

**“Don’t they Say you Die if you Meet yourself?” The Experience of
Human Cloning and the Description of the Self in Caryl Churchill’s *A
Number***

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Abstract

*The possibility of reproducing humans through genetic engineering has stimulated one of the most controversial debates about identity in society. Talking about originality and individuality within a number of copies would seem peculiar. For these purposes, this paper focuses on the effects of this artificial reproductive experience on the clone and the cloned. It will try to underscore the way different characters perceive themselves and the manner they interact with others. In Caryl Churchill’s play *A Number* (2004), Bernard or B1 (the cloned son), and B2 (the clone) are caught within a dilemma of self-recognition after discovering about a cloning enterprise. Henceforth, lights will be shed on how the two boys view themselves, each other, society, and their father Salter. The study of these central characters would highlight possible definitions of identity and the manner it is modelled.*

Keywords: Identity, Cloning, the Self vs Others, Individuality, Similarities and Differences.

Introduction:

Right from the announcement of the possibility of human duplication, people start to ponder upon the damage that may be brought to one's identity. Here, there is a growing fear that feelings of originality can be put at stake, though, other cloning advocates can estimate that the experience will not damage an individual's character. But before this talk about identity, we must note that generally speaking, cloning is the medical experience which produces an organ from a mother cell (Thomas 5). It aims at getting two exact organs who have the same genetic makeup.

This paper will then essay to pinpoint the notion of identity in one of Caryl Churchill's intricate plays. *A Number* (2002), in five acts, features the encounter between a father, Salter, and his three sons after the revelation of a cloning act the father has executed long ago. The text puts some light on the three sons' response (B1, B2, in addition to the third clone Michael Black) towards the father's enterprise. Obviously, the prescription of the self is of an extreme importance in this context of duplication and identical copies.

The process of identifying an individual may vary according to one's interpretation of identity itself. Thence, Caryl Churchill endeavours to establish various approaches to self-identification. Characters in the text display distinct characters from which one can assort possible methods of understanding identity. The following paragraphs will provide few depictions of the notion of identity as seen by some specialists and critics, and right after, the analysis will shift into exhibiting the way this concept is punctuated through real and cloned characters.

1. What is Identity?

1.1 Identity as a Social Functioning:

Identity is never a simple concept. Critics Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets proclaim that identity can be painted as "the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person" (3). Identity gathers the numerous qualities that paint an individual. This portrayal is done in line with the person's social affiliation. If you have (a) specific occupation(s), then this social seat will dictate your identity and then tell who you are. Identity, as explained by the statement, illustrates the individual's state within a wider social context. Everyone have a position in his/her community. That particular position is the thing that identifies him/her or gives him/her specific traits. Burke and Stets agree that identity is purely constructed within the social paradigm. Hence, characteristics of an identity correspond foremost to the social position a citizen may undertake.

Identity suggests what one is doing in the social arena, or what he/she did. Since then, the self is quite linked to society. Burke and Stets continue to mark that people's personal traits may influence their "behaviour, thoughts, and feelings or emotions, and how the[se] identities tie them into society at large" (3). At this level, individuals appear to be the outcome of this interaction between identity and society. Simultaneously, these two items do influence one's life and determine his/her future at least in the community he/she belongs to.

In other words, personal qualities are not innate. They are not inherited or offered since birth. Rather, it is acquired in the process of a connection between the person and the surrounding setting. “Identities characterize individuals according to their many positions in society, and it is important to note ... that both the individual and society are linked in the concept of identity” (Burke and Stets 3). A worker is defined by his/her own profession. This professional occupation influences parts of his/her essence. Similarly, humans’ familial state (father, mother, neighbour, etc.) or their interests (politics, sciences, philosophy, etc.) interfere in the construction of the self.

Personal particularities can hook up an individual within a social setting. Therefore, the triangle of identity, individual and society are pretty entangled. Each item affect and is affected by the two other poles. “Identity is simply the sum of the roles we play in our lives. Thus, identity is not some innate quality; nor a physically localizable property. Also, identity is not an essence in itself ... identity [is] the socially constructed result of all our engagements with others” (Den Berg 63). As stated by scholar Bibi Van Den Berg, the inconstant nature of the self is highly agreed upon by specialists. Identity is placed in a dynamic process of metamorphosis. Here, Den Berg consolidates Burke and Stets in their approach to identity as a complex variable entity which is set in continual communication with the surrounding context. Social integration can design identity and offers that feelings of identification. Yet, surprisingly, this approach might lead to shared personal features among members since it binds them to common social grounds.

1.2 Identity Can Designate Universality:

From a slightly different angle, thence, sociologist Steph Lawler comes to an agreement with the idea that “the notion of identity hinges on as an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference” (2). Identity entails contradictory aspects, for an individual may take various positions or social arrangements. He/she can face distinct as well as common experiences in life. As a starting point to Lawlers’ interpretation, one has to draw the attention that the word identity essentially comes from the Latin word (*idem*) which means (the same) and “from which we also get ‘identical’” (Lawler 2). According to Lawler, identity does designate uniqueness. Furthermore, it intensifies certain common features. The following paragraphs, will explain this “magical” mixture of sameness versus peculiarities within the self as notified by the researcher.

Firstly, as he strongly insists upon, these shared characteristics within the self are what tie members of a group together. “Not only we are identical with ourselves,” adds the sociologist, “but we are identical with others” (2). Sameness does not only refer to one’s relation to his/her personality, but also triggers the possible existing bonds within identity that can unite people together (whether they are from the same family, community, country, etc). Identity encapsulates a number of characteristics that form the essence of an individual’s originality. As well, it comprises numerous collective qualities.

For the expert, the part of sameness residing within the self is what constitutes the sense of association within an individual. It facilitates his/her attachment to a specific society. Meanwhile, that particular individual preserves his/her individuality through the second portion of identity which encloses different characteristics from others and denotes authenticity. We do share “common identities_ as human ... at the same time, however, there is another aspect of identity which suggests people’s uniqueness” (Lawler 2). Identity

permeates the inclusion of shared experiences and conducts in order to be acknowledged within a wider scope.

As a response, these aspects of sameness and differences are somehow set in a mode of interactions. Humans, during their life experience, may construct their own individuality in addition to a certain degree of affiliation to others. These formations and transformations are what Steph Lawler calls the “doing of identity” (3). The two complex poles of identity are never stable. They should be seen as “interactive,” “mutually constitutive” and most importantly “dynamic” (Lawler 3). Personal characteristics consciously or unconsciously alter in the course of time.

They change in reaction to multiple factors and circumstances. Perhaps, as a possible reason, what makes us unique is that “nobody has the same life: Even siblings _ even identical twins _ do not share every aspect of life” (Lawler 3). People are not the same from childhood to youth and then adulthood and so on and so forth. These inflicted distinctions prove how society interacts within the formation of one’s identity. The latter, as mentioned previously, connects humans to their communities.

Furthermore, the idea of sameness and difference within a person’s process of identification is constantly brought to the fore by psychologists and anthropologists. Scholar Phillip L. Hammak, for example, notifies that “across the social sciences and humanities, identity is a conceptual tool to think about sameness and difference, both in terms of individual continuity and change over time and social categorization or group affiliation” (11). Hammak’s remark is not contradictory to Steph Lawler’s definition. They both project how identity is driven by these two “paradoxical” factors.

The way an individual manages to stabilize these feelings may reinforce his/her social as well as psychological equilibrium. This balance can be achieved by being aware of his/her nexus with a larger social scope and acknowledging the qualities he/she may acquire during his/her entire life (Hammak 11). Probably, the critic, at this level, emphasizes the global world we are living in. This universality entails the coexistence of numerous people from varied ethnicities, races, gender, etc. We live in a globalized world where immigration and mass culture are common sense.

As a suggestion, Hammak deduces that collective feelings of identification may probably reunite people. It can minimize disagreement over differences. “Identity,” he signals, “is the tool we have to think about conflict and discontinuity within an individual person at a time of rapid social change and challenges to local cultural views of self” (11). The egocentric search for uniqueness will not permeate a tolerable social interaction. On the contrary, it would only lead up to hostility, division as well as wars. Personal identity, in a nutshell, can manipulate society the same way as society can influence the synthesis of the self. This same mutual influence and action between the self, society and individual is carefully stressed in Churchill’s play.

2. Can We Clone Identity?

As a leading factor, and as far as *A Number* is concerned, the text, from its very onset, manifests a story of identical twins separated at birth in order to answer some questions related to identity (Griffin 21-2). Salter, unable to raise his only child Bernard after his wife's death, gives him to adoption. But then, he regrets his deeds and tries to start over again by looking after a cloned copy of the original son. Unexpectedly, the hospital decides to illegally recreate more clones without informing Salter. Only after thirty-five years, the medical institution brings the whole issue to the fore by uncovering the truth. Hence, the idea of having a twin stimulates various responses between different characters.

Within this complex context of originality versus mimicry, the play apparently tries to legitimize the view that identity is object to repeated transformations. The idea is foremost incarnated by the principal characters within the text. Salter's three sons (B1, B2 and Michael Black) have much to represent through their disparate identities. An analogy between the three figures will hence take place in the next sections starting with the two Bernard.

2.1. B1 and B2: Originality versus Imitation

B1 and B2 are identical twins. Yet, throughout the acts, they display totally disparate attitudes, points of views in addition to gestures. At a first line, the two sons have paradoxical characteristics. B2 appears more attached to his father. He resembles any other normal son. However, B1, the original kid, seems too detached from social and ordinary life. Thence, the two boys display "significant differences" (Kritzer 75 *Political Theatre*). These disparities within their personal traits revolve basically around their relation to Salter. Throughout the play, Salter's conversations with his two sons are what foreshadow their true characteristics.

Dialogues between Salter and B2 disclose how the latter is so peaceful. He is calm, "self-contained, [and] shares an uncomplicated closeness with Salter" (Kritzer 75 *Political Theatre*). The clone strongly believes he has a good father and a stable normal life like others. His social and emotional stability appears quite satisfactory for him. He leads a regular life with parental love and care. Despite not having a professional occupation or social position as a thirty-five human being, he still belongs to a family. He has a social function by being a son.

After the revelation of cloning, B2 never shows amplified reactions towards his father. All his expressions, though they manifest deep feelings of anxiety and doubt, are marked by submission and weakness. He prefers to suffer alone. His reflex is simply summarized by his decision "if I go away by myself I might feel all right" (Churchill 39). Critic Gabrielle Griffin describes B2's reaction as too passive. When he meets the original Bernard, he just opts for "withdrawal" (21). B2 feels he is not the genuine son that is why he marches out quietly. Besides, and surprisingly, he seldom blames Salter or gets angry. He believes that what is done is part from the past so there is no way he can fix it. He deduces that "probably I shouldn't blame you" (Churchill 43). B2, in few words, prefers to maintain a vertical relationship with the father by simply forgiving Salter, yielding to the fact that he is a cloned son and then leaving the space for B1.

On the other hand, B1's speeches and acts are loaded with wrath and vengeance. Unlike the clone, he is unable to accept or adopt to the situation. He is desperate and overwhelmed by

extreme “hatred of both his father and himself” (Kritzer 75 *Political Theatre*). His relation to Salter sounds vertical but with the exception that this time it is B1 who is on the top. Bernard returns to the scene only to judge Salter for abandoning him to the social services since he was four. He furiously questions Salter and condemns him for being a disgraceful father. He cries out “don’t patronize me” when he feels his father wants to give excuses for what he did and puts the blame off himself (Churchill 29). His extreme deportments suggest his emotional and social deprivation. He looks so revengeful and ready to fight for his rights.

This deprivation affects his emotional makeup and psychological balance. He has “marginal social position” so that he does not feel any sense of belonging to a family (Kritzer 75 *Political Theatre*). Social insecurity has a great impact on B1’s identity. He does not experience parental love in order to exchange sentiments with anyone. He has no “starting point” to trust even his true father (Kritzer 76 *Political Theatre*). Furthermore, he gets angry, derived of course by jealousy in the first place, when he realizes that his father is able to love a son, and most importantly his affection is only directed to a substitute (Kritzer 76 *Political Theatre*). This social and emotional emptiness within the original son constitutes his indifferent or rather aggressive attitudes towards people.

For him, the only member of his “so called family” is a neglecting father who never affirms his sons’ needs. Henceforth, the traumatic experience of B1, especially by being handed to social services, makes him lack confidence and worth living. He is left with “an utter lack of trust in others” (Griffin 20). B1 does not seem to take part in society due to his misbalanced past. He does not enjoy an ordinary son-father relation which has badly inflicted his relation to society. According to him, “there’s a lot of wicked people ... And you see them all around you ... You go down the street and you see their faces” (Churchill 30). People within society, for the boy, are simply replicas of Salter’s “wicked” deeds. Thus, he is unable to live in society. Being excluded from the social position he is depending on (as a son) renders him fail in participating in wider social scopes.

The two boys stand as evidence that identity is a social entity. They both acquire discreet personalities in relation to their social backgrounds in spite of their exact genetic makeup. B2 does not inherit his identity but develops it. This development is primarily linked to the interaction with the father. His description of the self depends heavily on his closeness to Salter. B2 holds only one position in society and that in his being a son, as a consequence, he belongs to a sole group (the father). Obviously, after discovering the cloning act, the boy feels the real danger threatening his identity. The fact that he is a mere “number” among other clones endangers his only sense of identification as Salter’s child. His confusion and fear are justified by his prediction that “none of us is the original” (Churchill 18). Total essence of individuality and security are now put into question. He may be stripped of the only social identification he has.

Similarly to B2’s response, B1 is never at ease with being abandoned, cloned and then replaced by that copy. He considers, too, that the father is what must link him to the world and offer him sentiments of self-recognition. The two boy’s identity is substantially chained to the father. Their essence of existence depends fundamentally on their filial state. B1 and B2’s identities are built according to their connection to Salter and so are their social states. For instance, the two boys already know their father. So, the four acts of the play manifest the real objective behind B1 and B2’s confrontation with Salter. All they need to know is what they

really mean for him in an attempt to be assured of their existence (Griffin 24). For them, it is all a matter of originality that is now fluctuating because of the genetic proliferation. They feel the urge to compete for the same “vital” position.

Originality is the vital core through which the two boys value themselves. Obviously, cloning mutates this feeling of uniqueness. Consequently, throughout the play, B2 suffers from the melancholy of the loss of the original, meanwhile, B1 resorts to violence to respond to the fact that his singularity is mitigated by duplication (Case 160). They exhibit that identity is structured. This construction takes place when the individual acquires certain social positions which allow him/her to be exposed to a variety of situations.

The two Bernard demonstrate that identity does not lie in the genetic fabric of a person. It is composed as well as transformed in response to one’s life experience. Within the third act, B2 recounts his encounter with B1. He expels that “what struck me was how different ... you couldn’t mistake ... I wouldn’t be identical ... just a bit like” (Churchill 36). Unexpectedly, B2 vouches that there is a great gap between him and B1. They are only “a bit” similar in their appearance. He detects that there is a number of personal features that can make him look completely different from his original brother. These peculiar traits is for most caused by social upbringing. B2 himself concludes by the end that “so that’s what, his childhood, his life, his childhood has made him a nutter” (Churchill 37). The clone openly explains B1’s disturbed attitudes. He suggests that his brother is dissimilar because of the painful childhood he has.

Apart from this analysis, B2, although he partly appears to sympathize with B1, is still worried about another shared trait that connects him to the original son: Salter. He subconsciously does not want to be separated from his father. This father is the only core of his existence. He reluctantly confesses: “I remind myself of him. We both hate you. Except what he feels as hate are completely different because what you did to him and what you did to me are different things” (Churchill 45). Regardless of the distinct qualities they have, they both develop strong sentiments to the father (whether of hatred or love). In this context, both the clone and the origin are expressed through this son-father relationship. This relationship does not seem to unite them since they look only for singularity. They are never ready to share.

Within another different angle, Michael Black, a clone who is illegally created by doctors, provides an example of a twin who has no link with Salter. He is raised without knowing his real parents. The following paragraphs will consequently envisage whether the third clone Michael Black, shares his two “brothers” the same sense of identification or not?

2.2. Michael Black: Individuality on Question!

The study of the two Bernard’s personalities and attachment to their filial seats solidifies the first interpretation of identity as a social constructed entity through social roles. However, Steph Lawler’s theory of sameness within identity appears to be equally highlighted by the Churchillian text. The introduction of a fourth character in the final act presupposes another example of characterization. Michael Black is one among the numerous clones copied from B1. What is pretty interesting here, is that Black is the only character in the play who has a full name. His encounter with Salter discloses that he additionally has “a multifaceted life” (Kritzer 355 “*A Number*”). He has a constant job as a mathematics teacher, a wife and three

children. Black does not seem to have any problem with his identity. He enjoys a normal social life.

On the opposing side, B1 and B2, albeit their awareness of their genuine parents, have no official appellation. They do share the same name: Bernard. Ironically, they are introduced within the text as numbers (B1 and B2). Compared to the third brother, they give the impression of being mere clones of Michael Black (Gobert 114). Black is brought up by a fostering family. In this sense, he may live a little of B1's adoption experience. Still, he is content with his situation (Robert 114). Within the wider social context, he is a teacher, a father, a son, a husband, a friend, etc. The multiplicity of social functions renders him at ease with his self.

The third clone plays a fundamental role in *A Number*. He provides an alternative version that is completely different from his two brothers. He inaugurates that "we've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty percent the same as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong" (Churchill 62). Black pinpoints at that aspect of sameness within identity that can band together an individual with the outer world. For him, it is useless to pursuit uniqueness since we look like other creatures according to the law of nature.

Michael Black dismisses B1 and B2's desperate clutching to originality. He accepts correlation with even "humble" organisms. "Instead of asserting an egotistical uniqueness", Black puts forward "an alternative to traditional masculine and Western subjectivity" (Kritzer 77 *Political Theatre*). This traditional subjectivity, as advertised by Amelia Howe Kritzer, dictates that an individual is only assessed within society by his/her uniqueness. For the critic, this predominant pretension is nothing but an enterprise which promotes isolation and egoism (77). The search for individuality haunts the two Bernard causing them hatred, misery and then finally leads them to a fatal end (B1 commits suicide after murdering b2).

Feelings of uniqueness are found devastating. They disconnect individuals from the surrounding atmosphere instead of inserting them into a universal context. Churchill dares, over these scenes, to "ponder a threat to the very cornerstone of Western civilization since the renaissance: the idea of human individuality" (Brantley *NY Times*). The prevailing norm within society is carried on by B1 and his substitute. Caryl Churchill aims at representing how these prescriptions of identity do not always define an individual or guarantee a position within society. Her analysis introduces an alternate meaning for the process of identification.

With the character of Black, then, Churchill "is putting [destructive] individualism to the test" (Case 160). The obsession with singularity within western society may reinforce social split and feelings of suspense. For B1 and B2 exceptionality is situated in relation to Salter which also dictates their personal features. The way they define their identities make them in an endless circle of fear, doubt and loss. For Black, singularity requires a firm sensation of pertinence. Therefore, having copies similar to him cannot ruin his identity. He peacefully replies: "I've still got my life" (Churchill 60). Life designates living within a larger community. Having a number of twins can hardly affect his existence. He is quite aware of his distinct in addition to universal personal characteristics.

Professor Dan W. Brock, from his part, endeavours to analyse the question about individuality and cloning in a scientific method. He proclaims that genetic proliferation cannot affect one's

identity. He refers that “though homozygous twins may begin life with the same genomes, and often have many qualitative similarities, over time differences in their physical, psychological, and personal characteristics will develop together with differences in their life histories, personal relationships, and life choices” (314). Cloning is not only the procedure through which we can get two indistinguishable persons.

Homogenous twins do exist in nature. However, their uniqueness is still preserved. These two identical duplicates cannot maintain exact identities as they will never go through exact experiences in their life. “A person’s traits, character, and life history are the product not just of his genome, but of his environment and choices as well” (Brock 11). Cloning is not the solitary real threat that may inflict characterization. It is rather the way a person thinks of his/her sense of identification as restrictively attached to being with no matching copy in society (Brock 11). Identifying the self in a non-egocentric pattern can be the solution of this “crisis” of self-identification. It can at least guarantee a more universal and flexible representation of identity.

All in all, acquiring a safe status within society enhance the creation of a balanced self. The mathematics teacher seeks to investigate identity in a highly scientific method. He, as deduction, “finds a sense of belonging not only in his genetic sameness to the other clones, but also in his genetic similarities to other living organisms” (Kritzer 76 *Political Theatre*). Cloning does not intervene in his psychological disposition. As a result, he never looks for his genuine parents or seems touched by the revelation of being “a number”. He evaluates things in an objective manner.

The neutral clone is not attached to a single relation. Therefore, when he meets his biological father Salter, he “demonstrates a warm and relaxed manner not seen in either Bernard” (Kritzer 76 *Political Theatre*). His sense of identification does not depend on a father-son relationship like the two other boys. His social position as well as identity are solid and unbreakable (Griffin 18). B1 and B2 react intensely because they see things in respect to Salter solely, as indicated formerly. The act of cloning is catastrophic because it ruins their own individuality and connection to the father. On the other hand, Black’s response is pretty peaceful although he is aware of the fact that he is a copy. Psychological and social completeness hinders him from needing a father. Moreover, he does not take part in the “sibling rivalry” that bursts between B1 and B2 (Griffin 18).

In a way to establish an analogy between Salter’s sons and their disparate attitudes, the play necessitates the doubling scheme in acting. All three boys are played out by the same actor in order to incarnate physical resemblance, at the same time, elucidate psychological and personal distinctions (Cousin 112). Geraldine Cousin projects the playwright’s insistence on attributing the role of the three boys to the same actor. As a production note at the very beginning of the text, the producer transcribes that “the play is for two actors. One plays Salter, the other his sons” (Churchill 7). Bernard, B2 alongside Michael Black should be performed by one player. Trebling the role may make it easier to fathom this distinction in personalities.

The three characters within *A Number* have exact physical appearances. Henceforth, the actor is advised to materialize the personal disparities that characterize each son. Their varied tastes, thoughts, moods, conducts, feelings, gestures and even accents have to be fully represented. Every role has to “have value” indicating similarities and differences between the

original Bernard and his two clones (Brustein 86). When premiered by the Royal Court for the first time on the 23rd of September 2002, the British actor Daniel Craig takes the role of the three sons. “Although he wears the same jeans and T-shirt throughout, he transforms himself into three very different characters by accent, gesture, and facial expression” (Klotzko 1043). The actor prefers to conserve the same physical features but represents differences skilfully through simple yet significant signs on the stage. He portrays three roles with one fixed body.

Churchill comes to the resolution that nurture, not nature, is what makes us who we are. Her characters have one flesh but three souls. Craig’s performance is praised for succeeding at drawing the attention on the way the three characters develop distinguished identities regardless of their homogeneous shapes (Klotzko 1043). For reviewers and commentators, the play probes a modern quiz that is still a debatable issue within society. Still, it prefers to broach it in a manner that match contemporary systems of research. As a result, cloning, objective analysis and multiple characters are exploited to reach the conclusion that the presentation of identity cannot be isolated from the social setting. Meanwhile, it is also widely agreed upon that the theme of identification within *A Number* alludes to certain political cases.

3. Identity and Politics:

A Number’s main theme is at a first glance connected to identity. However, the prescription of the ego it articulates triggers some political perspectives. The play is actually one of Churchill’s work that targets some political cases. The presentation of three personalities in the five acts (since she is only portraying one character in each act) discloses certain political realities about identity. As critic Michael Patterson notes, Caryl Churchill constantly tries to combine “the personal with the political” (173 *Strategies of Political Theatre*). Consequently, the playwright ties up the very private part of an individual (identity) with a larger political scope.

Identity is foremost approached in the text according to the prescription of sameness and difference. This measurement, indeed, sounds to echo the prevailing political discourse within the very beginning of the twenty-first century. Contemporary societies “have reduced the formation of selfhood and identity to an ideology of individualism and the self’s own creativity” (McDowell 38). Dominant ideological systems reinforce the idea of uniqueness. Therefore, self-recognition necessitates the exclusion of “others” who can be a potential threat to this uniqueness.

Perhaps, as a response, in a world that is marked by wars and conflicts, Caryl Churchill finds it necessary to underline the negative outcomes of a self-centred perception of identity. This highly believed perception would only produce social hostility and division. “Churchill puts into perspective the contemporary obsession with individuality” (Patterson 295 *The Oxford Guide to Plays*). Through the characters of B1 and B2, for instance, the playwright alludes at the American president George W. Bush’s “we versus them” speech in 2001. The president clearly adopts an egocentric attitude as a global political strategy that will be followed by all people. He tends to legalize the rejection of those who does not belong to the group of “we”.

Thence, as referred by Phillip L. Hammack, his policy considers difference as a “ground for oppression, colonization, or enslavement” (11). This same system of hostility towards others may probably generate a global atmosphere of tension and anarchy. Within the text, Michael

Black comments on the existing political ideology by emphasising its absurdity. He expounds: “I dislike war ... nobody ever says we’re the bad guys, we’re going to beat shit out of the good guys” (Churchill 57). Black strongly opposes the prevailing obsession with individuality and the way it becomes a measurement for superiority and inferiority. Even more, this egocentric perception labels others as “bad guys” or evil. So, even ethics and cultural values are strongly touched by these political codes.

President Bush’s speech of exclusion is also materialized by B1 and B2’s responses towards others. Whether pessimistic like B2 or vicious like B1, the two reactions stress this duality of “you” as the opposite of “me”. B2 is unable to pursue the struggle, therefore, he prefers to step out to leave the floor for the “other”. From the other direction, B1, perfectly symbolizing Bush’s ideology, declares a war on every exterior self. They both seem to reject any different identification that does not belong to the category “I”. Ayalla A. Ruvio as well as Russell W. Belk identify that

In the negotiation of sameness and difference, the “me-others” as well as “us-them” tensions and comparisons are critical for individual and social identity. When we consider the us-them interplay, we notice that the boundaries and impositions of the in- and out-groups can make identity construction difficult and painful ... the us-versus-them comparison can be painful, even when it is chosen. (116)

The two critics in this statement point at the culture of indifference that can be foregrounded by an “us-versus-them” system. It may impede the social integration of individuals or groups. More interestingly, Caryl Churchill’s play does not only intend to criticize a society characterized by an egotistic self-recognition supported by political regimes. It is true that her text investigates the notion of identification as an attempt to review the predominant political conventions. Yet, simultaneously, her drama includes an alternative fashion.

Once again, through the character of Michael Black, the British playwright manages to paint another suggested version that is completely different from the prevailing descriptions. She maintains that embracing a flexible approach towards the identification of the self can secure harmony and balance within both the self and society as a whole. In the fifth act, for example, when Salter asks Black about any sort of thing that is too specific to him, the third clone finds himself unable to answer.

All what he thinks of are deeply associated to his family, friends, etc. He finally clarifies: “it’s people I love so ...” (Churchill 58). Black’s conclusion proves his easy assimilation with others. Henceforth, in a modern world famous for globalization, it could be very query not to adopt an open tolerant conduct towards other social categories. This international sense of belonging can solely be achieved by being aware of and accepting one’s distinct and unique qualities altogether.

Conclusion:

To sum up, *A Number*, indeed, does not intend at evaluating the arguments for or against cloning. Instead, this medical experience appears to be only exploited to stimulate the question of identity and self-recognition. The latter suggests a number of definitions on the

way an individual can be identified. From the analysis of different characters, the text criticizes the commanding view of identity as a core of exceptionalism and uniqueness. This approach is not complete as it does not encompass the self with its two vital poles: Similarities and Differences.

An individual has to develop certain discreet qualities due to his/her personal experience. Simultaneously, he/she owns specific common features that connect him/her to a global world. These common traits could definitely facilitate a person's belonging to a diverse social group. Thus, maintaining the balance between these two poles can guarantee balance and harmony at the individual and social levels alike.

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