to Ansell Pearson, Dionysus is the strongest reflection of Nietzschean will to power and Christian God is the weakest. There is a continuum between the two extremes and people are placed between them. In this way, people are categorised according to their strengths and weaknesses regarding their will to power organisation (1994: 46).

Furthermore, will to power creates an atmosphere for a person to expand due to the acquired strength after overcoming the others. Ciano Aydin states that in order to expand, an individual should subdue other individuals; that is, there should be a struggle of two or more wills to power. Therefore, Nietzschean concept of will to power is meaningless without its opposite (26). Only one will to power in a particular situation is not enough to establish its essence. Predominance over the other cases of power proves the eminence of a particular will to power. Ansell Pearson contends that "[e]very living thing, . . . does all that it can, not to preserve itself, but to become 'more'" (1994: 47-48). Human beings should expand themselves by subduing the other wills to power. In this way, an individual becomes stronger.

Aydin has perfectly outlined the process of generation of the will to power:

> A "will to power" organisation overpowers, as we saw earlier, another "will to power" organisation by the force that is released through the

> discharge of its internal tension. Internal tension is generated by building up the internal struggle in an organisation. Internal struggle is therefore a necessary condition for becoming stronger. At the same time, however, that tension can only be built up if the opposing parties are related to each other in a certain way; if, in other words, the struggle is organised. (38)

According to this explanation, firstly a human being needs an internal struggle, that is, the need for something. This is supported by Nietzsche's statement that "life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker" (*BGE* 259). As a result, the tension generated is marked by the analysis of the process leading to the achievement of this need. This tension produces force and emits it through the will to power machine. Will to power organisation is bred on this force and it starts overpowering the others when it meets any kind of resistance on its way to expansion.

In a Nietzschean universe, life means will to power, which creates ambiguity since in the struggle of different wills to power there are two sides: the winner and the loser. However, for Nietzsche, submitting oneself to the other's will to power organisation does not mean loss. Conversely, he implies a certain reason for such an act:

> That the weaker should serve the stronger, to that it is persuaded by its own will, which would be master over what is weaker still: this is the one pleasure it does not want to renounce. And as the smaller yields to the greater that it may have pleasure and power over the smallest, thus even the greatest still yields, and for the sake of power risks life. That is the yielding of the greatest: it is hazard and danger and casting dice for death.
>
> (*Z* "On self-Overcoming")

It is self-evident that Nietzsche accepts subduing as a strategy to overcome another will to power next time. He tries to assert that will to power is everywhere, even in a person who is overcome by the other's will to power. Aydin adds to this point of subduing and says that being overcome is a part of the struggle and that it is inevitable. He also stresses the fact that both human beings who take part in this struggle are inclined to command. Neither of them can give up his inborn qualities (28).

Overpowering the others does not mean only expanding; it also assists in self-preservation. As Nietzsche states, "life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation

is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*" (*BGE* 13). Unconsciously, a man is aware of the other will to power organisations since he is surrounded by various threats coming from other people. This awareness leads to preparation to struggle as the first instinct is to preserve life. In order to go on existing under the same circumstances, one has to overcome the resistance of the others who want to subdue him (Aydin 37). The first act a human being performs is to survive and defend himself. Only after these primal instincts there comes overpowering the others. A person can start struggle only when he ensures his safety.

3.2.7. Destruction and creation

Another essential feature of the strong people in Nietzsche's epistemology is the ability to create a new life, which is possible with the assistance of will to power: "All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming" (*GM* III 27). Löwith says that "Nietzsche calls his world of will to power a 'Dionysian world' of eternal self-creation and self-destruction" (1944: 172). For Nietzsche destruction is the most important need of a new life because if there is destruction, there can be put something new:

> Does one want a formula for a destiny *that has become man*? – It stands in my Zarathustra.
>
> *– and he who wants to be a creator in good and evil has first to be a destroyer and break values.*
>
> *Thus the greatest evil belongs with the greatest good: this, however, is the creative good.*
>
> I am by far the most terrible human being there has ever been; this does not mean I shall not be the most beneficent. I know joy in *destruction* to a degree corresponding to my *strength* for destruction – in both I obey my dionysian nature, which does not know how to separate No-doing from Yes-saying. I am the first *immoralist*: I am therewith the *destroyer par exellence.* – (*EH* "Why I am a Destiny" 2)

Although destruction causes suffering, people should overcome it since a new life embraces new power.

3.3. Art

According to Nietzsche, art plays a great role in human beings' lives because it makes them endure and overcome the suffering in life: "Artists, if they are any good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy, powerful animals, sensual" (*WP* 800). As Ansell Pearson puts forward, "for Nietzsche the importance of art consists in the fact that it enables us to carry on living" (1994: 159). Nietzsche regards this world as absurd because everything has lost its meaning; what is worse is that even the pain that people undergo, that is one of the characteristics of life, is meaningless. In this way, if, according to Nietzsche, ordeal is inevitable, human beings should find something that can furnish their suffering with value. Nietzsche's suggestion is art because it helps human beings to affirm their lives which are full of suffering. In this line of thinking, Dienstag says that "[a]rt is not an attempt to fight the pattern of existence but an effort to shape that pattern into something recognisable," and that only creative artists can express their gratitude for their lives (932). By creating something devoid of beauty, artists convey it as something natural, easily recognisable. And this shows that human beings should not avoid particular parts of their existence due to their negative aspects. On the contrary, they should accept them and acknowledge the necessity of these unpleasant factors; through ugly art, for instance, people can express their admiration for everything. They can reveal their inner nature that is characterised by acceptance of everything that exists in this world – especially pain or ugliness.

3.4. "Bailegangaire"

Among Tom Murphy's plays, "Bailegangaire" is of paramount importance in the sense that it draws a picture of people who struggle to find meaning in their lives. This is achieved with the help of Nietzschean concepts which stress the importance of being artistic and strong. The characters of this play are portrayed as powerful people who are able to deal with their troubles without any metaphysical power, and art helps them to conquer their stale condition. According to Nietzsche, art makes a man indulge in a meaningful life: "Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life" (*WP* 853 II). Tom Murphy has a similar attitude towards art in

"Bailegangaire," and his choice of art as a means to escape the futility of existence goes parallel with his tendency to emphasise the inner world of a person. Murphy wants his characters to communicate their hidden selves through art, and according to T.Gerald FitzGibbon, "[a]rt becomes the focal point for the struggle of will against despair, and through art the darkness is somehow articulated, set free and given flight" (50). In "Bailegangaire", Murphy portrays three women's lives and their problems, and the role of art is to help these women to overcome their meaningless condition.

3.4.1. Mommo's pain

3.4.1.1. The death of Tom and Shemus

The play is about the senile Mommo and her two granddaughters, Mary and Dolly. Although Mommo does not want to recognise Mary, the latter looks after her with great gratitude. Dolly is married and sometimes comes to Mommo's home to help Mary. The most compelling part of the play is Mommo's story telling. Mommo's story makes useful disclosures of her incompetence to save her grandchild, Tom, who died in a fire at home. In such a context, the play creates myths, and as O'Dwyer claims, these myths and the events of Mommo's story enable the audience and the narrator to approach, analyse and transcend her painful experience (38). Mommo's story is about a voyage of the Strangers, the consequences of which are mortal because Mommo loses her grandchild and her husband in this voyage.

3.4.1.2. Feeling guilty

Mommo cannot finish her story because in the end she has to uncover the reason of Tom's death. That is, Mommo is aware of her responsibility for the loss of her grandchild, but she cannot affirm it. This is the main reason of her telling her story again and again. When Dolly comes to visit Mommo, she guesses the reason of Mommo's repeating the same story for many times: "Wait'll we have a drink. She's guilty" (136) and "An' that's why she goes on like a gramophone: Guilty" (137). Shaun Richards states that:

> The heart of the play resides in the endlessly incomplete story of Mommo, whose inability to draw it to a conclusion and admit the reality of the death of her grandchild freeze-frames past and present without admitting an ending which will liberate the future. (2006: 472)

Mommo is unconsciously aware of her ability to free her future by accepting her guilt in the past. That is why she tries to tell the story and finish it. However, she is not strong enough to combat the feeling of guilt. Therefore, she goes back and forth, which prevents her from progress.

The story of the laughing competition, which Mommo cannot finish involves her own fault and affliction as she makes her husband, Shemus, perpetuate the laughing competition:

> But now Costello's big hand was up for to call a recession. 'But how', says he, 'is it to be indisputably decided who is the winner?' And a great silence followed. None was forgettin' this was a contest. An' the eyes that wor dancin', now pending the answer, glazed an' grave in dilation: 'Twas a difficult question. (*Quietly.*) Och-caw! Tired of waiting male intelligence, 'He who laughs last,' says she. (155)

The contest prevents the strangers in the story from going home for a long time. The strangers could save their grandchildren from the fire if they were at home in time. Consequently, Tom dies because nobody can save him. Thus, Mommo loses both her grandchild, Tom, and her husband, who dies of torment afterwards. Mary remembers the details of her brother and grandfather's death when she converses with Mommo:

> And then May Glynn's mother came and they took Tom away to Galway, where he died ...Two mornings later, and he had only just put the kettle on the hook, didn't grandad, the stranger, go down too, slow in a swoon... Mommo? (161)

Mommo's burden is heavy; two people who are close to her die because of her desire to go on with the competition. Hence, "Mommo's storytelling demands great courage because it is at root a revelation of her past and continuing vulnerability and guilt" (Cave 100). Mommo struggles a lot by going back and forth with the story, but she cannot express herself and admit her deeds.

Besides, Mommo's guilt prevents her from acknowledging the story as her own autobiography; therefore, she tells it as an omnipotent narrator. She starts the story by presenting the Strangers, who are Mommo and Shemus: "Now there was a decent man at that market and his decent wife the same. Strangers, strangers!" (94-95) Mommo's experience is traumatic, as Roche claims, and because of the depth of her sorrow, she cannot acknowledge it as her own autobiography; she insists that this is the story of the Strangers (1987: 121).

3.4.1.3. Unhappy marriage

As Mommo's story goes on, it is revealed that Mommo's relationship with her husband was not a pleasant one:

> But what about the things had been vexin' *her* for years? No, a woman isn't stick or stone. The forty years an' more in the one bed together (*and)* he to rise in the mornin' (*and*) not to give her a glance. An' so long it had been he had called her by first name, she'd near forgot it herself ... Brigit... Hah? ... An' so she thought he hated her ... An' maybe he did, like everything else ... An'. . . she hated him too. (135)

Seemingly, Mommo is hurt. Her hatred towards her husband is a reaction to his ignorance of her. Neglectful Shemus makes Mommo question her value as a person. Mommo has always been interested in her husband, and there are some statements from her story that hint at the possibility of her interest in Shemus: "And sadder still the same grey eyes were growing in handsomeness as the years went by. She had noted it" (97). Mommo tells about Shemus' attractive sides and, by implication her love for him. What is very clear in her story is the fact that her passionate hatred of Shemus is the effect of her profound affection for him. It maddens Mommo to see how unfairly Shemus has been treating her.

3.4.2. Mommo's overcoming her pain and meaninglessness

3.4.2.1. The art of storytelling

Tom Murphy creates a piece of art which illuminates the darkness of the past and directs the main characters out of this darkness. Mommo overcomes despair by storytelling, which indicates her artistic nature. Mary admits Mommo's success as a storyteller when she talks to her: "People used to come *miles* to hear

you tell stories" (113). Mommo has an audience; she commands a wide range of stories and poems. As O'Dwyer maintains, Tom Murphy is concerned "with storytelling as a way of finding out what happened to life, both for individuals and for the community" (31-32). It is important to listen to Mommo if the audience wants to understand the play because Mommo's story comprises the essence of the play. It helps Mommo to create a contest in which she and her granddaughters can realise the meaning of their existence. The events of Mommo's story stand for the roots of these three women, so their origins have to be treated carefully in order to have a healthy future.

Murphy tries to unveil Mommo's inner world to look for the ways to overwhelm her negative thoughts, and storytelling is a method of realising this task. From the opening of the play onwards Mommo is in great agony to tell her story, which can free her present and future. She does not lose any chance to go on with the story. For example, when Mary makes her take pills, she has them and goes on with the story: "The yellow ones? – Try again, Pedlar, for-that-was-the-horse's name!" (95) Mommo's concentration is on her story; as a result, after a short and inadequate answer to Mary's question she goes back to it. Mommo's insistence on finishing the story is marked by Murphy's intentions: in Richards's words, "Murphy's demand is that all truths must be told in order that freedom can be achieved" (2006: 472). Thus, the dramatist tries to liberate Mommo's future by making her tell stories; by completing the story Mommo leaves behind her grief and guilt.

Jose Lanters claims that in Murphy's drama "[s]peaking out or singing is connected with the quest to overcome tragedy and despair and attain spiritual wholeness" (238). His characters speak out their torture in an artistic way as in the case of Mommo, who enriches her art of storytelling to forget her unrequited love and to alleviate her pain. Similarly, in a Nietzschean universe, art assists people in dealing with the difficulties of life:

> It enables human beings to endure life in the face of the terror and absurdity of existence; and secondly, it acts as the great *stimulus* of life, encouraging human beings not to recoil from the horror of existence, but to seek its furtherance and perpetual self-overcoming. (Ansell Pearson 1994: 158)

Mommo's art helps her to overcome the absurdity of the world, especially of her hellish personal life.

So, Mommo's art of storytelling originates from her desire to accomplish her own self. She needs to be listened to and to be loved as her audience provides her with this psychological support by listening to her. In this line of thinking, Grene says that "Murphy remains a Romantic writer in his conception of an art driven by emotional extremities, and in his claims for the expressive value and meaning of such an art" ("Talking" 74-75). Art becomes a means of self-expression: since Mommo cannot tell anybody her failure in her marriage, she employs stories to get rid of her painful condition and to attain worth.

Furthermore, Mommo tries to defeat the fusty being that she experiences in the play, by sharing her folktales with her granddaughters:

> Let ye be settling now, my fondlings, and I'll be giving ye a nice story again tonight when I finish this. For isn't it a good one?.....An' no one will stop me! Tellin' my nice story ..... (*Reverts to herself.*) Yis, how the place called Bochtan – and its *graund* (*grand*) inhabitants – came to its new appellation, Bailegangaire, the place without laughter. Now! What time is it? (91-92)

Mommo's time passes in a more meaningful way if she tells stories. Her recurrent enquiries about the time is the sign of her desire to be sure that time passes while she tells a story.

3.4.2.2. Will to power

As stated above, according to Nietzsche, will to power is the most important energy of all actions in the universe: "Life itself is *will to power*" (*BGE* 13). Being able to live, in a strong sense of the word, depends on a man's will to power, which is an essential attribute for Mommo in "Bailegangaire". In one part of her recurrent story in the play she reveals her disappointment about her marriage. Due to her husband's ignorance of her, Mommo was thinking that "he hated her" (135). As a reaction to this feeling she conceived hatred towards him: "she hated him too" (135). This mutual feeling of abhorrence lasts for many years up to the point when Mommo's husband, Shemus, decides to participate in a

laughing contest, which takes place in a merchant's house on their way back home from a market place. Before the contest starts Mommo and her husband look at each other and realise the importance of each other. Shemus is in search of a supporter, and he finds it in Mommo, and, at the same time he recognises her love for him deep in her eyes: "An' how long before since their eyes had met, mar gheal dha greine, glowing love for each other?" (155) The couple has just realised their love for each other, and Mommo's will to power plays a great role in this realisation.

Mommo notices Shemus's interest in her when he decides to participate in the laughing contest in the merchant's place:

> An' didn't he ferret out her eyes to see how she was fairin', an' wasn't she titherin' with the best of them an' weltin' her thighs. No heed on her now to be gettin' on home. No. But offerin' to herself her own congratulations at hearin' herself laughin'. An' then, like a girl, smiled at her husband, an' his smile back so shy, like the boy he was in youth. An' the moment was for them alone. Unaware of all cares, unaware of all the others. An' how long before since their eyes had met, mar gheal dha greine, glowing love for each other? Not since long and long ago. (155)

There are some features of Nietzschean will to power organisation in Mommo's strategy to overcome her husband's hatred for her: she submits herself to his command of hate, but it seems to be a strategy because "'submitting yourself' can sometimes also be a strategic move" (Aydin 28). Similarly, Mommo's submission has resulted in victory because she encourages Shemus to participate in the contest. Costello, Shemus's rival in the contest, is known by everybody in the town. Therefore, there are many supporters of Costello. However, Shemus is a stranger in that town and Mommo is his only supporter. Mommo's will to power has been struggling so far to reach this peak of trust, and she has accumulated her strength to make her husband love her again.

Mommo's struggle to get rid of her stale being in the present is the depiction of her will to power. She continues storytelling for her psychological benefit. Accordingly, in Nietzschean epistemology, will to power ascertains the human beings' place in this universe and the direction in this absurd chaotic

existence (Gillespie 219), and aids human beings in understanding themselves, in realising self-mastery and reconciling with themselves.

Mommo's situation in the present is not blissful since she is stuck in a small room with limited facilities. Murphy's introduction to the play exposes us to Mommo's inflexible condition:

> *Dusk is setting on a room, a country kitchen. There are some modern conveniences: a cooker, a radio (which is switched on), electric light – a single pendant. Photographs on the walls, brown photographs. There is a double bed. It is the warmest room in the house (probably the central room of the traditional three-roomed thatched house). An old woman in the bed,* MOMMO, *is eating and drinking something out of a mug, occasionally rejecting pieces of food, spitting them on the floor.* (91)

Despite the limited technological facilities of the room, the colours and the characteristics of the other equipments evoke pessimistic feelings. Mommo struggles to change these gloomy colours with more optimistic ones by telling her story and starts it at the beginning of the play: "Let ye be settling now, my fondlings, and I'll be giving ye a nice story again tonight when I finish this. For isn't it a good one?" (91) Her hopefulness is revealed through the choice of the words at the beginning of her story. She calls her story nice and tries to get an affirming sign, which stands for her wish to paint her blank room with different shades of cheerful colours.

3.4.2.3. Affirmation of torment

Mommo's affirmation of her pain through storytelling finally redirects her life. With the help of Mary's insistence on accomplishing the story, Mommo comes to an end, and there is the chance of a happy life for their family:

> By recuperating the history of that family in all its psychic deformations, in forcing through the mythic story of the laughing-contest to its end, the play enacts a sort of family therapy that expresses the trauma of a nation for all of us who share in it. (Grene "Talking" 81)

Three of them come together and solve their problems: Mary is not alone anymore, Mommo acknowledges Mary, Dolly finds a "mother" for her baby out of wedlock,

and Mommo gets rid of her guilt for the death of Tom and her husband. Gleitman believes that "[o]nly by gaining access to the past in all its troubled complexity can the women imagine the future as something other than an endless repetition of the past" (266). Her present and future life depends on how she deals with her bygone years. Fortunately, Mary's assistance to complete the story full of dismal events and her ability to make Mommo affirm it as her own autobiography create a vision of a new life for the whole family. The future loses its negative attributes originating from the past; in other words, now there is a joyful future in front of this family since they have been successful in transcending their agonizing past.

By way of conclusion, this small community consisting of three lonely women has experienced a struggle to exist and their struggle embraces the generations and the secrets of the past (Gleitman 266). In this way, they can include their ordeal in their past and affirm it as a necessary component of life. Joy comes after their affirmation of pain and after leaving it behind.

3.4.2.4. Passion

FitzGibbon contents that Murphy's characters are usually drunk or crazy, and Murphy uncovers their inborn qualities by portraying them in such a condition (49). Likewise, senility of Mommo in the present induces her to give up all traditional ways of thought and act according to her passions, and folktales give expression to her inner disturbance and help her to overcome her pain. Passion is also a very important aspect of humankind for Nietzsche because it reflects the inner world of man. He draws a contrast between passion and morality which supresses the natural instincts:

> My insight: all the forces and drives by virtue of which life and growth exist lie under the ban of morality: morality is the instinct to deny life. One must destroy morality if one is to liberate life. (*WP* 343)

In order to liberate passion and instincts, people should eliminate morality, and Lambeir and Smeyers attribute a naturalistic viewpoint to Nietzsche due to this opinion. Instincts, sexuality, passion are the most essential elements of nature in a person, and these are banned by morality. Lambeir and Smeyers also draw the attention to Nietzsche's coming back to nature as "an ideal of human

perfectibility" and harmony (186). Nietzsche's concept of passion can be understood from what he says on dancing, which, for Nietzsche, is an act of communicating the inside and which is a passionate act:

> It is not fat but the greatest possible suppleness and strength that a good dancer desires from his nourishment – and I would not know what the spirit of a philosopher might wish more to be than a good dancer. For the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his "service of God." (*GS* 381)

For him, every good philosopher should be able to dance because dancing is the best means to express oneself.

Tom Murphy accepts this idea of expressing man's inner ideas. What differentiates him from Nietzsche is the fact that he lays aside the physical movement of dancing. However, he preserves the idea of delivery of the thinking process in the act of storytelling. The thoughts of man are understood through dancing; quick and exuberant; these ideas turn the dancing into a passionate activity. Similarly, Murphy has adopted the passion of storytelling to make the audience see what happens in the minds of his characters. Murphy, like Nietzsche, stresses the importance of unveiling what is inside a person and the aim of this activity is to shape future.

Storytelling becomes Mommo's passion. She does not limit herself during her obsession; she can wake up in the middle of her sleep and continue telling her story from the point where she has left it:

> MOMMO (*has woken up*). What's the plottin' an' whisperin' for?
> DOLLY. Good man Josie! (*And immediately back to* MARY *again.)* What? (*Crying.)* What?... Don't. Please. (*Her arms around* MARY.)
> *They are all speaking at once.* MARY *and* DOLLY *crying.*
> MOMMO. Oh yes, 'God man, Josie.' Now! Good man, Josie. And that was the second greeting he uttered that night. (125)

Mommo needs just a small prompt to continue her story. She also appropriates her language and the words according to the flow of the story: "(*and there is a defiance, hatred in the sound).* Heh heh heh heh!" (93) Mommo also makes her feelings accompany her story. This passion of folktale reminds Nietzsche's

fascination with Dionysius, who represents chaos and uncontrolled energy marked by instincts and tries to "reunite us with the 'innermost core' of nature" (Spinks 20). Thus, Mommo's uncontrolled desire to finish her story symbolises her deep urge to meet her 'real' self.

3.4.3. Mary's new life

3.4.3.1. Her will to power

As a result of her will to power, Mary is able to mould a new life for herself. Murphy has constructed the play in such a way that the action moves between Mary's and the other characters' commanding. According to Nietzsche, will to power is commanding:

> Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignity and strength. In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands, who commands severely – a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience. (*GS* 347)

Nietzsche invites people to be the commanders themselves in order to shun the authority of the others. Mary has a commanding lead in her community and exerts her authority to start a new life. Firstly, she rejects Stephen's (Dolly's husband at present) proposal, because her freedom is more cardinal. She looks for the best, which underscores the strength of her will to power. Hill states that "Nietzsche identifies the desire for creative transformation as our highest desire, because it is the desire to attain our highest interest" (65). Likewise, Mary is not satisfied with modest offers of life.

Another worthwhile dimension of Nietzschean will to power is the expenditure of force. In Ansell Pearson's words, Nietzsche argues that the end-state of achievement is not the only goal of will to power. Every living thing, he continues, should discharge its energy (1994: 48). Struggle with the other wills to power can also be regarded as training to acquire more techniques. Thus, Mary's clash of wills with Stephen can be analysed in this light: rejecting Stephen makes Mary stronger and more confident, and points out her priority of becoming 'more'.

Mary is powerful in enforcing her decisions. She was told that everything was going to be alright when she worked as a nurse in England. She remembers this avowal when she talks with Dolly in Mommo's room:

> But one day she said, in the middle of – whatever – conversation we were having, 'You're going to be alright, Mary.' Simple remark. But it took me by surprise. It was like, a *promised* blessing. And why I should have – (*Shrugs.*) – believed in it for, oh, twenty years? until recently, I don't know. There. (DOLLY's *hair is brushed.*) She left me these (*The brushes.*) and this (*The teapot.*) and the book. (*She dumps the lot into the suitcase.*) (154)

Mary admits the idea that she has been promised happiness. Henceforward, she has kindled expectations that she must now strive to live up to. Mary's desire is channelled to actualise the promise as in the case of her insistence on finalising the story for the sake of their small community.

Mary also shows her will to power when she verbalises her desire to finish with secrets. When Dolly asks Mary to look after her new baby, Mary rejects the idea because she does not want other secrets:

> DOLLY. You can return the child after, say, a year. If you want to.
> MARY. I thought your figuring things out were about - ? (*She indicates* MOMMO. *Then she goes to* MOMMO.) Mommo, open your eyes, time to continue.
> DOLLY. After a year it'll be easy to make up a story.
> MARY. *Another* story! (*She laughs, high-pitched – there's hysteria in it.*)
> DOLLY. You're a nurse, you could help me if you wanted to.
> MARY. Trying all my life to get out of *this* situation and now you want to present me with the muddle of your stupid life to make *sure* the saga goes on. (141)

Mary tries to shed light on Mommo's story in order to get rid of secrets when Dolly endeavours to get rid of her problems by producing more secrets. Mary renders herself strong enough to face reality rather than rejecting its negative sides. Nietzsche's attitude towards the strong should be remembered here because they accept reality as it is; they do not want to escape the fluctuating nature of existence because they are aware of the fact that it is impossible to change reality:

> In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. (*BT* 7)

Knowledge embraces the awareness that people cannot change reality. Hamlet cannot bring back his father if he kills his uncle, Claudius; thus, it is crucial to be able to go on living with this knowledge of reality. In the same line of thinking, Mary's "aim in the play is to end the saga, to get out of the world of stories so that reality may be faced anew" (O'Toole 1987: 193). Murphy tries to make clear that the process of achieving a new and a happy life encompasses unveiling of all the secrets.

Mommo's refusal to recognise Mary challenges the latter to struggle. There is a clash of wills between Mary and Mommo, and to overcome Mommo, Mary encourages her to complete the story:

> Wake up *now*, Mommo. Mommo! Because I don't want to wait till midnight, or one or two or three o'clock in the morning, for more of your – unfinished symphony. I'm ready *now*. (*She switches on the light. She switches on the radio.*) On with the story! (119)

Mary hopes that after finishing the story there will be a new day and a new life. Moreover, she is aware of her strength; she knows the means by which she can reach the end of the story; that is why she is encouraging Mommo to go on with the story by giving her a clue.

In the end, Murphy emphasises the interrelation of the future and the present by making Mary finish the story: "It is, in the end, not Mommo who finishes the story but Mary, the power of rebirth lying not with the old world of the past, but with the present and the future which Mary is free to face" (O'Toole 1987: 194). In addition, Mary has to ensure that Mommo affirms the story as her own autobiography. Thus, at the end of the story and the play, Mary has a conversation with Mommo in which she endeavors to force Mommo complete the story and acknowledge her suffering:

> MARY. Is there anything you have to say to me?

> MOMMO. Be sayin' yere prayers now an' ye'll be goin' to sleep. To thee do we send up our sighs – Yes? For yere Mammy an' Daddy an' Grandad is (*who are*) in heaven.
> MARY. And Tom.
> MOMMO. Yes. An' he only a ladeen was afeared of the gander. An' tell them ye're all good. Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. (*She is handing the cup back to* MARY.) And sure a tear isn't such a bad thing, Mary, and haven't we everything we need here, the two of us. (*And she settles down to sleep*.) (161-162)

Mary's will to power commands Mommo to continue her speech in the direction that is suitable for Mary. Mary's question fixes Mommo's affirmation of her torment through acknowledging the death of her beloved ones. Furthermore, it encourages Mommo to recognise Mary, which is the most essential function of this conversation. Apparently, Mary has always wanted it, and eventually she gets it. Mary comes out as a winner from the clash of wills with Mommo. However, Mommo's submission is not a disadvantage to her; she benefits from Mary's victory since Mary has gained this happiness for the whole community of their small home. In a Nietzschean context, overpowering the others results in the growth of power; similarly, Mary becomes stronger and more confident in this process of recognition. Here O'Toole drives the nail home when he says that, "[i]n the process of her search, she has acquired a new power and a new confidence. She has also acquired something that no Murphy character has ever had before – a home and a refuge" (1987: 194).

3.4.3.2. Passion

In the middle of the play Mommo's passion to tell her story is transferred to Mary, who wants Mommo to finish her story because she has never heard the end of it: "She's going to finish it.....*Tonight!*" (129) Her obsession with the story becomes vigorous; whenever Mommo stops her tale, Mary assists her to continue it: "(*encouraging* MOMMO.) Good girl! (*Silently with* MOMMO.) Then loud as you please..." (130) Mary's encouragement does not fail as Mommo goes on telling her story with more enthusiasm. Mary's obsession to complete the story prevents her from listening to Dolly when the latter pronounces her name to have a conversation: "No! No! 'Excuse me there now a minute now –'" (133). Mommo becomes the only attractive object in the room as Mommo and her story are the

objects of Mary's passion from now on. Mary does not even permit the old woman to have a glass of milk: "(*takes the milk from* DOLLY). No milk" (132). Sleeping, too, is forbidden for Mommo: "And I'm going to rouse her again in a minute" (136). Mommo's sleep is not advantageous for Mary anymore as it used to be at the beginning of the play because it means waiting. Obsession has devoured Mary and has helped her to evade her loneliness and meaninglessness of existence. She has a target now: to hear the end of the story.

Nicholas Grene draws a nice picture of this passion of folktale in Mary and Mommo:

> What gradually comes to work against that sense of locked-in, locked-out isolation of the characters from one another, is the musical relationship of the voices in the act of expressiveness which is the play itself. This is something I cannot begin to illustrate in this paper, but just listen to it as we watch the performance tonight. Listen to the way in which a disjointed phrase like 'the cursed paraffin' is sounded early on and reappears several times before its meaning within the story becomes clear. Listen to the way Mary and Dolly's comments from outside Mommo's narrative echo and counter-point its continuing melody. And after Mary determines to egg Mommo, on to finish the story, we begin to get not dialogue but dualogue and eventually duet between them, as they come to sing together. The harmonies that emerge out of the dissonant voices of Mommo, Mary and Dolly are heard harmonies for us in the audience rather than the shared harmony of communication between the three of them. ("Talking" 78-79)

The melody of Mommo attracts her granddaughters, and they start singing together smoothly at the end of the story.

3.4.3.3. Coming home

"Bailegangaire" is based on confronting one's roots to meet the reality there, which can help to have a healthy future. As Paul Ricoeur argues,

> There are certain boundary situations such as war, suffering, guilt, death etc., in which the individual or community experiences a fundamental existential crisis. At such moments the whole community is put into question. For it is only when it is threatened with destruction from without or from within, that a society is compelled to return to the very roots of its identity: to that mythical nucleus which ultimately grounds and determines it... In this way we become aware of our basic capacities and reasons for

> surviving, for being and continuing to be what we are. (qtd. in O'Dwyer 31-32)

Murphy's storytelling technique is coming back to the roots of a situation in the strongest sense of the word. Mommo's story performs the function of a folktale; it discovers the reason of the name of a town. In a similar vein, this folktale deals with Mommo's life as there are questions that need to be answered in her past. Thus, she has to go back to her past to resolve them. Mommo's story is also intertwined with the stories of Mary and Dolly. So, it is a story about this family. Mommo's search for the meaning of life overlaps with the Nietzschean idea of the significance of man's naked self.

Mommo's story in the play makes Mommo, Mary and Dolly go to the origin of their present situation as Mommo does not only explain what happened on that Christmas evening between Shemus and Costello. As Swann suggests, "it is a myth of origins, telling Dolly and Mary of the crucial event in their childhood when they lost their brother and their grandfather, and by implication their home" (153). To get back home they have to travel back, which results in Mommo's catharsis and Mary's finding a purpose for living. Mary is going to stay with Mommo, whom she loves; and she is going to look after Dolly's illegitimate child, who is going to bring happiness to their home.

Mary experiences the concept of home in two ways: abstract and concrete. Mary comes back home from England to start a new life. Giving birth to a new Mary requires the destruction of the previous one. So, Mary has to come to the place where she had set up her life. Therefore, she comes to her grandmother's home. When Mary and Mommo are alone at home, Mary scrutinises her life. She asks Mommo an important question regarding her returning home: "(*Absently.*) What am I looking for? I had to come home. No one inveigled me. I wanted to come home" (112). She does not have an aim in life, and although she has come home to have a new beginning, she feels despondent. She cannot explain the reason of her coming home. Her conversation with Dolly and her monologues contain only repetition of the fact that she wanted to come home. It can be guessed from the context that:

> The solution is never to walk away from a difficult situation. Departure or emigration is not the conclusion, rather there is a sense of renewal, abandonment of submission in favour of accepting the challenge and seeking an alternative mode of action. This is frequently not easily achieved. Deaths, disease, misery may all have to be faced first.
>
> (O'Dwyer 32-33)

Accordingly, by moving to other places due to some problems does not help to get rid of those problems since they are inside the people themselves. In order to free oneself from them, people have to meet them and affirm them. Mary's awareness of the idea that escape does not help forces her to come back from England although she has had a good life there: "I was a nurse, Mommo…And offers of marriage" (113). The idea of reconciliation between her past and future is buried deep within her and this pushes Mary to return.

Murphy stresses the affinity between Nietzsche's and his own concept of homecoming in "Bailegangaire" by portraying Mary and by revealing her real thoughts about the concept of home. Her rejection of Stephen and her job in England reveals her free nature. Despite Mary's silence about her abandonment of her position, it can be inferred that she looks for freedom. This free nature of a character is common in Murphy's plays. For Anthony Roche, Murphy's characters despise constraints because they cannot liberate their imagination and joy. As soon as they comprehend the stifling quality of their condition in a particular place, they prefer to escape from that place regardless of the prosperity that it promises (1995: 129). Mary is one of those unfettered characters. She comes home because she thinks she can liberate her future there. Yet, it does not satisfy her; she does not feel free. Her ambitions to change her life are futile because everything is stable at home; she cannot see any changes to realise her intentions.

Mary's idea of home does not coincide with Mommo's practical home. Thus, as soon as she comprehends it, she wants to go again. Fixed situation at home urges her to prepare her luggage: "*She has not heard* DOLLY *go out; now she stands there looking at the door, the motorcycle outside driving away, her hands clapping together some of her wardrobe (as if demonstrating the possibility that she is leaving rather than confirming it)*" (111). Seemingly, Mary has not reached her home yet; therefore, she still searches for it. Being near Mommo and being at home physically are not what she has been expecting as what she does

need is a spiritual home. Mary needs a context to meet her past and start a new life. Eventually, she realises what it means: she has to unveil the secrets of her past. Here one cannot help remembering O'Dwyer's words: "The theatre is a way of telling the truth, no matter how painful, of playing in order to find out about ourselves" (40). Similar to Nietzschean concept of coming back to man's primordial being, Mary wants to start everything from the very beginning.

Mary's craving to have a new spiritual home and at the same time to have it in this room with Mommo makes her resolve to force Mommo to finish her story. "(*a realisation: thoughtfully, to herself*)… No, I'm not trying to stop you, 'Why doesn't she finish it and have done with it.' (*A* DOLLY *line from earlier.*) Yes" (120). As Richards states, Mommo's completing the story is a new start, and a release for both women as Mommo can free her worries and guilt, and Mary can fulfill her aim of coming back (2006: 473). Both Mommo and Mary are relieved at the end of the story because they break the chains of the past and guilt of Mommo. They commence building a new life together.

Murphy puts forward the idea that home is a sacred place to have a new beginning. Thus, throughout the play it has been suggested that home keeps attracting its inhabitants. Despite the fact that the situation at their home is not positive, Murphy tries to push his characters there to make them encounter their fates. Mary's discernment about the situation at home, that is Mommo's condition, does not prevent her from coming home. Just the opposite, she is able to overcome all troubles and start a new life with Mommo:

> To conclude. It's a strange old place alright, in whatever wisdom He has to have made it this way. But in whatever wisdom there is, in the year 1984, it was decided to give that – fambly ... of strangers another chance, and a brand new baby to gladden their home. (162)

Mary seems optimistic about her future; notwithstanding the stale atmosphere of Mommo's home, she is sure that she is given another chance to shape her future. As Murray states, the last word of the play – "home" – suggests a long journey and Murphy's talent in directing the audience's thoughts convinces the theatregoers that happy destination is available (226).

3.4.4. Laughing at disasters

There is an affinity between Murphy's treatment of laughter in "Bailegangaire" and Nietzsche's concept of laughter in the sense that both involve misfortunes. Both of them believe that laughter helps people to overcome despair, and as Nietzsche claims:

> The short tragedy always gave way again and returned into the eternal comedy of existence; and "the waves of uncountable laughter" – to cite Aeschylus – must in the end overwhelm even the greatest of these tragedians....The most cautious friend of man will add: "Not only laughter and gay wisdom but the tragic, too, with all its sublime unreason, belongs among the means and necessities of the preservation of the species." (*GS* 1)

Laughter helps the individuals to transcend the tragedy and preserve themselves. Thus, in a Nietzschean context, people should laugh "in order to bear the tragic nature of the human condition, and to overcome its depressing effects" (Ansell Pearson 1994: 53). When ordeal attacks humans, their laughter comes to their defence. It is one of the strongest weapons of the human psychology in this regard.

The frame story about the laughing contest constitutes the skeleton of the play. The participants are Mommo's husband and Costello, a man whom they see on their way back home from the market place. Mommo's husband challenges Costello: "'I'm a better laugher than your Costello'"(123). So the contest starts and the topic is misfortunes. Ironically, their adversities make them laugh. In her story Mommo clearly outlines the subjects Costello and Mommo's husband laugh at. Firstly, they start laughing at agricultural disasters of that year:

> (*Whispers.*) Misfortunes... She supplied them with the topic. And it started up again with the subject of potatoes, the damnedable crop was in that year.
> 'Wet an' wat'rey?' says the stranger.
> 'Wet an' wat'rey,' laughing Costello.
> 'Heh heh heh, but not blighted?'
> 'No ho ho, ho ho ho, but scabby an' small.'
> 'Sour an'soapy –Heh heh heh.'
> 'Yis –ho ho,' says the hero. 'Hard to wash, ladies, hard to boil, ladies?'
> 'An' the divil t'ate – Heh heh heh!'
> But they were only getting into their stride. (156)

Money and food are supplied to such people like Mommo, her husband, Costello and the others in the story by agriculture. Therefore, upsetting results of the crop mean major problems for them. Particularly, potato's low quality has made their lives worse since it is their main food, and in their references, they reveal a fairly grim portrayal of suffering. However, as O'Dwyer contends, "shouted out during the laughing competition, all misfortunes are finally vented and lose their potency for evil" (39). In this way, people are able to endure "the tragic nature of the human condition, and to overcome its depressing effects" (Ansell Pearson 1994: 53).

Not only people's food supply but also animals' has been of low condition. Chicken, sheep, and cows have been in danger of hunger since the hay has been rotted:

> 'An' the hay?' says old Brian, 'behell.'
> 'Rotted!' says the contestants, roarin' it together.
> 'The bita oats,' shouts young Kemple, 'Jasus!' Lodged in the field. An' the turf says another. Still in the bog, laughed the answer, an' the chickens the pip, pipes up the old crone. An' the sheep, the staggers, an' the cow that just died, an' the man that was in it lost both arms to the thresher, an' the dead. (157)

People's disasters have reached the point where they have decided to come together and laugh at them. Not only Costello and Mommo's husband but also the other men from the group watching the laughing contest laugh at their misfortunes. These people are united against their bad luck and fight it by the strongest weapon they have, laughter.

The art of laughter includes even death. Costello and Shemus go on laughing when Mommo lists the names of the dead:

> Skitherin' an' laughin' – Ih-hih-ih – at their nearest an' dearest. Her Pat was her eldest, died of consumption, had his pick of the girls an' married the widdy again' all her wishes. The decline in that fambly, she knew the widdy'd outlast him. She told them the story – an' many other. An' how Pat had come back for the two sheep (*that*) wor his – An' they wor – An' he was her first born – but you'll not have them she told him. Shy Willie inside, quiet by the hearth, but she knew he'd be able, the spawgs og hands he had on him. 'Is it goin' fightin' me own brother?' But she told him a brother was one thing, but she was his mother, an' them were her orders to

> give Pat the high road, and no sheep, one, two or three wor leavin' the yard. They hurted each other. An' how Pat went back empty to his strap of a widdy, an' was dead within a six months. Ih-hih-ih. (*The 'ih-hih-ih' which punctuate her story sound more like ingrown sobs rather than laughter.*) She made great contributions, rollcalling the dead. Was she what or 'toxacated? An' for the sake of an auld ewe stuck in the flood was how she lost two of the others, Jimmy and Michael. Great gales of laughter following each name of the departed. Ih-hih-ih. An' the nice wife was near her time, which one of them left behind him? (157)

Mommo starts with her first born child, Pat. She remembers several dispiriting details about her son, especially the ones that happened several days before his death. These details are of great significance for Mommo, who is suffering from guilt because revealing her past makes her liberate her future. By laughing at death she gets rid of painful thinking about her son, and she continues with the story of the death of others. Cave aptly says that "[t]he tales to provoke laughter get wilder and more grotesque; no subject, not even death, is safe from ridicule" (97). Murphy's aim is to confirm the idea that trying to escape suffering adds more pain to people's existence, so it is better to laugh at misfortunes to make them seem trivial.

3.5. "The Sanctuary Lamp"

Tom Murphy's plays revolve around the theme of people's innermost qualities, which become their weapons against the meaninglessness of the universe and which emphasise Murphy's occupation with the universal issues. For example, "The Sanctuary Lamp" takes place in an isolated church, which means that Murphy does not want the audience to specify a place or time. Billy Roche in his interview with Kevin Kerrane says:

> When critics talk about my work as being set in a particular time, I don't look at it like that. It's meant to be timeless. Like with Murphy – I don't think there are any faxes in his plays. No e-mails, no mobile phones. . . .
>
> The fundamentals apply in this world – love, death, jealousy, sex, longing, fear: all those things that have always been there and always will be there, regardless of fad or science or history or anything. We're stuck with those fundamental things that make up our human family. All the sophistication in the world won't stop you from being jealous or stop you from longing and loving and hating. (371)

Tom Murphy discusses universal issues and solutions in this play, which are reflected through Ireland's condition. He implies that people experience loss of place and meaninglessness of existence; and he suggests ways to overcome this situation: people should be strong, which is possible only by following their innate qualities.

3.5.1. Harry's power

Harry, the main character of the play, is a physically strong man, and he has been a circus man exhibiting his physical power in front of the public. However, at the beginning of the play, when he talks about his ability with Monsignor, the priest of the church, the latter cannot believe Harry's power:

> HARRY. In the circus. I was the strong man.
> MONSIGNOR. Were you indeed? Fancy that! (103)

Harry's physical appearance because of his homelessness and loneliness hides his physical strength, and it is difficult for Monsignor to trust him. Later on, "[*h*]*e tries to lift the pulpit and fails*" (108). Harry really loses his strength and collapses mentally. This condition is caused by his daughter's death, Teresa, and Olga's unfaithfulness. By depicting Harry's infantile behaviour Murphy wants to deliver a message: people "must break with the childlike faith of former days and embrace new ways of knowing, new modes of moral survival" (Murray 178). Harry becomes weak and unable to deal with his problems, yet he gains back his strength when Francisco tells him that Olga is dead. He "*rushes in, under the pulpit, and with a mighty effort lifts it off its base*" (146). Harry, who is not able to lift the empty pulpit at the beginning of the play, lifts it easily after he hears the news of Olga's death. Teresa's death has paralysed Harry, and Olga's death makes him come out of his passive condition: "By the end of Francisco's story, he lifts the pulpit at arm's length with Francisco in it – a Nietzschean superman born of despair" (Poulain 54). He becomes strong again both physically and mentally. His lifting of the pulpit is the transition from one dimension of the play to another. His regained power opens a door to the meaning of his life, that is a goal to overcome himself. This is a general feature of Murphy's characters as they undergo pain

which leads to the awareness of their power and potentiality. Moreover, they comprehend the idea that life is the relation of power to power (Swann 152). Thus, man should use his strength to continue living.

3.5.2. Francisco's destructive personality

The play concentrates on Nietzschean binary oppositions of destruction and creation. For Nietzsche, destruction is the first step to new commencement: "The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future (my term for this is, as is known, 'Dyonisian')" (*GS* 370). Ansell Pearson says that "Nietzsche is not simply a philosopher of war and destruction, but the advocate of the infinite creativity of life" (1994: 54). Tom Murphy considers this kind of destruction possible in his characterisation of Francisco; "this is the same vision that Francisco propounds from the pulpit, the vision of an apocalyptic beautitude being won through waywardness and despair" (O'Toole "*Homo Ansconditus*" 91). Francisco is self-destructive, and it is evident from his speeches, in which he firstly desires destruction and then a new beginning. He reveals it when he talks to Maudie: "And I'd like the whole place to fall down. . . . And singing and dancing and talking to Jesus here and everything? Very nice" (129).

Francisco reveals his destructive nature also when he wants to confront Harry, who wants to punish him due to his squalid behaviour regarding Olga, Harry's wife. Although Harry does not make any effort to meet Francisco, they meet because Francisco comes to see Harry. Francisco does not try to evade Harry's cruelty; thus, as Mahony discusses, "'The Sanctuary Lamp' contains the threat of violence throughout" (139). Francisco invites this threat by seducing Harry's wife and trying to have Maudie, Harry's only friend. Thus, Francisco's actions make him a seeker of destruction because his deeds constitute a war against Harry. Very suitably, Browne argues that with reference to Francisco's personality Murphy's drama brings inner violence of a person to the surface and supports the view that life is action and people should avoid being ordinary in order to experience everything fully (136). Thus, they can avoid being part of a herd.

Nietzsche has always stressed the importance of synthesis of Apollo and Dionysus among the Greeks:

> This antithesis of the Dionysian and the Apollonian within the Greek soul is one of the great riddles to which I felt myself drawn when considering the nature of the Greeks. Fundamentally I was concerned with nothing except to guess why precisely Greek Apollonianism had to grow out of a Dionysian subsoil; why the Dionysian Greek needed to become Apollonian; that is, to break his will to the terrible, multifarious, uncertain, frightful, upon a will to measure, to simplicity, to submission to rule and concept. (*WP* 1050)

Ancient Greeks combined Dionysian abyss and destruction with Apollonian order, and this always attracted Nietzsche. The combination of Apollo and Dionysus, who are the opposite poles to each other, has become the cornerstone of Nietzsche's philosophy. Dionysus should be integrated with Apollo in order to channel his destruction towards a new beginning. Spinks claims that the Greeks used Apollonian art to protect themselves from Dionysian destruction, and this desire to destroy has been channeled by means of Apollo and his order (23). Murphy uses Harry as Greeks used Apollo. Despite the fact that Francisco seeks destruction from Harry, the latter escapes it. So Francisco's craving for annihilation leads to a new beginning, and they commence a new life.

3.5.3. Struggle between Harry and Francisco

Struggle between two people requires power, which is endorsed by Nietzsche. He claims that this world is like "a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there" (*WP* 1067). Nietzsche postulates the concept of will to power to show that a man is the highest authority; and each will to power avoids appeasement because it is designed to fight and get more. Thus, will to power and will to control are the features of the strong men, that is, of the superhuman generation. Nietzsche has given man freedom to be the agent of his deeds; man becomes not only the one who performs an action, but also the one who chooses what to do.

Tom Murphy employs the above mentioned power of a human being in "The Sanctuary Lamp" when he characterises Harry and Francisco. In the first

conversation between Harry and Francisco on the stage it is apparent that they exhibit their power in different ways. Firstly, each wants to overcome the other by the power of his words. Francisco is the first to perform his ability:

> Harry! (*Coming out of hiding – laughing*.) Jesus Lord! Jesus Lord! (*Sings*.) 'All my sins I now detest them; never will I sin again'. Harry! For what reason have I this fortnight been a banished pal from my friend Harry?
> HARRY. Oh, hello, Francisco. That was very – y'know? (*The singing*.) (*He glances at the bottle of wine*.) (134)

Francisco acts as if there is nothing wrong between the two. Thus, he wants to show his strength; according to him, Harry cannot frighten him because he is stronger than Harry. His singing also emphasises his attitude towards Harry. Francisco tries to imply that life is beautiful and there is nothing that can change it. Harry's technique to tackle with Francisco is similar. He does not want to show Francisco that he has been waiting for him for a long time to take revenge. It would reveal his weakness because it would demonstrate that Francisco was able to take his most precious possession. Just the opposite, he wants to make it clear that Francisco has not achieved that level of being able to hurt Harry.

Next, Harry ignores Francisco, which is another way of showing his power. He deliberately neglects Francisco when he divides the fish and chips into two, for himself and Maudie. He "*has taken out his penknife to divide the fish between himself and Maudie; he excludes* FRANCISCO. *Though feigning casualness and affecting to ignore* FRANCISCO, *his movements are tense and deliberate"* (135). Harry pretends not to see Francisco because he does not want him in their company. However, it is seen that it is difficult for Harry; his actions betray his intentions. Due to his ability to ignore Francisco, Harry can be called a really strong man since, despite his mental fire of hatred, he endures it successfully. When the latter starts talking about his hatred of religion, Harry asks Maudie a diffirent question: "(*to* MAUDIE *who, he feels, is giving too much attention to* FRANCISCO). Not too much vinegar I hope, Maudie?" (135) Disregarding him and the main subject of his speech, Harry displays his wish to be stronger than Francisco. His message is: Francisco does not deserve Harry's attention.

Francisco, on the other hand, tries to overcome Harry by attracting Maudie's attention. He needs a tactic to struggle against Harry's ignorance technique. So, he has to get Harry's vital supporter, Maudie, and he does it by explaining about the Jesuits when she inquires about the term: "It is a distortion of a Jesus with sex in the head and tendencies towards violence! (*He laughs*.) I have a dream! I have a dream! The day is coming, the not too distant future!" (136) Francisco seems successful in his attempts at stealing Harry's partner in conversation in that Maudie is interested in Francisco's speeches. Francisco, when he gets her attention, makes Harry angry because she does not answer his question properly: "(*She nods but is inclined to laugh with* FRANCISCO" (136). However, Harry does not lose his temper and tries to find other ways of attacking Francisco.

Harry mentions his past when he was physically attractive for women: "Just a second, old boy. Not too glib now. Remember that movie queen, Maria Del Nostro? I had her" (137). Harry's calling to mind his sexual success is marked by his desire to overwhelm Francisco. Then, he belittles Francisco by reminding that he is not thriving in his profession as a juggler: "Also you're a very bad juggler" (138). In this power struggle between Harry and Francisco it is difficult to identify the victorious one because their imagination continues producing different methods of defeating each other. After Harry's decrying of Francisco as a worthless juggler, Francisco develops a different means of overthrowing Harry. He employs the memory of bygone happy days with the latter:

> When we met. We must have been the first pair of Bohemians around these parts. The laughs we had, Har. He had started to go downhill – (HARRY *glances at him*.) slightly. I mean I hadn't even started uphill. Remember the little yellow plastic bucket, Har? (138)

As can be seen, Francisco tries to mollify Harry by making him remember his joyful adulthood. Each of them tries to overcome the other by means of various methods. In a Nietzschean context, this craving for victory is the sign of their search for meaning. Both of them are lost in this world; they do not have jobs or homes. Thus, portraying themselves stronger than the other adds meaning to their misery. As Murphy manifests a man's relation to this universe by underlining that

life is a "meeting of force and force" (Swann 150), these characters come to understand that existing in this universe means struggling, not submission.

3.5.4. New religion

Tom Murphy's play dramatises Nietzschean idea of overcoming nihilism in creating new values. Nietzsche suggests that "[w]e require, sometime, *new values*" (*WP* "Preface" 4); thus, overthrowing of old values embraces the generation of the new ones. This is exemplified in Tom Murphy's play when Francisco creates a new life for himself. Moreover, his penultimate speech pinpoints the belief in happiness without God. According to his point of view, people are strong enough to create a state of bliss for themselves:

> Yeh. Baptism – the passport to heaven – disbarred you. And contrary to what they thought, I thought – same as any other sensible baby would – that Limbo was the place to get to. It was tropical really. Imagine, the only snag to Limbo was that you never got to see the face of God. Imagine that. Now, what baby, I ask you, gives a burp about the face of God. No, the only thing that babies feared was the hand of God, that could hold your little baby body in his fist, before dipping you into the red hot coals of hell. (159)

God is an obstacle for a baby on his way to a perfect future in Francisco's words as God does not even forgive innocent babies and sends them to hell. Thus, a formula for a joyful life is to avoid Baptism, which is a passport to God's universe.

Francisco rejects God's power, and thus creates a new philosophy of life. Mahony translates Francisco's desire to have a new world as follows: he builds his future in Limbo, a place between heaven and hell, where people are without God. So, it is a safe place for him because he does not want to see capricious God (140). God is an obstacle for him because he wants to be responsible for himself. As O'Toole states, the new religion makes man stronger than God and his justice is greater than God's justice (1987: 155). Francisco clearly voices what he wants when he talks to Harry:

> No, babies are wide, Har, babies are shrewd. Well, they aren't fools. And they are grossly abused in the great trade-union of Baptism. Oh but Limbo, Har, Limbo! With just enough light rain to keep the place lush green, the

> sunshine and red flowers, and the thousands and thousands of other fat babies sitting under the trees, gurgling and laughing and eating bananas. (160)

It is important for him to see the babies happy because he thinks that Christianity uses babies as a means of income. In such a context, one can refer to Hill's references to Nietzsche:

> The idea of a perfectionist ethics based not on the individual's achievement of perfection, but in the individual's facilitating of someone else's achievement of perfection. The ethic is in one sense communitarian: I am to help realise a certain kind of community whose member I am, and certain community projects. (29)

Francisco tends to save the whole new generation, not only himself. He chooses especially babies because they constitute the posterity. Seemingly, Murphy portrays Francisco in a way which bears affinity to Nietzschean man who tries to remedy the humankind's rampant condition.

Limbo is a place between heaven and hell; the presence of a man in this state suggests abyss since nothing is known and since it is not decided yet whether that man is going to heaven or hell. It also suggests despair because the sense of instability brings forward a person's discomfort. However, Nietzsche claims that strong people are able to overcome that feeling of chaos and live joyfully in the absense of stable concepts. Francisco's choice of Limbo as a permanent abode marks his power and ability to endure despair and discomfort.

Nevertheless, Francisco's search for an ideal life does not exceed the limits of his religious background, which underscores his belief in spirituality; it does not entail moral codes or institutionalised church. Spirituality and the religious institution should be separate matters for people. He is against morality which is the result of people's desire to direct the others. Francisco is against religion which is a product of man. Mahony connects the lack of faith in the play with Murphy's own opinions in this regard: "The reclining figure of God is for Murphy a flickering and passive presence. Superseded in a postmodern world, this god may still exude light, and therefore illumination, but it is merely a punning reflection" (139). God appears and disappears in the play, which renders him insufficient to

solve people's problems. His power is not enough to spread faith to everybody. Francisco, for example, is one of those for whom God's illumination is not enough; therefore, he engenders his own light – his new religion – which can illuminate his future. Etherton argues that "Francisco is not against spirituality but against what Christianity has become" and finds a strong affinity between Francisco's and Nietzsche's ideas regarding the death of God (139-140). Francisco's position, in this plane of thinking, is clear in his desire to lead an independent life, and it is similar to Nietzsche's view of life: man is the sole agent in his actions and is responsible for everything that happens to him.

In a Nietzschean universe, good people are the ones who follow their instincts. Virtue kills reality, and the death of tragedy is the correct reflection of the death of reality. Virtue and its followers are responsible for this (Spinks 29). People have become hypocritical which is obvious in their belief in the other world as they pretend to ignore this world. It seems that Nietzsche propagates man remote from virtue, which is reflected in Murphy's portrayal of his characters. According to Francisco, an ideal life is to esteem the strong and the rakish rather than the feeble; he chooses Jesus, a total man, who calls to his side the strong and the immoral. He talks about his dream to Harry:

> I have a dream, I have a dream! The day is coming, the second coming, the final judgement, the not too distant future, before that simple light of man: when Jesus, Man, total man, will call to his side the goats – 'Come ye blessed!' Yea, call to his side all those rakish, dissolute, suicidal, fornicating goats, taken in adultery and what-have-you. And proclaim to the coonics, blush for shame, you blackguards, be off with you, you wretches, depart from me ye accursed complicated affliction! And that, my dear brother and sister, is my dream, my hope, my vision and my belief.
>
> (155)

Francisco admits Jesus to his new religion and teaches him his own ideology. Jesus rejects all those hypocritical priests and celebrates the freedom of passions and instincts. However, Francisco banishes God from his religion; man becomes the main power, which destroys meaninglessness and suffering. In this way, a man experiences rebirth (O'Toole 1987: 156). Dissolute goats reflect Nietzschean Dionysus in that they bear a bond to "primal and pre-moral" nature. People should have this bond in order to fit into the reality of the universe. These energies of a

primordial being are put into a human being, which is marked by Apollonian function (Spinks 19). Accordingly, Francisco supports people who do not hide their passion and instincts.

In fact, Francisco realises his dream in life. He is rakish because he steals Harry's offstage wife, Olga. The audience learns about Francisco's immoral values from Harry when he says: "You know Francisco? Juggler actually. Well, he was my friend, I took him in. Then he usurped, sneaked my wife" (109). Harry and Francisco were close friends until the latter deceived Harry. Olga is also called a nymphomaniac by Harry because he has seen her many times having sex with different men: "Of course all this time Olga was off, having herself screwed, panting for unhappy life in the very next room. With Francisco. Or making love to all and sundry" (111). So, Francisco is portrayed as immoral, which is his ideal life style. And the people around are also similar to him; they do not hide their passions and can follow their primal instincts everywhere as in the case of Olga. In fact, Francisco respects Olga and reveals it when he talks to Harry: "Yes, contrary to what some people thought, I had a great regard for old Olga" (151). He respects people like himself who do not obey any moral constraints. As a matter of fact, he uses her, and Olga allows this because Murphy portrays her as a woman of nature and passion. In a Nietzschean universe, a woman is also an element of nature, suitable for reproduction: "Pregnancy has made women kinder, more patient, more timid, more pleased to submit" (*GS* 72). Olga fits into Nietzschean definition of a woman, who, to some extent, is strong because of her sexuality and enjoyment of sex. However, a woman's task is to be pregnant and look after her children. These two aspects complete the nature of a woman (Ansell Pearson 1994: 183). The former function of a woman fits Francisco's way of life, whereas the latter one is suitable for Harry. Nevertheless, both of these men lose her because Murphy regards Olga as weak due to her inability to combine these two essential functions.

Harry, too, has got a new view of life: he believes in spirituality and like Francisco, he does not accept institutionalised religion. As Etherton maintains, "Harry is not showing faith in Christ but in the endurance of relationships beyond mortality" (139). Harry illustrates his faith in the sustainability of the union of beloved people when he has a conversation with Francisco:

> And if a hole comes in one of the silhouettes already in that wall, a new one is called for, and implanted on the damaged one. And whose silhoutte is the new one? The father's. The father of the damaged one. Or the mother's, sometimes. Or a brother's, or a sweatheart's. Loved ones. That's it. And one is implanted on the other. And the merging – y'know? Merging? – merging of the silhouttes is true union. Union forever of loved ones, actually. (159)

Both Francisco and Harry have lost something important in their lives and want to replace it with something valuable. Harry wants to be reunited with his daughter and Francisco wants to be free from God's dictates. And they want to realise it by means of their new religions.

3.5.5. Affirmation of pain

Nietzsche's strong people do not only stress the importance of overcoming the limits and boundaries of morality, but they also pinpoint the essence of affirming pain. Only when a person acknowledges his ordeal can he anticipate a joyful future. Indeed, there is not a happy life and the most important achievement that a man can experience is to be an immortal hero (Ansell Pearson 1994: 70). Nietzsche's hero is his superhuman, who comes out of any grief as a winner because he accepts ordeal as part of life not as a negative experience that can be eradicated: "God died: now *we* want the overman to live" (*Z* "On the Higher Men"). Nietzsche's overman is born after the death of God because this death opens new horizons for men:

> You higher men, overcome the small virtues, the small prudences, the wretched contentment, the "happiness of the greatest number"! And rather despair than surrender. And verily, I love you for not knowing how to live today, you higher men! For thus *you* live best. (*Z* "On the Higher Men")

As can be seen, Nietzsche supports men's despair and the resulting abyss.

"The Sanctuary Lamp" has such strong personalities that affirm life together with its pain. The playwright asserts his position regarding this issue by inserting statements on the necessity of both pain and joy in life. Sheila McCormick argues that Murphy's discovery of a human's anguish has a reason: by exploring it, the playwright tries to find the ways to make the character experience

emotional release (150). People should not avoid suffering; just the opposite, they should affirm both feelings because happiness lies in the exploration of grief.

During his first monologue, Harry pronounces Murphy's ideas about the binary oppositions in life: "You never feel your soul when you're happy" (110). It is important for Harry to feel his soul and to know what happens inside his mind. However, he claims that when he is happy, he forgets about his soul. Thus, through Francisco, Murphy criticises this obligation to choose between the two, and his criticism brings him closer to Nietzsche's ideas on the unity of body and soul:

> The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit" – a little instrument and toy of your great reason. (*Z* "Of the Despisers of the Body")

Tendency to get rid of one part of the body fails because every part depends on the other. Murphy creates an atmosphere where Harry should choose to either accept joy without a soul or affirm his suffering, which is marked by the existence and importance of his inner feelings. Regardless of its lure of happiness, Harry rejects this kind of life because his inner world is weighty for him. Therefore, it is difficult for Harry to endure this life, but he goes on searching for his home, that is his purpose, in this absurd universe (O'Toole 1987: 153). Harry's experience invites him to madness, but he resists it because he wants to stay in this world and find a place for himself. Murphy's desire to attract attention to this issue reveals how much he values a man's inner feelings. According to Harry, a human being should suffer in order to have access into his soul. As Browne underlines, Tom Murphy is among those gifted writers who are able to use people's suffering in order to show those people a way to their health (133). This is a reference to Nietzschean binary oppositions since ordeal leads to happiness, and man attains wisdom and freedom through suffering. Thus, he deserves life in Nietzschean terms (Ansell Pearson 1994: 160). In this line of thinking, Harry's choice of life, which embraces both grief and joy, results in his heroism and freedom.

3.5.6. Forgiveness

Mercy is one of the features of a strong man in Nietzsche's epistemology. Nietzsche states that strong people can overcome nihilism and start a new life and in order to fulfill the requirements of strength, people have to be able to forgive their enemies:

> *To offend and be offended*. It is much more agreeable to offend and later ask forgiveness than to be offended and grant forgiveness. The one who does the former demonstrates his power and then his goodness. The other, if he does not want to be thought inhuman, *must* forgive; because of his coercion, pleasure in the other's humiliation is slight. (*HTH* 348)

Both types of people, offended and those who offend, can show their power by asking for forgiveness and forgiving. However, if the offended one is forced to forgive his enemy by particular circumstances, he is not strong. A person's inner feelings should allow him to forgive his offender. Indeed, a man should be beyond the dilemma of forgiving or not. He should not bother himself by remembering the people who hurt him (Schoeman 27). Nietzsche celebrates people who can forgive their enemies just because they do not pay great attention to their memory. He calls such people strong because these people channel their power to create something new:

> To be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget. (*GM* I 10)

Tom Murphy puts under discussion this issue of forgiveness when he portrays Harry, who along with his physical power, is mentally strong. Although he experiences despair because of Francisco and Olga's affair, he forgives them. Mahony says that "[a]lthough Harry would like to exact revenge for the betrayal, he is strongly motivated to forgive. This latter urge is, he hopes, the requisite for his being forgiven for any responsibility he bears for his daughter's death" (138). Harry blames himself for his daughter's death, and is in despair. However, he is optimistic in this regard since he thinks that one forgiveness leads into another one. In Nietzsche's concept of strength, the strong forgive their enemies because

they want to show that their enemy is too weak to make them suffer. Similarly, Murphy's portrayal of Harry reveals such strength. Richards claims that there is the presence of violence in the play between Harry and Francisco, nonetheless, this threat of violence turns out to be a reconciliation, which brings about harmony of souls (2006: 471). Harry forgives Francisco and the play ends with the union of three characters, Harry, Francisco and Maudie sleeping in the same place:

> FRANCISCO. (*he looks at* HARRY *for a moment*). We'll go together, right? (HARRY *nods. Sleepily.*) It's quite an adventure though. It isn't half bad town here. (*Yawns, settling back to sleep.*) Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I ... See? I can't remember. I've beaten them. Goodnight, Har.
> *Pause*.
> HARRY. Y'know! (160)

There is a tone of close friendship between the two enemies who decide to be together again; and it means that Harry has forgotten everything Francisco has caused. This conversation suggests a new life for everybody.

Forgiveness is seen in other sections of the play because everybody needs it to go on living. However, as Mahony states "ultimate forgiveness comes to humans from other humans" (140), not from God. Firstly, Maudie, who seeks for forgiveness because of her child's death, is forgiven by her dead mother, whose vision has been bothering her at nights:

> Yes. Her face would come beside me, in the dark, like a plate. And her eyes would look at me. And I didn't know what to say....And it went on like that. Like, every night. Like, forever. (HARRY *nods.*) Well, one night, I knew there were a change.....My mum got up and went out...then the door opened again...and she said, 'Oh, by the way, Maudie, I'm very happy now.' And I were so grateful.
> HARRY. And what did your gran say?
> MAUDIE. She said it were forgiveness. (118-119)

Then, in the end Harry forgives Francisco and they are able to start a new life:

> As the play closes, however, loss and pain are replaced by forgiveness and reconciliation, signalled by Murphy's having the three – Maudie,

> Francisco, and Harry, all of whom have experienced bouts of guilty sleeplessness – fall asleep together *in* the confessional. (Mahony 139-140)

All three characters have experienced a lot of grief, however, their strength makes them forgive and unite in a harmonious music of forgiveness and reconciliation. Each of them forgets his past and the thoughts that have been torturing him/her for a long time. Etherton states that Francisco does not think about the treacherous symbolism of the confessional, in which he sleeps, which means that he forgets the Jesuits who educated him (140-141). Thus, it can be concluded that Francisco's background has been a wound for him and has prevented him from moulding his happy future. However, from now on, he is free and forgets them: "Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I .... See? I can't remember. I've beaten them" (160). He tries to recite a prayer that he has been forced to learn by heart by the Jesuits, but he fails to continue it. He celebrates this failure because it means his overcoming them.

Throughout the play it is visible that Harry, Francisco and Maudie cannot sleep because of their pain. Firstly, Harry reveals the reason of his inability to sleep: "Night after night this thought would come: well, if as they say there is no law, there is no God, mustn't I take charge?" (111) His idea of revenge has been bothering him at nights preventing him from having a rest. Francisco is another character who has not been able to sleep: "I can't sleep sometimes because I can't stop thinking" (130). Francisco has always been bothered by the idea of God and the meaninglessness of the world, which colours his incessant speeches about the death of God. Similar to Harry and Francisco, Maudie suffers from sleeplessness, too, and Francisco becomes Maudie's speaker: "Yeh? (*She averts her eyes.*) ... You have a baby, Maud? Stephen? Is that who you think about? At night? Awake and asleep?" (131) He reveals her inner worries about her dead child. As O'Toole maintains, all three characters experience similar feelings at nights as they suffer from what life has given to them (1987: 158). The harmony and reconciliation of the characters in the end are the results of forgiveness. By forgiving his close friend, Harry empties his mind, which has been full of thoughts of revenge and regret. Francisco forgives people who are responsible for his unhappy childhood, which makes him celebrate a new beginning. Since they leave behind the heavy

load of thoughts in terms of revenge and regret, they get back their ability to have a peaceful sleep.

Maudie forgives her grandparents, too. For a moment, between waking and sleeping, Maudie decides to go back to her grandparents: "I'm going home to gran. And to grandad. (MAUDIE *settles back to sleep in her compartment. Pause*)" (157). She escaped her grandparents because they were treating her violently. Nevertheless, she resolves to face her fate as she is confident enough to mould her future. Now, she can sleep because she has learnt how to deal with her grief and has comprehended the inevitability of it and the insuffiency of evasion from pain. Indeed, this is the experience of both Harry and Francisco, who are asleep at the end of the play, which underlines their success in their endeavours to add meaning to their lives. They are eager to sleep since they have been struggling hard to reach this peak of joy and ability to sleep in a serene mental state. Murphy's choice of the ending is symbolic because he propagates buoyancy: joy has to exist both outside and inside a person, regardless of the callousness of life.

3.5.7. Forgetfulness

For Nietzsche the ancient Greeks represent the pinnacle of culture and they are his idols for some reasons which helped to shape his epistemology: the ancient Greeks were always able to enjoy the moment and improve it more. They ignored their past and history; and this enabled them to have more time and effort to perfect their present (Hill 26). Forgetfulness is one of their admirable features. Nietzsche talks about forgetfulness as an essential contribution to the concept of superhuman as forgetting helps a human being to concentrate only on the matters that deserve attention. It also provides a space in mind for new or cardinal thoughts. Ansell Pearson states that for Nietzsche living without a history is more vital and more fundamental than remembering the bygone events (1994: 70). Thus, forgetfulness leads into power:

> Now this animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of *robust* health, has bred in itself an opposing faculty, a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases – namely in those cases where promises are made. (*GM* II 1)

Murphy, too, deals with forgetfulness in detail in "The Sanctuary Lamp": it becomes the main goal of the characters, as it is a method of attaining mental serenity and happiness. Firstly, Harry tries to forget his daughter's death and Olga's squalid acts and, in this he needs help: "Help me to forget" (110). Harry's craving to forget is the sign of his desire to be free and go on living in a happy psychological condition. Maudie, too, wants to forget and hers are similar to Harry's feelings: she has experienced callous events, which have given way to her psychological and physical discomfort. Her granddad was suspicious of her being a prostitute and treated her violently because of this. Moreover, she was raped and, later, gave birth to her child. She wants to forget all these traumatic events to liberate her future: "I just want it to stop – " (121). Her thoughts about her background and the death of her son, Stephen, do not leave her, thus, enslave her. The main characters of the play want to awake from their death-in-life existence by forgetting their past which holds their feet and prevents them from action and progress. Moreover, as Ansell Pearson contends:

> The grief of man consists in the fact that life always reminds him of the 'it was', which Nietzsche describes as 'that password which gives conflict, suffering, and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is – an imperfect tense that never becomes a perfect one.
> (1994: 69)

Thus, if a person forgets his/her past, s/he will get a visa to a joyful future, which is freed from the previous problems.

3.5.8. Art

Nietzsche has got fervid faith in art, which is similar to his Dionysus in terms of importance: "Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence forms of man. The *countermovement: art*" (*WP* 794). Art is in the nature of man; through art man depicts his inner world, which is so important in modern literature: "The phenomenon 'artist' is still the most transparent: – to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature, etc.!" (*WP* 797) Hence, life seems meaningful when art plays a role in it.

As Kelly, Mitchell, Ward and Weesjes maintain in their article, "[t]he works of Tom Murphy stand out among Irish plays of the last several decades that most successfully combine reality, art, and political engagement" (127). Murphy's talent as a playwright and a careful observer lets him draw a picture of a new philosophy of life, which is perfectly accessible by means of art, and which he regards as a powerful magic to struggle against despair and absurdity. Moreover, according to Nietzsche, art ennobles the artists because they reject the authority of the universal moral precepts and "give aesthetic shape" to their characters (Spinks 17).

For Harry, his art is his strength, as O'Toole confers, he exhibits his inner thoughts through his performance (1987: 151). Harry communicates through his art and performance, which have a direct bearing on his self-esteem: "Sixteen stone weight above my head before I was sixteen" (125). When Maudie talks about her abilities to climb 'lamp-posts', Harry becomes jealous:

> MAUDIE. …Sometimes I'd climb even higher than the light. I would catch the iron thing on top and pull myself up over the top, and sit there in the night. And sometimes, if I waited up there long enough, everything made – sense.
> HARRY. (*a little jealous of this last experience*.) Did you ever hear of Ivan the Terrible?
> MAUDIE. (*nods, but she is not listening to him.*) It were very exciting.
> HARRY. That was my name when I topped the bill. (119-120)

Maudie has been able to find the meaning of her existence by means of her abilities to climb the top of the lamp-posts. This makes Harry jealous of her because he was experiencing the same feeling through his talent, which, he thinks, he has lost now. Remembering his nickname given by the public makes him feel strong and important. In Nietzsche's philosophy, people should be strong to create meaning for themselves and these two concepts – strength and life's meaning – go hand in hand (Hill 69). In this play it is the same; Harry and Maudie have different abilities, which help them to overcome their problematic conditions and discover new horizons of life. As Spinks states, in their case, art is beyond morality and traditions, beyond good and evil; it is an inborn quality of a person, which helps him/her to change his/her opinions about existence (25).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In his attempts to characterise the essence of existence, Nietzsche is often seen to distinguish his universe from the universe that people are used to appreciate in traditional terms. The contrast drawn in his works is spelled in terms of existential values. Therefore, the philosopher acknowledges the inescapibility of suffering in this world, which does not promise another life as it is anticipated in Christian epistemology. Thus, in a Nietzschean context, an individual should have sufficient strength as a pre-condition to overcome the nihilistic condition, a consequence of the death of God. This nihilism and power needed to surmount despair, which results from the loss of meaning after the annihilation of the metaphysical authority, prepares a context for Tom Murphy in his plays.

Tom Murphy's plays dramatise Nietzschean nihilism on the stage. His treatment of nihilism seems to bear wider reflections on people's experience in the modern world: the decline of Christianity, people's frustration in finding meaning in this absurd universe, the development of science and modernity. "The Sanctuary Lamp" draws a picture of three nihilists: Francisco, Harry, and Monsignor. Although Harry and Monsignor do not want to reveal their inner feelings concerning religion explicitly, a detailed analysis of the play unveils their geniune attitude. Francisco, on the other hand, is a second Zarathustra who preaches the death of God openly and presents robust evidence for his content.

Despite the differences between the characters' ways of comprehending their nihilistic attitudes, it is palpable that they are homeless and lonely. The playwright portrays them in this way to show that this is their reality and that despite the fact that people try to hide their deep anxieties, it is possible to see through them by analysing their behaviour. "Bailegangaire" also entails homeless and lonely characters. Murphy's obsession with this theme stresses the importance of Nietzschean perception of realism in his plays. People are alone in this universe, there is not a God who can guide them, so people have to solve their problems

themselves. In such a context, Mommo has to choose the means with the help of which she can liberate her future. Mary is also responsible for shaping her own life since there is nobody to help her. In her personal tragedy, even Mommo does not want to recognise her in the beginning, which sharpens Mary's loneliness. Dolly is destitute because she has lost her purpose in life and all her acts confirm this idea. Both plays encompass numerous instances of nihilism and thus, draw strong parallelisms between Tom Murphy and Nietzsche.

Nietzsche discusses the features of weak and strong people in his works, stressing the superiority of the powerful group and foregrounding their characteristics. The first feature of the strong people is their ability and even desire to experience chaos, which makes them acquire more strength. Their ability to affirm pain is another cardinal issue, which deserves mentioning. Those who are capable of forgiving and, therefore, of forgetting, are also among the most important human features Nietzsche admires. The next feature of the strong is their affinity with Dionysus, the god of passion, whom people should follow to overcome nihilism. Will to power is another seminal characteristic, which people should have to register themselves to the group of the powerful men. Will to power also assists people to be masters and even Gods. Last but not least, the ability to integrate power with the ability to create reveals a strong personality, which enables man to overwhelm nihilism in a healthy way.

Another important factor that gains significance against the background of Nietzschean concepts is art, which is put under scrutiny in "The Bailegangaire" and "The Sanctuary Lamp." Art constitutes the major background which assists the strong people in employing all their features to add meaning to their lives. In "Bailegangaire," art helps the main characters, Mommo and Mary, to affirm their pain in the past and their meaningless existence in the present. Moreover, art becomes the main factor that makes the characters gain the qualities of a strong human.

Mommo's pain originates from the death of her grandchild, Tom, and her husband, Shemus, who indirectly die because of her. Her guilty conscience makes her despondent. What is more, Mommo remembers her unhappy marriage, in which she was ignored by her husband till the last few days before his death, and this spoils her mood. However, by means of her art of storytelling, her will to

power, and her ability to affirm her grief and passion she is able to mould a new and mentally healthy future. Her art makes her attain a strong identity to fight against her husband's ignorance and her will to power brings back Shemus's love. Affirmation of her grief helps her to forget her past torment and liberate her future, and her passion reveals her inner world, which shows her real desires.

Mary, too, builds a new life through her will to power, her passion and re-discovering of her home. Her will to power directs her towards the highest interest ensuring the best alternatives for life. Moreover, it frees her from negative factors such as loss of freedom. Her passion lets her have a new beginning by enabling her to get rid of annoying meaninglessness. Lastly, her idea of coming home helps her to commence a new life by bringing her back home spiritually where she discovers her roots. All these make her affirm her grief in her past and face the disadvantages of her present condition such as Mommo's stale life and senility. Hence, these three main means of overcoming nihilism create a strong character able to fight all her misfortunes.

This play also deals with laughter at misfortunes. Tom Murphy portrays characters that are virile to fight against the most perilous enemies such as death, hunger, and meaninglessness. Shemus and his rival in the laughing contest, Costello, make their audience laugh at their misfortunes. In this way, they belittle their ordeal and elevate themselves.

Another play, which pinpoints the strength of the characters, is "The Sanctuary Lamp." Two main characters, Harry and Francisco, reveal themselves as powerful to surmount their meaningless existence and create a new life for themselves. Harry is strong both physically and psychologically: he has been a circus man who lifts heavy things, and he is able to forgive his worst enemy, Francisco. Harry's temporary state of weakness does not become a prolonged process because it involves change for the better. The news about his wife's death generates the birth of a Nietzschean superman who becomes stronger by means of grief. Francisco is also strong despite his desire to destroy everything. His awareness of a possible cruelty from Harry towards him does not stop him from a deliberate encounter with Harry. As a result, when they meet they want to ensure their power over each other. They generate different techniques to struggle, such

as belittling each other, ignorance, leaving the rival without a supporter, remembering bygone sexuality and remembering happy days in the past.

Both Harry and Francisco demonstrate their mental strength when they propagate a new religion, an indication of their craving to dethrone God. Francisco's new philosophy of life welcomes dissolute people with their strength to govern the others, and Jesus appears to be on the side of these rakish individuals. This desire to accomodate himself in such a context is accompanied with Francisco's respect for Olga, Harry's wife, who leads an immoral and lustful life. Harry's new life is similar to Francisco's in terms of disbelief in God; however, he stresses the importance of sustainability of relationships as an implication of his desire for unity. Their ability to affirm their pain is also generated by their powerful nature, which gives them an opportunity to forgive and forget their enemies and their grief. Francisco gets rid of his persistent thoughts about his childhood when he was exposed to the Jesuits' religious education. Harry forgets the insolence that his wife and Francisco have caused, which leads into relief. Maudie, too, forgets and forgives her grandparents and affirms her life as it is; she commences a new life which flows in accordance with the psychological needs of an individual, that is, craving for a purpose in life. Hence, all three characters are able to sleep in the end, because their sick thoughts were the main cause of their ill psychology beforehand.

Art is another cardinal factor in this play, leading into a purpose in life. Harry adds meaning to his life by remembering his art at the circus. When he remembers the enhancing nicknames given by the public, he starts to envisage the possibility of a meaningful existence again. Maudie's extraordinary ability to climb, too, brings with itself a strong possibility of attaining meaning in her life, which is easily acknowledged by Harry because he can comprehend the power of talents in an individual to transcend the gloomy condition of aimlessness.

In conclusion, the analysis of the dialogue between Tom Murphy's plays and Nietzschean philosophy prepares a solid ground for the dramatist when displaying an individual's horrendous condition and, at the same time, endowing him/her with the strength and the virtue to escape this condition. Thus, Murphy gives an individual back his/her privilege, which has been usurped by morality. His plays dramatise characters who can add colours to the black and white forms

of existence through their realisation of the significance of other colours in life. In this dialogue between the dramatist and Nietzsche, the former goes one step further by transfering the philosopher's ideas generated in the late 19th century into the modern world of the late 20th century. His plays involve a pragmatist model of today's population whom Nietzsche tried to portray more than a century ago. In other words, Murphy with a modern artistic sensibility re-contextualises Nietzschean ideas in the modern day Ireland in his attempts to offer a new frame of reference which disrupts and subverts the previous one based on morality and religion and thus, builds a bridge, through his art, between the late 19th and the late 20th century epistemes.

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