



## Mark Ravenhill'in Kötü Şöhretli Oyununda Güç ve Şiddet İlişkisi

*Violence and Power Relations in Mark Ravenhill's Notorious Play*

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**ÖZ**

Yirminci yüzyıl savaşlar, soykırımlar ve çatışmalar nedeniyle en az 100 milyon insanın ölümüne tanık oldu. 20. yüzyılın son on yılında ortaya çıkan felaket ve şiddet olayları Britanya'da suratına tiyatro gibi yeni tiyatro akımına yol açtı. Bu hareketin öncülerinden biri olan Mark Ravenhill, şiddet olayına dair yeni bir farkındalık yaratmak için gerçekleri sahneye taşımaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, Foucault'un şiddete karşı bakış açısının Mark Ravenhill'in *Alışveriş ve S\*\*\*ş* adlı eserinde nasıl ortaya çıktığını göstermeye çalışmaktadır. Bu oyun ilk olarak 26 Eylül 1996'da Royal Court Tiyatrosu'nda sahnelenmiştir. İçerikle birlikte başlık da izleyicileri şok etmek için yeterli olmuştur. Oyun yazarı, oyunlarına her zaman dikkat çekici başlıklar bulmuştur, fakat bu oyunun başlığı *Alışveriş ve S\*\*\*ş* şeklinde asteriksler kullanılarak yazıldığı için diğerlerinden daha fazla şimşekleri üzerine çekmiştir. Kısaca bu makalenin amacı, Ravenhill'in kötü şöhretli oyununda şiddetin dinamizmini, değişimlerini, sosyo-politik önemini ve etkilerini güç ve aile ilişkilerini de dikkate alarak analiz etmektir.

**Anahtar kelimeler**

Suratına Tiyatro, Foucault, Ravenhill, Şiddet, Güç

**ABSTRACT**

The twentieth century witnessed the death of at least 100 million people due to wars, genocides, and conflicts. Catastrophic and violent events that emerged in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to new trends in Britain, such as *in-her-face* theatre. One of the forerunners of this movement, Mark Ravenhill, reflected the realities on stage to create a new awareness about the case of violence. In this respect, this study will attempt to demonstrate that the Foucauldian approach to violence did immensely affect the English drama of the time by apparently showing itself in Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*. This play was first performed on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1996 at the Royal Court Theatre. Together with the content, the title is enough to shock the public. The playwright is surely good at finding affective titles for his plays; however, this one affects the norms and values more than the others since the title of the play is printed with asterisks as *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. Shortly, the aim of this article is to analyze the dynamism, changes, socio-political importance, and effects of violence in Ravenhill's infamous play by taking power and family relations into consideration.

**Keywords**

In-her-face Theatre, Foucault, Ravenhill, Violence, Power

## INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century witnessed the death of at least 100 million people due to wars, genocides, and conflicts. Catastrophic and violent events that emerged in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to new trends in Britain, such as *in-yer-face* theatre. The contemporary playwrights of the 1990s started to reflect the realities on stage to create a new awareness about the case of violence taking place not only in England, but also all around the world. As a result, violence became one of the most essential themes in the works of the most prominent playwrights such as Sarah Kane, Simon Stephens, Anthony Neilson, Martin Crimp, and Mark Ravenhill. These figures are also known as Thatcher's children since they experienced her strict policies and thus, they reflected their experiences to the stage. In other words, the role of violence on the British stage towards the end of the twentieth century is the common denominator behind *in-yer-face* theatre.

The role of a stage has a big impact on its audiences and causes them to reevaluate their positions by uncovering the aimlessness, ugliness, and two-facedness among people in society. In this respect, theatre has many functions; one of them is that it is a powerful medium to uncover the hypocrisy of the world. In addition, theatre often emphasizes the issues that people prefer to remain silent about. In the twentieth century, a period in world history notably marked by violence, British drama took the same responsibility. It tended to reflect the cruel events ignored by society on-stage, as a mode of sensitizing people towards the problems of the era. Taking this as a starting point, the purpose of this article is to display how Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* demonstrates the clear-cut relationship between power and violence in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* was first performed on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1996 at the Royal Court Theatre. Together with the content, the title is enough to shock the public. The playwright is surely good at finding affective titles for his plays; however, this one affects the norms and values more than the others. For this reason, it is not surprising that the title of the play is printed with asterisks as *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. The word "fuck" is officially banned from any public display, according to the Indecent Displays (Control) Act of 1981. To cope with this problem, the initial posters for the title have employed the symbol of a splintered fork to hide the disturbing word. Sonia Friedman, the producer, states that "[w]e can use the F-word on stage, but in anything unsolicited – posters, leaflets, direct-mail letters – we cannot print it without risking prosecution" (Sierz 2000, p.125). That is the reason why they have received legal advice that the title should not be seen on posters or in adverts without asterisks in its first debut.

There is a paradoxical issue that lies under the asterisks, as the play itself is full of violence, sex, and abuse. Therefore, using asterisks can be considered ironic since a play that intends to expose the violence of the world is being censored. Despite the usage of the asterisks, the play's explicitly bawdy title is the first aspect of the play that leads to extensive controversy. However, the applied censorship has a reverse effect; it serves as unexpected publicity for the play, since it makes *Shopping and Fucking* infamous and advertises the play much more effectively than one can expect. As a matter of fact, the title turns into a parody of sexuality, as Ravenhill brings an unusual approach to society by releasing more of its humor. Furthermore, the title foreshadows the violent content of the play. While the first word of the title indicates that everything has been for sale nowadays and that consumerism has been almost becoming

our “new religion”, the second word foreshadows the forthcoming brutal sexual scenes, as sex in the title is also commoditized by losing its connection with love.

Since the emergence of *in-yer-face* theatre, various studies have been conducted on *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* by Mark Ravenhill from different perspectives, which will be mentioned briefly below even though they do not bring a Foucauldian analysis. To begin with, in her article entitled “Responsibility and Postmodernity”, Clare Wallace (2005) researches how the contemporary world has been depicted in Mark Ravenhill's selected plays, especially in *Shopping and Fucking*, through assimilations of postmodern superficiality. In addition to this, Enric Monforte (2007) studies the controversial position of that play being part of the so-called “gay and queer” theatre genre. He pays attention to the shift from gay to queer theatre practices which took place in the mid-1990s. Moreover, Milena Kostic (2011) focuses on the play as the reflection of pop culture, especially its aspects of consumerism, resistance, and marginality, by emphasizing the power of individuals to stand against the negative effects of consumerist societies. Additionally, Hildegard Klein (2011) discusses how *Shopping and Fucking* demonstrates a world of homosexuality. In my interpretation of her words, she investigates the possibilities that may happen when women are not required sexually on morally and physically disaffected male figures. Furthermore, Sibel İzmir (2014) conducts a critical approach of postmodernist discourse in the same play. She suggests that Ravenhill's voice is the strongest voice of the postmodern period. Lastly, Rui Pina Coelho asserts (2016) that violence becomes a kind of medium to communicate among individuals in his article on Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*.

This play reflects troubled times in which the concept of humanity started to decline by losing its value after the collapse of the nuclear family, lack of parental guidance/discipline, debates on gender roles, extended individualism, consumerism, too much financial burden, excessive freedom of the children, and a general fear about the future. For this reason, the focus of this work will be on the character's sufferings, traumas, fears, anxieties, and shock. This play has also pulled their audiences on stage to make them witness, and to some extent experience, a series of terrifying events which are reflective of the ones emerging in real life. In light of the research that has been covered, it has been revealed that not many works have been conducted that are related with the literary review on this on in terms of the Foucauldian analysis. In this respect, this study aims to attempt a Foucauldian reading of the selected play in terms of power, surveillance, and violence.

### **POWER RELATIONS IN *SHOPPING AND F\*\*\*ING***

The play structurally revolves around five characters: Lulu, Robbie, Mark, Gary, and Brian. None of these characters are related by blood or marriage; they seem to be brought on the same stage “casually”. These five characters are also different from each other in terms of their personalities and attitudes; however, they share a common destiny in a world in which everything is on sale, and they feel a lack of parental protection. In other words, the play is about Mark's relationship with fourteen-year-old Gary who is previously abused by his stepfather and is now selling his body to other men for security. It is also about Lulu and Robbie, whom Mark claims to have bought at a store, and who owes a great deal of money to a gangster, Brian.

Mark Ravenhill claims that these young characters certainly live in a world “without family, without any kind of history, without structures or narratives” (qtd. in Aragay 2007, p.93), and as a result, they are forced to establish their own structures. Through this peculiar characterization and approach, the play aims to describe the obsession of contemporary society with money, sex, and drugs, as well as to shed light on how these obsessions and financial problems have had a negative impact on human relationships. The play also examines the struggle of the characters to claim power and dominate each other, which will be examined in light of the Foucauldian philosophy. In this play, money is shown to be the dominating power and the controlling factor.

Emotions are almost detested in the play, as they are accepted as signs of weakness. Ken Urban elaborates that “[l]ike the genre of paperback fiction that gives the play its title, *Shopping and Fucking* shows a world reduced to shopping and fucking” (2008, p.45). Based upon the action and the dialogues among the characters, it is understood that the characters feel entrapped in the new world, and they find it difficult to adapt and adopt survival skills. Ravenhill deliberately creates such a world to foreshadow the future of his generation, who are addicted primarily to buying and selling. Therefore, he attempts to show how capitalism and the rise of consumerism dehumanize people. In the introduction part of *Plays 1*, Dan Rebellato states that Ravenhill's plays are not merely about fucking, but importantly about shopping too: “These two terms couple promiscuously through *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. In the phone sex lines, a topless audition for a shopping channel, rent boys, the variations on a tale of sexual slavery, the terms combine orgiastically” (2001, p.xi). The play questions if there is anything left in our daily routine which cannot be purchased or marketed.

People have to adapt themselves into the new world system in which they are forced to live due to capitalism “which undermines all particular lifeworlds, cultures, and traditions” (Zizek 2008, p.155). This is such a violent world where individuals are bought and sold. All of Ravenhill's characters are, in a way or other, affected mentally, emotionally, or physically by this new order. Through them, Ravenhill tries to reflect the loss of communication in society. As a matter of fact, Ravenhill's *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* sheds light on the potential risks of the near future. In spite of its superficial attractiveness, there are serious problems society and individuals have to confront, since the last decade of the new millennium witnessed the beginning of a culture of violence and suffering in a tragic context.

Ravenhill follows a specific strategy in naming the characters of this play; he borrows the names from the members of the *Take That* musical band, which emerged in the 1990s. The members of the band are considered to be a role model for lots of young people in England. However, it should be kept in mind that the members of this group are addicted to drugs. Likewise, Ravenhill's characters in the play also are using drugs, which lead them to violence. To illustrate, Mark struggles hard to get rid of his addiction, since he regards it as weakness, while Robbie uses the ecstasy he is supposed to sell. According to Graham Saunders,

Mark Ravenhill makes a point of critiquing this so-called Ecstasy culture in both *Shopping and Fucking* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*. In the former play, after taking Ecstasy, Robbie enters an altered state where he sees the suffering of the world as if from a great height [...] but his conclusion after witnessing all this misery is simply to ‘Fuck the bitching world and let's be... beautiful (2008, p.11).

In this way, Ravenhill shows the evil and violent aspects of human beings under the effect of drugs. To Ravenhill, drugs and substance abuse is one of the main causes of the catastrophic events in society. Therefore, he creates addicted characters to shed light on this grim fact. They are the products of a money-based society in which everything has a special value; that is the reason why Ravenhill starts the play in a flat which is once relatively stylish, but "*now almost entirely stripped bare*" (p.3). He deliberately designs a bare and filthy setting to create disorder. Moreover, the setting frequently changes from one place to another. Additionally, the description of the room means that Mark has sold all his possessions, which indirectly suggests an imminent need for cash that must be used for drugs. In other words, he desperately suffers from financial problems to get what he desires.

After the description of the room, the play starts with Mark vomiting. It is inferred from Lulu's words that this is a frequent event: "Why does that alw ...? / Darling – could you? Let's clean this mess up" (p.3). Besides being a direct attack on the spectator by aiming to violate theatrical order, this beginning points to Mark's unhealthy condition and to the disintegration of their little family solidarity, since Mark, as a father figure, will have to abandon his children for treatment. In other words, Ravenhill deliberately raises the tension of the play when "socially dead Mark" expresses that he will leave Lulu and Robbie (whom he has bought from a man in the supermarket), in order to go to an institution to get rid of his drug addiction. His exit threatens the family unit and forces Lulu and Robbie to support themselves financially. Lulu exclaims, "And you said: I love you both and I want to look after you forever" (p.4). This sentence evidently points to Lulu's disappointment by Mark's departure, and it is concrete evidence of her distorted emotions. It should be kept in mind that Mark has bought Lulu and Robbie from a fat stranger who claims, "I own them. [...] They're trash and I hate them. Wanna buy them?" (p.5). In fact, both characters react harshly to Mark and accuse him of being a heroin addict because of his unexpected departure, although he willingly "buys" them. Lulu also shouts to him in a verbally violent way that there is no need for him to come back, as they can learn to stand on their own feet:

**Lulu:** Look what you've done to him. [...] You've sold everything. You've stolen.

**Mark:** Yes. It's not working. That's why I'm going.

**Lulu:** [...] We won't want you back.

**Mark:** Let's wait and see.

**Lulu:** You don't own us. We exist. We're people. We can get by. Go. Fuck right off (p.7).

This debate also implies that Mark and Robbie have a homosexual relationship, which is against the norms of society. At the same time, the characters' attitude is contradicted with human morality. They sometimes steal their food and sell their furniture to buy heroin; it seems that drug addiction is implied to be the basis of all violence taking place around the world. For example, Gary works as a prostitute and a rent boy to get money. It shows that people are humiliated and victimized for the sake of money. They are abused by other powerful people who do not feel any sympathy for their victims. Individuals' indifferent behaviors and negligence reduce weak people to goods to be bought and sold. They live in a cruel world which has no mercy for the ones in need.

The characters' jobs illustrate how they are exploited as commodities. It is noticed that the characters are exploited through their weaknesses, which are their needs, each for something.

This makes them casualties for all who are thirsty for power, which is Foucault's main interest. Robbie works for a fast-food chain, and, soon thereafter, as a drug dealer. Gary works as a male prostitute. Lulu practices for a TV shooting to eventually be hired as a drug dealer. When Brian (Lulu's boss) asks for her to take off her jacket, she is afraid that he will see the stolen ready-made meals she hides underneath, not of her exposure. Indeed, she has to tell the truth when Brian asks whether she has paid for them or not. She admits, saying, "I'm not a shoplifter. I need a job. Please" (p.12). Immediately after Lulu's hope to get by on her own, the audience, at the beginning of Scene Two, is introduced to Brian. Lulu has a job interview with him, as she is willing to find a job and earn money. During the interview, Lulu is obedient towards Brian, as she urgently needs a job. Brian dictates whatever he wants as a powerful figure. It should be noted that, to Foucault, violence stands for forcing someone to do something. In his interview with Michael Bess, Foucault states:

I exercise power over you: I influence your behavior, or I try to do so. And I try to guide your behavior, to lead your behavior. The simplest means of doing this, obviously, is to take you by the hand and force you to go here or there (1988c, p.2).

In light of the foregoing quotation, the characters are desperately controlled by their need for money. Money, as stated earlier, is the power that subjugates the characters to its will. In parallel to this, Brian even tells her to take off her blouse, and Lulu continues the interview half naked: "Lulu: One day people will know what all this was for. All this suffering" (p.13). Brian, in fact, asks for Lulu to undress not for mere sexual pleasure, but to exert the power he has on her, and her alone. According to Slavoj Žižek, "individuals seek power so as not to be dominated by others" (p.63). From a different standpoint, Lulu's words point out that she and the other characters are concerned with survival under the difficult conditions that they are living in. Brian is a character symbolizing the experts of capitalism, and his relationship with Lulu is exemplary of a master-slave relationship.

After the interview, Lulu learns that Robbie is sacked from his work since he has argued with a customer. Angered by the indecisiveness of the customer, Robbie attacks the man verbally with the following words: "For once in your life you have a choice, so for fuck's sake, make the most of it" (p.14). In return for this harshness, the customer demonstrates physical violence towards Robbie by stabbing him with a plastic fork. However, the audience is not sure whether Robbie is being genuine or not - they are not sure if it is part of the play or if it is improvisation. It seems that the event is included as part of Ravenhill's intent to cause viewers to question the play's reality, as stabbing somebody with a plastic fork is somehow difficult for me to believe. So, this points to the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction in the play.

Robbie begins to work in a burger chain that contributes to the dramatic effects of the eating habits of families all over the world - it is parallel to McDonald's, Burger King, or similar fast-food chains. Based on our interpretation of the play's culture, children start to be away from their homes and parents, as they can easily meet their basic needs outside. Therefore, the family houses turn into a kind of temporary accommodations for the children, and the parents have gradually lost their control on them (Sierz 2012, p.2). In this way, the gap between the children and parents has become wider since they usually do not come together even for their daily meals. As if to strengthen this estrangement in contemporary families, Brian asks Lulu whether she knows her family or not, and she harshly reacts upon this question: "**Lulu:** Of course [...] We spend Christmas together. / **Brian** writes down celebrates Christmas/ **Brian:** So

many today are lost. Isn't that so? / **Lulu:** I think that's right. Yes (p.10). Although Lulu states that she spends Christmases with her family, she never talks about it for the rest of the play. Because of her lack of communication about her family, we believe that the traditional nuclear family structure is violated, since familial solidarity is lost. This lack of communication results in the creation of a more violent, undisciplined generation in the 1990s, and it seems that is what Ravenhill harshly criticizes in the play through the symbol of the plastic fork - this is his way to create awareness. At the beginning of the play, it is implied that Lulu and Robbie are unwanted "possessions" by their indifferent fathers. Instead of their fathers raising them, Mark obtains the role of a fatherly figure that, similarly, seem to symbolize power. Nonetheless, Mark has to leave Robbie and Lulu to attend his treatment. He ends this peculiar relation saying that he is obliged to go. For Robbie and Lulu, everyone needs a protective father. However, they quickly replace the father figure with his money in the end because Mark emotionally harms them, as they experience the same feeling of being abandoned and unwanted once more. Ken Urban focuses on Mark's role as a dysfunctional father-like figure stating:

Mark is a drug addict kicked out of rehab for having sex, and he returns to his flat to find Lulu and Robbie, the young woman and man whom he 'bought' at a store, trying to continue their lives without him. Mark has been a father figure for these twenty-nothings and Robbie hopes Mark has come back to reclaim that place in their lives (2008, p.45).

In addition, Gary, towards whom Mark cannot repress his sexual feelings, has also suffered from his stepfather, and it seems to me that he is trying to make up for having an absent father through his incessant desires to be with men. Gary is a neglected boy who is challenged to survive by prostituting himself. Although he is fourteen, his experiences are more than he can handle, and this is why he is labeled as the darkest character of the play. He is even much more victimized by his father when compared to other characters. Before being introduced to solitude, he is exposed to physical violence. When Mark informs him about the bleeding in his arse, Gary reveals that he is being raped by his stepfather every night in his room through the following dialogue: "**Gary:** [...] Come here, son. I fucking hate that, 'cos I'm not his son. / **Mark:** Sure, sure. I understand. / **Gary:** But I thought... now... I... got... away. / **Mark:** FUCKING SHUT UP, OK? KEEP YOUR FUCKING MOUTH SHUT. / **Gary:** You sound like him" (p.33). In this play, the characters are shown to be cut off from their past, from the source of their moral values, because the past stands for moral integration, opposite to the present, which stands for moral disintegration. For example, Gary cannot help talking about his past, although Mark does not want to listen. He explains the reason why he does not care about what Gary is saying, seemingly claiming that he does not have an identity. Gary feels the lack of a true father because he is emotionally distorted by the violent attitudes of his stepfather. According to Foucault, individuals, instinctively and willingly, require being monitored, controlled, or disciplined. In compliance, Gary expresses this need clearly, and he longs for a real father: "I want a dad. I want to be watched. All the time, someone watching me. Do you understand?" (p.33). His words signify that he is in emotional pain, as he desperately needs the protection of a father, just like other characters in the play.

The lack of a protecting fatherly figure for each of these characters is, to me, the most shocking aspect of the play since it is depicted as the underlying reason for the troubles these characters



have to confront. To me, their conditions prove the undeniable importance of parental guidance, affection, and discipline that Foucault highlights on children. I do not find the scenes of excessive sex and uncensored violence to be as distracting as the sense that the characters are lost, clueless, inclined to emotional collapse, and exposed to exploitation. This means that these characters are all alone in a world surrounded by all kinds of violence and evil.

Gary's helplessness is intensified by the way his complaint is received by the authorities. Hence, the answer Gary gets from the lady in the council he has gone to ask help from is as shocking as his violent experience, even though his father comes to molest him three times in a week. Gary is depicted in the same manner that Cate and Alan are depicted. His weakness as a child makes it easy for his father to exercise his power over him and to harass him sexually. Worse than that is when he relates Mark with these events, Gary also reveals that the woman representing the government offers him a leaflet on the proper use of condoms. Instead of offering Gary the help he desperately needs and is asking for, frustratingly, the government representative focuses on a trivial detail. Gary continues to talk about his disappointment:

**Gary:** Listen. I tell her he's fucking me – without a condom – and she says to me – you know what she says?

**Mark:** No. No, I don't.

**Gary:** I think I've got a leaflet. Would you like to give him a leaflet?

**Mark:** Fuck.

**Gary:** Yeah. Give him a leaflet (p.41).

This section points to the vulnerability of the characters in the play. At the same time, it can imply the government's disgusting attitude since the woman seems to be interested only in the minimization of potential viral infections and not on Gary's individual problem. In other words, it seems that the play's state politics are focusing on maintaining a "healthy" society but remaining indifferent to people's personal needs. The most frightening thing is that the woman symbolizes how institutions and individuals alike seem to accept violence as something normal. In his *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault indicates that "[t]he perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes" (1995, p.183). It means that violence is not regarded as something extraordinary in the societies in which it becomes a dominant force, and that is what England experienced at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason, the unwillingness to take drastic measures provokes Gary, and this again shows the created society's indifference to those it has allowed to be victimized. In other words, even the government gets so accustomed to violent instances taking place that even they are ignoring such cases, so with this, Foucault's idea of "governmentality" collapses.

Furthermore, Gary is also verbally attacked by the woman working at the council since she seems to make fun of him through her indifferent questions. When she asks what she can do about his stepfather raping him, Gary gets more frustrated, and wants even more for the authorities to do something. The anger Gary feels towards his stepfather has now also turned towards the woman who seemingly symbolizes both the society and the authorities which are both unwilling to stop the violence. The message the author wants to convey, thus, becomes evident. Gary is badly affected by his stepfather's physical assault, and it seems to me that this leads to him dreaming about a rich and strong man who can protect him. However, Mark remains indifferent to what Gary has experienced and thus ignores him. While Gary suffers

and struggles to have his voice heard, Mark asks for his money back, claiming that the sexual satisfaction he is after has not been provided. Indeed, through this event, Gary wants to be treated in the way his father has treated him with a twist of possessiveness, and that the violent physical abuse Gary has been exposed to turns into a need for him. Illustratively, when Mark kisses him twice, Gary rejects further kissing, claiming, "I want someone to look after me. And I want him to fuck me. Really fuck me" (p.56).

It should be pointed out that Gary's fantasy is not aimed to compensate the lack of a father figure, rather it targets overcoming the sexual abuse by his stepfather. Instead of paternal love, Gary's fantasy is to get this absent father fuck him with a knife. This act shows Gary's lack of true love, which he has never felt. It seems that he thinks that true love can be provided with sex, but he cannot achieve this. His real father and stepfather have taken Gary as their slave. They enslave him sexually, pretending to provide him with what he is taught that he desperately needs: one supposedly provides him with family protection, his real father, and one provides him with money, his stepfather. Thus, sex is also used as a source of power which "is the moving substrate of force relations, which constantly engender states of power" (Foucault 1978a, p.93).

Later on, Gary evidently explains to Mark the details that add up to the violent aspects of his raping by his own father: "He gets me in the room, blindfolds me. But he doesn't fuck me. Well not him, not his dick. It's the knife" (p.84). Mark's indifference towards this extreme act of violence represents modern people's blindness to the sufferings of others. This is reminiscent of Ian's indifference, in *Blasted*. Similarly, Lulu ignores the physical violence imposed on a student. She walks away rapidly instead of intervening when she witnesses the violent murder of the student girl in a shop behind the counter: "**Lulu:** [...] And I didn't see anything. Like the blade or anything. But I suppose he must have hit her artery. / **Robbie:** Shit. / **Lulu:** And he's stabbing away, and me and the TV guide, we both just walked out of there and carried on walking (p.29). Certainly, Lulu's words demonstrate that she is aware of what is taking place behind the counter; the man hits the artery of the girl with a blade. There is blood everywhere. She questions herself about why she does not help the victim instead of walking away. Therefore, it seems that people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain acted in the same way when they encountered or witnessed similar events. Through Lulu's behavior, Ravenhill precisely criticizes this contemporary attitude. Lulu is more concerned about being labeled as a thief than of the crime she has witnessed, as she is not able to pay the fee of the chocolates when she leaves in a hurry, an action that must be noticed by the multitude of cameras in the shop. "**Robbie:** Look, they'll have a video. There's always, like, a security camera. / **Lulu:** And I've still got it. You see, I took it. *She produces the chocolate bar from her pocket.* I took the bar of chocolate. She's being attacked and I picked this up, and just for a moment I thought: I can take this and there's nobody to stop me. Why did I do that? What am I?" (p.30). Lulu questions her humanity; however, she is not concerned with not being able to help the wounded student, but with having stolen the chocolate. Her realization of what happened and her anxiety about the chocolate after learning the existence of cameras can be a good example of the selfishness of some people who are living in the writer's chosen setting. The idea of being watched is making her feel insecure, which is reminiscent of Foucault's recollection of Bentham's panopticon. In the panopticon, the techniques of surveillance operate on the body and the mind of the individuals, so that the laws and rules of the authority can be successfully employed. A controlling gaze is adequate to inspect each individual. People are controlled by constant

observation. Hence, their slightest movements are monitored and recorded in order to regulate individuals' behaviors in the name of "improvement". Nevertheless, this creates pressure and emotionally affects people. In his *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault summarizes the effects of the Panopticon upon the individuals:

Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication (1995, p.200).

In this regard, the individuals turn out to be the powerless object of the powerful system of Panopticism, which primarily prevents communication among and with the people under extreme inspection. At the same time, the concept of freedom is blurred by the citizens' perceptions. Just like Lulu in the play, the people living in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the CCTVs were exposed to excessive control, also known as physical and emotional violence. In his *Introduction to Mark Ravenhill: Play 1*, Dan Rebellato focuses on the repression that CCTVs cause on people by touching on the idea of power:

[A]s *in-yer-face* plays show, the desire for protection has not disappeared. Gary, in *Shopping and Fucking*, [...] would cry out for someone to watch over him. In these plays though, it becomes clear that we are now only watched over by CCTV, and even this is largely in the hands of big business (whenever there's major crime, it's striking that the best quality video images are always from instore security cameras)" (2001, p.xiii).

This shows that CCTVs, instead of being devices that contribute to human safety, have turned into elements that disturb people, since there is no longer static discourse of the gaze between the individual and the dominant power. These cameras tend to create fear and distrust rather than giving a feeling of security. In other words, people, terrorized by power relations, feel oppressed under the strict doctrines of the authority's better disciplinary system, thinking that they are always gazed upon. Foucault highlights that disciplinary practices are crucial in supervising each movement of the individual: "The practice of placing individuals under 'observation' is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures" (Foucault 1995, p.227). Through Panopticism, people can easily be disciplined. For example, Mark asks Gary to please him orally in the fitting room while shopping, however, Gary refuses him claiming that there are security cameras around: "**Gary:** One day. Take me home. / **Mark:** Suck my cock. / **Gary:** You taking me home? / **Mark:** Suck my cock now. I'll take you home later. / **Gary:** There's a security camera" (p.57). Up to that point, Gary prefers to keep his age a secret; however, he confesses that he is just fourteen when Mark asks him for oral sex in the changing room while shopping. It is implied that the existence of a security camera makes him restless and uncomfortable, especially because of the legal age of consent and legal policies on public nudity/sexual conduct. Therefore, he needs to uncover his real age. People in the 20<sup>th</sup> century world force themselves to repress their feelings, although Mark's approach suggests that sex is no longer an intimate issue limited to the bedroom.

Moreover, Ravenhill's portrayal of violence takes different forms, some are sexual, some are emotional, and some are physical. Sexual violence is shown when Gary's experiences of rape

are analyzed earlier. Physical violence is mostly shown when Robbie at one point appears bruised and bleeding in the face. Lulu attempts to sexually arouse him in order to learn what has happened. She is positive that she can reach her aim in this way, as she knows that he does not answer questions when asked in normal circumstances. He recalls that he has personally used some of the ecstasy pills Brian gives him to sell and has given the rest to some boys for free. Though the effects of the pills wear off, Robbie remembers how he feels when under their effects: "I was looking down on this planet. [...] And I see the suffering. And the wars. And the grab, grab, grab. And I think: Fuck Money" (p.39). Then, Robbie is beaten by the people he has given the pills to once the ecstasy's effects wear off when he asks for the money. Thus, he is exposed not only to verbal violence, but also to the physical violence of the attackers. Power is exercised by all who can detect a source of weakness in the other characters. When Foucault defines violence, he states that it is a physical, unregulated act which "allows one to think that good power, or just simply power, power not permeated by violence, is not a physical power" (2006, p. 14). Thus, violence, to him, is simply defined as physical power. The violence practiced by the people in this play, to me, shows their hunger for domination, even at the expense of hurting or destroying others.

Anyhow, Lulu tries to dress Robbie's bruises and consoles him even through masturbation, though she changes her attitude and addresses him as an "arsehole" for having offered the ecstasy pills for free. Additionally, she indirectly blames him for his homosexual actions. Afterwards, Lulu and Robbie work in the sex industry to pay off Robbie's debt to Brian. Both of them sell sex via phone lines to compensate the financial disorder. It seems that this scene points to the commercialization and virtualization of sex, emphasizing that human beings are potential compliant objects of the trade as much as they are its target -niche - market. In other words, sex, commerce, and violence are united in this scene, as Lulu and Robbie are exposed to verbal violence from their customers.

Interestingly, Lulu and Robbie cannot keep up with the constantly ringing phones and distorted fantasies of the callers. Therefore, Lulu, rightfully, questions the reason why the numbers of such emotionally disturbed and sad callers are so high. The huge number of adulteries seems to also signal the degeneration of society, like the fact that the callers are in the pursuit of virtual violent fantasies. In addition, violence is manifested not only in the stories made up by Robbie while selling sex on the phone, but also in the daily lives of the individuals through their experiences with encountering brutal force. As a matter of a fact, Lulu and Robbie benefit from fictional violent stories in their job. To invent more attractive violent fantasies for their customers on the phone, they make use of various literary sources. In one of his speeches, Robbie notes the necessity of grand narratives: "I think we all need stories, we make up stories so that we can get by" (p.66). This speech suggests that their world alienates them from society as a united entity.

The main characters try to understand the world without religion or ideology. To me, this seems to be a world of extreme individualism, freedom, and selfishness, which is shown through the individuals and still interconnected stories of each character. The stories of the characters are clear-cut examples of violence taking place since each has "the most intense point of a life, the point where its energy is concentrated. This is where it comes against power, struggles with it, attempts to use its forces and to evade its traps" (p.162) as Foucault says. Some of the stories are recorded and replayed on video cassettes. Brian watches a video of a

schoolboy playing the cello with Lulu and Robbie, and he exclaims, "But we sinned, and God took it away" (p.46). It is interesting that Brian is suffering from memories and trauma despite the fact that he is reflected as a powerful character in terms of economic freedom. According to Andreas Huyssens, all victims of traumatic experiences encounter hardships when being exposed to new beginnings, "[b]ut the tension between traumatic symptoms and a new beginning will necessarily remain unresolved" (2003, p.151). It means that people who cannot succeed in dealing with their trauma tend to suffer from re-experiencing indications of their past, no matter how strong they are in their current lives, as in the case of Brian.

Evidently enough, Gary's social death is controlled by his fantasies. He offers to pay the money that Mark, Lulu, and Robbie owe Brian on the condition that they penetrate him with a knife - his ambition being to act out his stepfather's violent sexual abuse. Gary's obsession with death or violence shows a kind of cure to his desperate spirit, which is devastated by people's hunger for violence and power for Foucault. When Lulu, Robbie, Gary, and Mark come together at home, they play a "game" in which Gary is to be blindfolded. In spite of the fact that Mark does not want to be part of this game, Gary insists. In this violent game, Gary's trousers are pulled down by Robbie and rough sex is ignited. Initially, Robbie *"penetrates Gary. He starts to fuck him [...]* **Mark** goes through the same routine – spitting and penetrating **Gary**. He fucks him viciously" (p.83). Mark hits Gary after a while, as he wants Mark to behave like his stepfather and imagines that he is him. Although Gary knows the prospective dangers, he wants Robbie to go on fucking him with a knife, so that the physical/ sexual violence will lead to his death: **"Lulu:** You'll bleed. / **Gary:** Yeah. / **Lulu:** You could die. / **Gary:** No. I'll be OK. Promise. / **Robbie:** It'll kill you. / **Gary:** It's what I want" (p.84). Robbie rejects to continue to satisfy Gary's fantasy once they start to become threateningly violent. His refusal to indulge him is met with anger by Gary, however, Mark eventually agrees to fulfill Gary's wish. This immediate eagerness of Mark can only be expressed by Robbie and Lulu's need for money. He asks Robbie and Lulu to leave them so he can be alone together with Gary. It seems that Mark has an obsession with power which is best seen when he finds someone in a weak position, like Gary. When they go away, Gary desires for Mark to finish the sexually violent game by a knife or a screwdriver as his father does, although Lulu warns him about the risk of death. Nonetheless, Gary regards death as the only way out of his pain, since he feels that his body and soul have suffered beyond redemption, and his emotional wounds beyond repair. Foucault believes that power exists in the simplest human relations, and this is shown when the one who wants to practice power detects a sense of fear or weakness in the potential victims.

It is implied that Mark accepts the offer and kills Gary, who is already bleeding at the end of the previous scene. He is exposed to death through anal penetration with a knife. In other words, Gary's absence in the final scene points to his death, although it is not clearly demonstrated. Without a doubt, Gary is emotionally deprived, and his weakness turns into aggression. His violent expulsion affects all the others in the play, and it shows the dark side of Ravenhill's world in which only the fittest survive. In other words, Gary functions as the theatrical sacrifice for the others in this play since the money he pays for Lulu's and Robbie's debt will give them independence. The end of this scene is open-ended, and it is, thus, open to various interpretations since there is no clear-cut resolution, which makes the play open-ended.

The play ends where it begins - Lulu, Robbie, and Mark come together in the same house. To me, this implies that nothing truly changes in their world, no matter how hard it is attempted. However, Ravenhill finishes the play in an optimistic atmosphere by turning Lulu into a motherly figure who feeds the others around her, which is reminiscent of Cate in *Blasted*. Lulu not only provides food for them, but she also holds this weird family together. Most of Ravenhill's plays "shoed groups of ill-assorted people" (2000, p.181) who are frequently held together again by their own solutions to their available problems. *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* is one of these plays in which troublesome characters come together, and their symbolic family unity after all cruel events seem to stand for human collaboration, which results in a better future for the whole world.

Lulu is the provider of both food and jobs to keep the family united. Although Robbie asks for love, he is refused by Mark, who just desires de-personalized sex, disguised as a commercial enterprise. Robbie chooses another way to lead his life, that is, under the influence of ecstasy. Gary prefers death to living, while Brian, as a father-like figure, acts like an advisor for the others. Among these characters, the only one who interrogates their own existence is Lulu, and she expresses her wish to break her ties and gets her independence in her dialogue with Robbie: "**Robbie:** You want to die? / **Lulu:** No. I want to be free" (p.58). In other words, there is just one powerful character, who is unhappy with and willing to rebel against their condition. Ravenhill labels his characters as kids without parental guidance and protection, as they do not have any family ties.

In this play, it seems that money is depicted as the root of all evils in the world, since it also represents the power in all affairs. It is evident that Brian worships money as a tool for succeeding the most important victories in his life; however, a strict figure like Brian also gives money to Robbie and Lulu, who owe him, since they have adopted his philosophy about money and civilization at the end of the play. His change in attitude gives hope for the new, changing system. Before handing in the money, Brian gives a main idea of the whole script:

**Brian:** Civilisation is money. Money is civilisation. And civilisation – how did we get here? By war, by struggle, kill or be killed. And money – it's the same thing, you understand? The getting is cruel, is hard, but the having is civilisation. Then we are civilised. Say it. Say it with me. Money is [...]

**Lulu and Robbie:** Civilisation" (p.87).

In this way, Brian who is driven by money acts as a powerful character for Lulu and Robbie since he teaches them to survive in contemporary society. Brian emphasizes the greediness of people for the sake of money when he suggests that they struggle and even kill themselves for it. For him, money is the key element of civilization, and thus, the war for it leads to perfection. His fatherly guidance is associated with Foucault's concept of power which dominates their everyday life; as he states in "The Subject and Power": "It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects" (2001c, p.331). The powerless is shaped by these forces to gain new identities. In other words, powerful people, like Brian, attempt to change the personalities of weak people.

In the same way, Mark's last monologue also supports Brian's view of life, and they make the audience think about the current situation of human beings who fight with each other to earn more and more money. In other words, Mark, like the other characters, is affected by the

ideology of the powerful Brian, and he begins to consider money both as civilization and as the root of all evils: “**Mark:** The Earth has died. Died or we killed it. The ozone, the bombs, a meteorite. It doesn't matter. But humanity has survived” (p.89). The quotation illustrates that Mark is pessimistic about the future of humanity, thinking that the consumerist society will never change in the right direction at all, and that it will continue to show its violent face in all cases. However, Ravenhill displays his hope by offering that compassion, love, and the search for new values are probable and can be promising for the future.

## CONCLUSION

Mark Ravenhill, in his *Shopping and Fucking*, reflects on England as a new, expanded consumerist country in which everything, including sex and love, is commercialized. The play also deals with violence and power. It shows that all the characters who demand to hold a certain power have to find a platform to practice their power on someone or something. This platform is especially shown on weak characters, whose weaknesses make it easy for the other characters to ascertain their power. Therefore, the victimized characters are overpowered by the usurpers. To exemplify, Gary is regarded as a foil character, whose weakness is seen as a direct threat to the strong character, Mark.

The play is associated with the concepts of violence and the characters' reaction to the horrible events they witness. The audience feels physically, emotionally, and verbally disturbed, and these attacks lead some of them to leave the performance. Additionally, the characters suffer from Mark's abuse, physically and/or emotionally. Mark, as a father figure, cannot protect and give comfort to Lulu and Robbie in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing*. They are Mark's possessions since he buys them. In the same way, although her son is raped by her husband in Ravenhill's play, Gary's mother does not react at all. The play strongly implies that a lack of parental guidance leads children to suffer from the unfortunate, grim facts of their lives. In this respect, Foucault is of the idea that parental discipline is a must for children, since it corrects their misleadings and “it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact grouping of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions” (Foucault 1995, p.219). The lack of discipline is visible in each character's life in this play.

*Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* focuses on the system of power that immensely affects the daily lives of the individuals, without taking the physical or emotional health of the characters into consideration. All the characters have to support each other and help them to stand on their own feet in the violent worlds in which they are confined in, as they are always under the control of power. Foucault explains the Panopticon as an arrangement whose internal mechanisms create the relations in which people are captured. This panoptic system shows how individuals within it are trapped and captured in society, and the role of the watchman makes them feel obliged to be careful with their behaviors. The play shows the violent sufferings and traumas of victims who are ruled or governed by powerful figures in society by leaving permanent traces on individuals, as violence lives in the minds of people either as a threat or reminder of prospective dangers after being experienced.

The free characters Ravenhill has created in *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* are tested with money and their durability in life, since they are oppressed under excessive financial burden. He deliberately emphasizes the monetary issues to attract the attention of Cruel Britannia's blindness to those suffering people and to criticize the politics and societies of the 1990s.

Through the end of the play, Brian evidently claims that the root of violence in the world stems from the lack of parental guidance which, in his perspective, everybody needs at all ages. These characters in the play try to stand on their own feet in their violent world, even though they cannot succeed properly due to lack of parental guidance and discipline which arrests or regulates movements. They have to adapt themselves to the constantly changing new conditions; for this reason, the methods they employ are vehemently violent. In this perspective, the play brings a confirmatory approach to Thatcher's dictum that "there is no such thing as society". Through its challenging title, the play draws a chaotic and dark picture of the contemporary British world. As a matter of fact, *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* portrays a society which is increasingly growing violent, detached, and treacherous.

It has been discussed in this article that every relationship depends on power. From basic relationships within an immediate family to one between two distinct countries, everything relies on power struggles to disempower or overpower each other. In this respect, *Shopping and F\*\*\*ing* depicts a world of miserable souls who are devastated by the society, its government, and lack of true incentives of living decently. They fall victim to those who are empowered by money and sexual thirst. Ravenhill demonstrates different kinds of violence in this play: physical, emotional, and verbal. It is Gray who is succumbed to the greatest share of the violence practiced. The intensification of his misery and the violence practiced against him are used to show the extent to which an individual in the modern world can fall victim to these disgracing and demolishing factors.

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