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## MARK RAVENHILL'S ENCOUNTER WITH DELEUZE AND GUATTARI: THE ULTIMATE BODY IN *SHOPPING AND FUCKING*

### Abstract

This study departs from the widespread interpretations of Mark Ravenhill's play *Shopping and Fucking* in terms of the commodification of the self in the consumerist world and proposes instead to explore the self through an engagement with Deleuze's and Guattari's ontology. Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts "body without organs" and "desiring machines" are employed in order to reveal Ravenhill's concern with the body and its relation to identity in a world where everything is commodified. This study seeks to address the question of shifting of boundaries of ethics, which arises with radical postmodern sensibilities. It tries to reveal the ways in which Ravenhill redefines the established codes, proposing instead an 'individual' self, which emerges as a radical and intensive body from an assemblage of forces, flows and different intensities, capable of creating new configurations and codes of ethics, which are adjusted through continuous flux of transformation and becoming.

Keywords: body without organs, desiring machines, cruelty, self, *Shopping and Fucking*

### Deleuze and Guattari's View of the Body

A primary area of debate in the late twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries is constituted by the representation of the body, which receives now a broader scale of interpretation that goes beyond gender studies, comprising also cultural, social, anthropological perspectives. The contemporary theatre places body and desire at the centre of its discourse, stressing out their codes within commodity relations. New associations between body and desire, along with violence towards the body as source of pain and pleasure emerge thematically, and they become interrelated with the ideas of dominance and submission in a community. Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts of "body without organs" and "desiring machines" can be employed in the discussion of the tendencies in the contemporary theatre, in general, and in Mark Ravenhill's play *Shopping and Fucking*, in particular, with regard to the body and its relation to identity in a world where everything is commodified.

Throughout their important works *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari abandon altogether the concern with the body as "essence", stressing instead that

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our earlier considerations of essences are no more than “machinic” aggregations. Deleuze and Guattari promote a kind of machinic production which is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said the id. Everywhere it is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections (1983: 1).

The idea of machine neither emerges from, nor advances towards an organic whole or an essence. Deleuzian machine is meant to dethrone the notion of ‘structure’, which is viewed as something fixed or static, proposing instead activity, which is inserted within the very notion of a “machine”. Moreover, instead of focusing on the predictability of the movements of a machine, Deleuze and Guattari promote the aspect of their productivity. François Dosse, in his study *Deleuze and Structuralism*, explains that “against structure, which is defined by its ability to exchange its particular elements, the machine would stress repetition, but in the sense in which Deleuze understands it – that is, repetition as difference” (2012: 127). Deleuze and Guattari are interested in those forms of repetition that introduce difference into the repeated act, rather than in repetitions that only produce a series of identical movements. Instead of dead repetition of the same, Deleuze’s and Guattari’s machines provide an opportunity of viewing everything in terms of differential interaction of forces and processes of individuation, which control, connect and organize all entities, whether animal, mineral or machine. If machines were put into different contexts, or combined with other machines, there is no way to predict and exhaust all possible capacities of interactions and their outcomes. The impossibility to predict with certainty the reaction of a machine prior to putting it within a set of relations is considered at the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus*, when the following question arises: “Can we possibly guess, for instance, what a knife rest is used for if all we are given is a geometrical description of it?” (1983: 3). Although the knife-rest is created with a certain purpose in mind, there is no limit for putting it to various uses, in totally unexpected contexts, in order to serve different functions. Drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the impossibility of exhausting all possible functions of a machine, as they claim:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body. (1987: 257)

Deleuze and Guattari place themselves against the Cartesian mechanism, which stresses only the formal and substantial aspects of a machine, the properties it displays and the anticipated movements that it brings about. Instead, the “machinism” of Deleuze and Guattari puts forward the “virtual” side of the machines, respectively their capacity to do other things than those which they were initially designed for, therefore opening the possibility of producing something new and unexpected.

In Deleuzian terms, the machine encompasses both culture and nature, both of them being parts of the same continuity. Derrida, Butler and Lacan, for instance, concentrate mostly on nature, materiality and the ‘real’ body, dealing with the effect of language and the symbolic, and resisting any interaction with natural sciences, such as biology, anatomy, physiology, etc. Whereas the cultural-linguistic constructivism has a tremendous importance, especially with its interrogation of “grand narratives” and the display of the constructedness of ‘presences’ and ‘essences’, it remains limited, since it ignores the field of materiality and the body, and especially the sciences that deal with these issues in the most remarkable ways. Deleuze clearly sets himself against the cultural-linguistic constructivism’s and Derrida’s premise of deconstructing the metaphysics of presence, suggesting instead an ontology of difference. He abandons the dominant awareness of futility of the act of fixing Being in a transcendent or unitary entity or structure, such as God or the signifier, providing an alternative in a differential metaphysics, concentrating on becoming and multiplicities.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze advances the idea of “becoming”, which is more accurate than the Platonic concept of “being”. The notion of “becoming” gains crucial importance, especially in the shift in subjectivity, which is central to Deleuzian discourse. Primarily, he re-evaluates the “subject” and the sense of identity that gives shape to this subject. Relying on Spinoza

and Nietzsche, Deleuze questions the negations and/or structures that erase true differences and tries to present instead a mode of thought that does not subdue difference to identity (1994: 281-2). The alternative suggested by Deleuze is delivered by the theory of forces that sets the difference through varying degrees of intensity. These variations in intensity carry out more differentiations, as a result of which the entities are produced and recognized by us as distinct objects or, ultimately, as individuals. Difference, therefore, is prior to and produces individuals. Deleuze stresses two important outcomes of this process: first, the individual emerges as a result of a succession of differentiations rather than of an essence; second, as a possible result of a continuous process, the individual experiences a relatively stable condition that is concomitantly driven by previous states and perpetually open to change. Especially this aspect of Deleuzian philosophy — namely of having no absolute or fix boundaries between one ‘issue’ and the ‘next’— would be mostly explored and interpreted during the collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari; the existence of any boundaries being acknowledged in parallel to the awareness of their permeability, as well as their openness to transformation or becoming other.

Becoming, therefore, designates a perpetually ongoing process of differentiation and, at the same time, defines our relation to our own subjectivity. Deleuzian subjectivity should be understood as a process, a doing, which is simultaneously creative and critical. Moreover, the image of identity, as suggested by Deleuze, opposes the unified Platonic subject, presenting instead a decentered identity, which emerges as a result of extremely complex interactions between pre-personal forces. The outcome of this process reveals that identity is not an essence, but rather a fusion of some heterogeneous elements, that might include some biological and evolutionary operations, social and cultural processes, and arbitrariness of history. The individuals or the identities which emerge as a result of these various interactions are determined to a certain extent, but, at the same time, they are open to variation or becoming, therefore always being different from what they once represented.

With this in mind, we should return to another concept, which is central to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s work, namely body without organs (frequently abbreviated as BwO), a confusing term which should be presented in relation to identity. The logic of identity is prompted by Deleuze and Guattari throughout all their work, by following some systematically established series of oppositions, such as between self and other, human and machine, inside and outside, human and animal, among many others, constantly questioning the “fact” of a fused, self-contained subject. Since the conventional boundary of the subject is determined by the boundary of the flesh, it leads to the idea that the body is “given” and palpable. However, Deleuze and Guattari reveal that the body is created via some “codings”, which emerge from the impact produced by regulations, control, and conjunctions of diverse “flows”, including among others the biological, the technological, and even the cultural. They raise the awareness of the socially coded and socially constructed conventional logic of identity. Deleuze and Guattari put forward the idea that the body is more than some biological parts with some fleshy boundaries, paradoxically distancing the body from the “material” realm of biology by asserting exactly its materiality. This apparent contradiction is explained by Rosi Braidotti in the following manner:

The embodiedness of the subject is for Deleuze a form of bodily materiality, not of the natural, biological kind. He rather takes the body as the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces. The body is not an essence, let alone a biological substance; it is a play of forces, a surface of intensities; pure simulacra without originals. (1994: 112)

Therefore, Deleuzian “material” surpasses the biological field; it is rather used to designate the forces that merge in order to constitute “the body”. Deleuze’s and Guattari’s machines do not abandon the materiality; on the contrary, the “becoming” implies the acceptance of both materiality and the material flux.

The materiality is strikingly obvious when the concept “body without organs” is considered. This term does not represent “a body deprived of organs”, but rather “an assemblage of organs freed from the supposedly ‘natural’ or ‘instinctual’ organization that makes it an organism” (Holland, 2013: 94). Dwelling on Antonin Artaud’s concept of body without organs, Deleuze and Guattari explain that “BwO is not opposed to the organs; rather, the BwO and its “true organs”, which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs” (1987: 158). As

they assert, the “enemy is the organism”, not the organs, and the hostility towards the organism emerges from the particular configuration and arrangement of the organs which deprive an organic body of all the possibilities it could attain as a result of regulation processes. Body without organs stands in complete antagonism with the organism, as it thwarts the full set of capacities, which potentially were possessed by a body prior to being shaped into an organism. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari question the constraints and the limits imposed by an organism:

Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and larynx, head and legs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly? (1987: 150-1).

Deleuze and Guattari imply that the bodies and the organs should be used not in the manner the organism expects them to, but in ways different from what they were initially designed. The emerging implication is to treat them as machines, capable of growth and dynamic openness, efficiently making new connections, always exerting a capacity for creating possibilities. In other words, they call for potentiality and experimentation that dismantle any form of totalization, hierarchization or unification, and invite instead the creation of something new.

Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the oscillation between two opposing poles of social investment, “the paranoid, reactionary, and fascisizing pole, and the schizoid revolutionary pole” (1983: 366). Although the terms paranoid and schizoid come from psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari depart from initial significance of these words, as a mental disorder, and use them to designate instead different types of logic and dynamics of the social organization. To them, paranoia refers to an Oedipal and transcendental mode of being, which is rigidly structured segmented and controlled by an external authority, whereas schizophrenia designates a possibility of thought which acknowledges difference and reveals liberating potentialities, a fluid mode of being that deliberately encourages openness, dynamics, self-organization and represents a constant becoming. The schizophrenic is, therefore, a nomadic subject which is opposed to any synthesis that would transform it into a whole or an organism and asserts itself through the repulsion and disjunction, perpetually creating a difference.

### The Representation of Body in Mark Ravenhill’s play *Shopping and Fucking*

*Shopping and Fucking* is one of Ravenhill’s most known and discussed plays, in which he challenges the limits of the embodied and organic structure of a subject. In a world where everything is commodified, Ravenhill questions the value of a subject, exceeding the worth of a body, which is attributed to the individual in the consumerist world, and emphasises instead the ethical accountability and the sense of responsibility of this subject. Ravenhill’s attempt is a daring one, since in the era of advanced postmodernity the notion of the “subject” is not only de-stabilized by the commodification and fetishisation of human relations, but also by the contradictory redefinition of what is considered a subject. The playwright draws the audience’s attention to the construction and manipulation of the docile and knowable bodies in the present social system, and at the same time, he invites the audience to think of the new kinds of bodies which are constituted and the ways they function within the social mechanism.

While Foucault’s perspective on “bio-power” is much noticed in Mark Ravenhill’s play, the playwright also tries to stress out that in the contemporary community the power does not function any more by normalized heterogeneity, but rather by communication redesigns, various networking and multiple interconnections. Looking through the Deleuzian perspective, Ravenhill’s characters live in a world which represents what Deleuze and Guattari call “organism”, signifying a type of body which is structured in a certain way, “centralized”, “hierarchized”, and “self-directed”. When considering Deleuze’s and Guattari’s model of the machine, the organism could be viewed as a high-order construction, where social relations are deflected into commodity relations, which hold the organs together, conferring them a unified and regularized form of existence. Even the dramatic structure of *Shopping and Fucking* seems to suggest the Deleuzian organism, since the play’s fourteen separate scenes, much in the Brechtian style, resemble some disconnected snapshots which might correspond to

the disjointed and scattered collection of organs/machines, which hold together only as a result of the regulating system of the organism.

The characters' identities "are delineated primarily by their roles in a system of commodities and commodification" (Wallace, 2005: 270). Mark, Lulu, Robbie, Brian and Gary inhabit a world in which the organization of the organs/machines rests on perpetual transaction, and the increasingly disconnected form of human behaviour becomes unified only as a result of a "shopping story". The transgression of familial or lovers bonds is reflected in the play in the episode when Mark "buys" his companions:

It's summer. I'm in a supermarket. [...] And I'm watching this couple shopping. I'm watching you. And you are both smiling. You see me and you know sort of straight away that I'm going to have you. You know you don't have a choice. No control. Now this guy comes up to me. He's a fat man. Fat and hair and lycra and he says: See the pair by the yoghurt?  
Well, says fat guy, they're both mine. I own them. I own them but I don't want them – because you know something? – they are trash. Trash and I hate them. Wanna buy them? [...] So I do the deal. I hand it over. And I fetch you. I don't have to say anything because you know. You have seen the transaction. And I take you both away and I take you to my house. [...] And we live out our days fat and content and happy. (Ravenhill, 2001: 5)

The last word of this shopping story – "happy"— suggests a relation to 'happily-ever-after' scenario, implied by the reference to salvation of the ones in distress by Mark. At times, as Caridad Svich mentions, "Ravenhill at heart seems to be making a plea for a world in which love can transcend the violence and hatred of a society that has been run into the ground by the consumerist values of a wayward class" (2003: 82). However, the possible happiness is thwarted by the incapacity of people that are enmeshed in the organism to grasp the true significance implied by the word happiness. In the case of Ravenhill's characters, the prospective siblings and/or lovers are unromantically chosen, picked up as products in a supermarket and objectified, revealing thus a contemporary version of tragic. The tragedy of Lulu and Robbie intensifies, as they are unaware of their subjection by the imposition of bodily organization, which is rendered by the words "You know you don't have a choice. No control" and by their constant entrapment into the mechanism of the repetition of their story told by Mark, which they apparently enjoy. Lulu and Robbie's supplication, "Tell us the shopping story" (Ravenhill, 2001: 4), suggests somehow a desperate invocation of transcendent realm, infinitely awaited, where the plenitude in relation to life's differential presence might perpetually produce only desire.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire is also a machine, an assemblage of disparate parts which function. Desire is "a flow-producing machine" which "constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1983: 5). This aspect becomes relevant in Ravenhill's play when Lulu and Robbie, forced by Brian to make money, engage in telephone sex, switching from one client to another via some mythical stories which generate desire, such as the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, and Phaeton.

The two companions turn into machines, driving other machines, and being driven by other machines. Lulu produces a desire which is never fulfilled, always remaining at the level of simulacra, when she says: "That's what I say. Standing in the Garden and it's All of humanity, the course of history. Look, I'm offering it to you. Because we are the first, we are the only ones. And I want you to take it" (Ravenhill, 2001: 50). Lulu produces desire as a product, which is advertised by the language of consumption. Her body, through various "codings" that emerge from conjunctions of biological, technological and cultural "flows", produces the identity of a fetish and commodified object, which prevents Lulu from her accomplishment as an individual. Deleuze and Guattari explain such moments as following: "Producing, a product: a producing/product identity. It is this identity that constitutes a third term in the linear series: an enormous undifferentiated object. Everything stops dead for a moment, everything freezes in place-and then the whole process will begin all over again" (1983: 7). Lulu produces the phantasy of an identity, which is based on the principle of autonomy of the presumably self-sovereign individual, capable of producing and delivering a paradise, but since it is a product of desiring production, without seeking different patterns of configurations, she develops an

indifference towards the act of production and toward the product “paradise”, and this keeps her entrapped into the paradisiacal mechanism.

In a similar manner, Robbie refers to the myth of Forbidden Fruit while talking to a customer via telephone, the story being delivered by the young boy in a fractured and disjointed manner: “Here is my hand. Skin. Core. Red. Red skin. And there’s juice. And you see the juice and you want to bite. Bite. Yes. Your tongue. The apple. Good. The forbidden fruit” (Ravenhill, 2001: 51). The pleasure and delight which is suggested by the edenic space and the forbidden fruit is conveyed by Ravenhill in such a material manner that it produces the illusion of palpability of these unreachable concepts. The alienating experience and suffering which emerge as a result of the humans’ loss of paradise are tremendously trivialized by Robbie’s erotic discourse. While stressing Robbie’s incapacity to grasp the dimension of human suffering produced as a result of the brutal rupture from paradise, Ravenhill raises the audience’s awareness to the genuine suffering of humankind, which is created from the imposition of some moralizing codes of conduct by the bodily organism. To Robbie, the apple from the primordial story becomes a mouth-watering fetish and desirable object, devoid of any transcendental meaning, uttered in his fragmented speech, since in the consumerist culture only such a desire is encouraged and valued. Ravenhill exploits Robbie’s apparent ignorance, in order to reveal the knowledge concerning the construction of some codes of conduct which emerge from the encounters between some particular bodies and produce a certain form of oppressive judgement to measure the value and the boundaries of life.

In this respect, the Deleuzian attitude toward the doctrine of judgement may be relevant when he explains that humans no longer compensate for the debt to the gods by adjusting themselves to their prescribed forms and ends, but they rather “have become in our entire being the infinite debtors of a single God” (Deleuze, 1998: 129). Moreover, Ravenhill, who obviously embraces this attitude, uses his theatre to raise the awareness of the fact that not only God, but also philosophers, savants and doctors brutally inflict these values and moralizing codes of conduct upon humans. In his plays he frequently makes use of various postmodern theories and some of their ideological propagators. Sometimes latently, some other times more patently, he brings about some postmodern debates. In *Shopping and Fucking*, Ravenhill makes the allusion to the oppressive codes imposed by the metanarratives through Robbie’s words to the rent boy, Gary:

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

From the domineering judgemental codes of “grand narratives”, Ravenhill suggests a difference, a movement toward an immanent experimentation. The concept Body without Organs, which was borrowed by Deleuze and Guattari from Antonin Artaud, should be considered while examining Mark Ravenhill’s desire to represent a possibility for the human being to escape such a disempowered mode of existence. The liberation is possible only by escaping the configurations of one’s body, by becoming body without organs.

Following Spinoza and Nietzsche, Artaud advances the idea that the human mode of construction or existence determines their thoughts and actions. Therefore, the feeble anatomy of Man, the organism, which also includes the organ of the mind, should be altered to escape the “automatic reactions” assigned by God, by philosophers, and now by doctors. (Artaud in Sontag, 1976: 571). If one wants to affirm life, as Deleuze later suggests, the oppressiveness of judgement should be avoided. Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, claim that “the judgement of God [...] is precisely the operation of He who makes [...] an organization of the organs called the organism, because He cannot bear the BwO [...] The organism is already that, the judgement of God, from which medical doctors benefit and on which the base their power” (1987: 158-9).

This desperate call for liberation could be considered in relation to Mark, the character in Ravenhill’s play who makes an attempt to escape the interiority of the organism, by trying to become a BwO. His dependence on the reproductive system of the body is made obvious in the play by his initial addiction to drugs and the power of money. Mark acknowledges the contemporary absence of

values, as well as the lack of any moral framework in his life, since his and his companions' ultimate thrill in life is produced by drugs, shopping and sex. With this awareness in mind, he starts questioning the degree of his own freedom; moreover, he interrogates the authenticity of his own self. He experiences the imprisoning boundaries of his identity, as he expresses his need to detach from the capturing apparatus of his existence: "Just sit here. Sit and Think. My head's a mess. I'm fucked. [...] Look at me. I can't control anything. My ... guts. My mind." (Ravenhill, 2001: 4).

Like the classical heroes of tragedy, Mark embarks on a quest to know who he truly is, to search the boundaries of his autonomy, his sovereignty, factors that should confer him a sense of freedom. His awareness of this lack triggers his apathy, and he, unable to control his body and mind, experiences a discomfort, which is represented in the play by vomiting out the takeaway food given to him by Lulu, the type of junk food which is mostly advertised and imposed in all shopping centres by the gods of the economic forces. This acknowledged lack, in his "machinic" life, makes Mark develop an indifference towards the "product" and the "act of production", revealing a state of a subject that has withdrawn from itself, that has lost its desire.

However, since "desiring machines" represent molecular assemblages of heterogeneous drives and flows, and tend perpetually to connect to other desiring machines, "every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected, but at the same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1983: 36). In Mark's case, his suffering, produced by the awareness of his meaningless existence in the world of hedonistic transactions, breaks the flow, and thus produces another flow, as he understands his need for deterritorialization, his need for a change, which is materialized, in his case, by the awakening of desire to be cured. As he says, "I want to get myself sorted. I need help. Someone has to sort me out" (Ravenhill, 2001: 6).

Mark's desperate call for a healing leads him to a pitfall into a dangerous pattern, imposed by doctors in the rehab centre. He struggles to make sense, to sort the things out, when he says: "We've been talking a lot about dependencies. Things you get dependent on. [...] Smak, yes absolutely. But also people. You get dependent on people. Like ... emotional dependencies. Which are just as addictive, OK?" (Ravenhill, 2001: 17). In his confusion, Mark misinterprets the entrapment and oppressiveness imposed by the language of therapy, where the emotional dependencies are understood in terms of addiction, creating as an effect, the sterile world of a loveless hell. The codes of conduct imposed by doctors create an emotional emptiness that has a torturous effect, and they produce a devastating and alienating experience upon the individual.

Since "desiring-machines make us an organism", the BwO is a differentiator inherent in the synthesis, which establishes the desiring-machine, and it develops as "an element of anti-production", expressed as a friction, a juncture for resistance within the desiring-machine, and it triggers the suffering "from being organized this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1983: 8). The BwO pushes away the connected fragments and produces their dislocation. Therefore, Mark, who suffers from being organized in such machinic patterns of behaviour and emotions, repels the fragments of his surrounding system, taking a risk and acting like a performative body, who challenges everyone to explore the unknown facets of one's powers of thinking, judging and acting, potentially disorganizing the subjected identities, inflicted by the organism. His words suggest a disjunction, when he claims: "Today you see my first day of a new life. I've been away to get better, well to acknowledge my needs anyway, and now I'm standing again and I suppose I wanted to experiment with you in terms of an interaction that was sexual but not personal" (Ravenhill, 2001: 25). Although the disjunction is still made in the realm of transaction, it is the first call for an immanent experimentation, and he surprises the rent-boy Gary by his unusual desire: "I suppose what I'd like, what I'd really like is to lick your arse" (Ravenhill, 2001: 25). This relationship between Mark and Gary, which is based on ownership and transaction, in Mark's quest for an authentic experience, triggers the transformation from an emotionally empty liaison, in which the sexual intercourse becomes an object of economic exchange, into a private experience, in which the pleasure emerges from delivering pleasure and caring.

Despite his initial intentions, as Elizabeth Kuti asserts, "Mark falls in love with Gary, and the recognition and confession of this love in scene eleven is a major turning point [...] and a moment of anagnorisis" (2008: 461). The anagnorisis implies a change, a transformation of the hero in tragedy from ignorance to knowledge. In Ravenhill's play, the change in the main protagonist is produced by

Mark's rejection of the organism, and having made himself a body without organs, he becomes a schizophrenic body, a nomadic type, "out of sync" with itself, ready to extend and deterritorialize in order to emerge as an 'I'. Although Gary rejects Mark's unconditional love, by clinging stubbornly to the known world of possession, claiming "I didn't feel anything [...] Nothing [...] I'm not after love. I want to be owned" (Ravenhill, 2001: 56), Mark, by way of intensities through which he passes, attempts to experiment with forms of love, suffering and even cruelty. In his quest, he exhausts all possibilities, representing a schizophrenic process in which the individual passes through a series of incompatible intensive states that repeat one another and, at the same time, bring about the difference. In this encounter with difference, Mark affirms a new code of conduct, which is based on non-sexual genuine love, despite Gary's inability to detach himself from the code of transaction:

Mark: I'm just trying to show you. Because I don't think you've ever actually been loved and if the world has offered us no practical...

Gary: What are you?

Mark: I can take care of you.

Gary: You're nobody. You are not what I want.

Mark: If you can just get out of this trap. (Ravenhill, 2001: 81)

Mark tries to create some new, alternative ways of acting and thinking, introducing difference into the individuals' experience. Contrary to most interpretations of Mark's final rape of Gary (see Kuti and Svich), as a failure of the protagonist to detach himself from the circuit of transactions and abuse, we consider Mark's final act as becoming "schizophrenic" in Deleuzian terms, a person who, in his encounter with the unbearable and overwhelming nature of life, discovers the most radical and intense solutions, by creating new codes of ethics that require extraordinary volition and strength.

Primarily, the function of "vibration" should be considered in the moment Gary's arse is penetrated first by Robbie, then by Mark. Ravenhill makes an emphasis on bodily fluids and processes, like the spit, the sperm, the blood, which become palpable by the playwright's stage directions: "Mark [...] spitting and penetrating Gary. He fucks him viciously" (Ravenhill, 2001: 83). The scandalous and shocking vibration becomes so visible, so audible and so palpable that it reminds of Antonin Artaud's use of the concept in his search for difference:

I wanted a fresh work, one that would make contact with certain / organic points of life, / a work in which one's whole nervous system / illuminated as if by a miner's cap-lamp / with vibrations, / consonances / which invite / man / TO EMERGE / WITH / his body / to follow in the sky this new, unusual, and radiant Epiphany. But the glory of the body is possible / only if / nothing / in the spoken text / happens to shock / happens to damage / this sort of desire for glory. (Artaud in Sontag, 1976: 579)

Artaud's ambition is recognizable in Ravenhill's play, as the playwright's insistence on vibration produced by the penetration seems to attain an effect of the shattering, first of the character's, then of the audiences' nervous system, which should cause a renewed awareness of their bodies. In a world where the individual screams desperately "I didn't feel anything" (Ravenhill, 2001: 56), an epiphany is expected, but this epiphany is produced slowly, then it intensifies, as a result of excessive pornography, drug abuse and cruelty, this undigested exhibitionism causing a visceral response and shattering the individual from the apathy of desensitized existence. Although Gary is warned that his desired penetration by a knife or a screwdriver might be lethal for him, he insists that "It's what I want" (Ravenhill, 2001: 84), and the cathartic experience emerges as a result of purgatory nature of cruelty.

Though to most spectators Gary's submission to cruel abuse by Mark may suggest the character's return to his vicious circle and his transgression, we would argue that Mark's display of cruelty does not emerge from his fall into depravity, but from Gary's desperate appeal to feel something, a kind of last plea to go beyond the simulated experiences of the consumerist world and to finally feel something that is for real. It is Gary who supplicates Mark: "Are you gonna do it? I want you to do it. Come on. You can do it. [...] I've got this unhappiness. This big sadness swelling like it's gonna burst. I'm sick and I'm never going to be well" (Ravenhill, 2001: 85). This is the closure of life that he chooses by himself, not inflicted by anyone; it is a paradoxical manner in which he tries to gain



a sense of autonomy without being ruled by any external forces, at last asserting a kind of control over his own being. The self-mutilation then could be viewed as a kind of self-assertion, the only authentic experience which can be derived from pain. In this respect, Elaine Scarry explains that “physical pain – unlike any other state of consciousness – has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language” (1985: 5).

Therefore, Mark, as a BwO who passes through a schizophrenic process, seeks some radical solutions that would be liberating, thus escaping the limits imposed by the codes of conduct of organism. Mark’s acceptance of Gary’s plea is done with enormous care, as he says “Alright. You are dancing and I take you away” (Ravenhill, 2001: 85), so this cruel moment changes from an atrocious act into an ethical embrace of one’s pain. As a body without organs, Mark reconsiders the judgement imposed by the organism’s codes of conduct and revises the conventional attitude towards cruelty, self-consciously enduring another’s catastrophe, embodied by the end of the one he loves. Frida Beckman and Charlie Blake in their work *Shadows of Cruelty* (2010), refer to “the ambivalence of “cruelty” as signifying a concept of both an imposition of violation and, [...] an opening up of new potentialities and transformations of self and indeed of other, is indicated as signalling the possibility of a new kind of ethics” (10).

Mark re-evaluates the significance of a cruel act, and the fact that there is “a bit of blood” (Ravenhill, 2001: 90) on his mouth suggests the repetition of the act of licking of Gary’s arse, a repetition which implies his care, affection, and compassion that lead to his transformation. Contrary to Elizabeth Kuti’s assertion that there is “absolute failure of Mark’s hero-quest to extricate himself from the world of consumption, dependency, purchase, exchange and commodification in which all the other characters are so deeply enmeshed” (2008: 462-3), we believe that Mark reveals extraordinary volition and strength; he is also capable of compromise and compassion, implied in the act of causing pain to the one he loves, and enduring the unendurable, becoming the great accursed, but at the same time, through his openness and courage for experimentation, he reaches the unknown. The unknown, attained through variations, resulting from extremely complex interactions of biological, social and cultural processes, is disclosed in the difference introduced in the initial “shopping story”, this time

It’s three thousand AD. Or something. It’s the future. The Earth has died. Died or we killed it. The ozone, he bombs, a meteorite. It doesn’t matter. But humanity has survived. A few of us ... jumped ship. And on we go. So it’s three thousand and blahdeblah and I’m standing in the market, some sort of bazar [...] And I’m looking at this mutant. Some of them, the radiation it’s made them so ugly, twisted. But this one. Wow. It’s made him... he’s tanned and blond and there’s pecs and his dick [...] three foot long. (Ravenhill, 2001: 89)

This story, which represents a variation of the first one, reveals Mark’s willingness to shift the boundaries of the affective and kinship relations. Although the “family story” is diversified by the introduction of one new member, a mutant who has been a sex slave for all his life, it suggests the necessity for redefining these relations in the context of a world of perpetual flux, where the traditional natural order no longer has validity. Even in an apocalyptic environment, Mark reveals his capacity to generate a new ethical dimension, claiming: “That’s a risk I’m prepared to take” (Ravenhill, 2001: 90). By negotiating his next move differently and proposing a new system of kinship which embraces a radical other, Mark represents an example of philosophical nomadism, by embracing every body who lives on the edge, in the liminal space of transformation and becoming.

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