

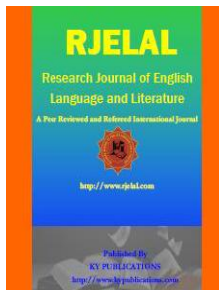


## DELINEATION OF VIOLENCE AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN IN E'R FACE THEATRE: A STUDY OF MARK RAVEN HILL'S SHOPPING AND FUCKING

MOHAMMAD DANISH SIDDIQUI

Research scholar

Department of English, Aligarh muslim university



### ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the subject of violence and Homosexuality that has come to acquire a significant place in the theatre of 1990s. Violence is seen as a part of break cutting edge in the works of Mark Raven hill that has drawn a clear cut imagery which symbolizes the character Psyche. Violence amidst shock-fest imparts a new In e'r face sensibility which acquire new dimension. Sex and consumerism as the part of affect theory in which 'affect' functions as a psychoanalytic paradigm and acquires a cultural metaphor is highlighted. Unlike Kane, Raven hill, too has his way of portraying the level of violence and Psychological trauma that inbuilt his characters. Affect theory apart from Psychoanalytical theory has been focused in terms of Homosexual discourse and sexual intercourse amidst traumatic action which brings into light the absence of love and emotions which are deeply rooted in cultural politics of Emotions are focused upon. Through this paper I would like to highlight Affect theory in terms of cultural politics and plight of homosexuality which brings with it 'negative affects' as a part of sexual transactions in general and derangement of self in particular.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Mark Raven hill is one of the most Significant In e'r face dramatist-cum-journalists after Sarah Kane who has created a new thematic sensibility of outrage and violence. His plays are derivatives of Violence and nudity which comprises a shocking subject for audience. Abusive language perpetrates entire play and is used as a device for action. He uses the words like 'Fuck' and 'cunt' to reflect the outrage and angst of his characters. Two reasons which prompted to start his writing career was the death of his homosexual boyfriend due to AIDS and secondly the murder of James bulgur----- a three year old boy from the shopping centre.

Caridad Svich considers this shock technique as a reference to another major playwright:

"Like Joe Orton, to whose anarchic spirit He is often compared, Raven hill revels in Unnerving his audience and crossing boundaries

Of authority and moral license in order to expose the Licentiousness of his age."(90).

Sex, addiction, violence and the crisis of masculinity are explicitly shown, not only to provoke reaction but also to reveal a deeper meaning to the audience. In e'r face theatre reflects the confrontational sensibility and the political arena which was the cause of socio-political climate of

second half of the twentieth century. In e'r face theatre projects shocking theatrical images and as Sierz enumerates:

"If drama dealt with masculinity, it showed rape, if it got grips with sex, it showed fellatio, when Nudity was involved, so was humiliation; if violence was wanted, torture was staged; when drugs were Issue, addiction was shown. While men behaved badly, so did women. And often the language was gross, the Jokes sick, the image indelible".

The Shocking Provocative theatre cultivates a long history. In e'r face theatre confronts and employs shock tactics to produce an Affect on audience. Cruelty shapes the projection of characters and their psychic state of minds. A character indulges in violence and use abusive language and becomes aggressive. Affect theory which has his root in cultural studies and rhetoric comes to acquire a unique place in Homosexual discourse where affect are 'the qualitative expression of our drives' energy and variations' (Giardini 1999:150) are what enable drives to be satisfied and what ties us to the world. Unlike drives, Affects can be transferred to a range of objects in order to be satisfied in a way that drives are not. Affect is seen as a fulfillment of drives. Degree of violence increases as a result of sexual and psychic pressures that undermines In e'r face theatre as Wandor explains:

"Social and urban fragmentation move Into theatrical space and consequently, Theatre displays 'the atomized relationship Between the individual and a bleak world", Reflects the confrontational sensibility and a shocking bleak, dark world where the audience and characters are lost in the pessimistic environment built up there.

Ken Urban argues that it is not the violence but cruelty which dominates In e'r face theatre. He calls In e'r face theatre as a 'New nihilism. In line with Artaud's philosophy, he defines cruelty as "the violent awakening of consciousness, both unseen and unspoken (302)".

In the play 'Shopping and Fucking', Mark Raven hill has blended the episodic plot of various characters

each of one tells a story and each story reflects the theme of homosexuality where the two homosexuals interchange their ideas and feeling amidst situational dialogues which takes place between them. The play reflects a glimpse of the life of Mark, Robbie and Gary. Mark goes to rehabilitation centre to have drugs and is a character filled with sexual powers and essence of monetarism. He has emotions for Gary---- a teenage prostitute, he cannot repress his feelings and overtakes boy with love and passion. In him the power of 'Affect' has been transferred from monetarism to spatial bodies which exercises a good control over emotions. For Mark emotion has acquired a new meaning, a new onset of bodily pleasures where emotion itself is politically constructed and generates new cultural avenues of repressed feelings. So, Sex is seen as the part of Affect paradigm which functions as a libidinal force but soon acquires a commercial pattern where sex is no longer a private business to be confined to bedroom. On the contrary, it has become banal, everyday routine without meaning. Similarly, when Brian instructs lulu to take off her blouse she does so without hesitation. Whereas Robbie sells three hundred ecstasy pills for Brian but absorbed in a pacifist dream like vision----- he gives them away for free. Homosexuality intertwines Fucking along with sexual transaction has been a derelict. At one place in the drama Mark forces Gary to suck his penis and in turn evokes homosexual desire in Gary who is presently held aloof from his parents and society. After completing the Shopping, Mark asks Gary to satisfy him orally in the fitting room at Harvey Nicholls:

Mark: Suck my cock now. Take you home later.

Gary: There's a security camera.

Mark: Doesn't matter (55).

For Gary----- a teenage prostitute, Sex stands as a metaphor of fulfillment of wishes and dreams that has its association with money which lurked him to homosexual adventure with men who uses him to their satisfaction. For Gary Emotions work in the form of affect in which epistemological experience of bodies are helpful in shaping desires and

emotions. Emotions, as material rhetoric have affective power:

“Some words stick because they become attached through Particular affects. So, for example, someone Will hurl racial insults.....Precisely because they are Affective, although it is not always guaranteed that

The other will be ‘impressed upon’ or hurt in a way that follows from the history of insults. It is the affective nature of hate speech that allow us to understand that whether such speech works or fails to work is not really the important questions .Rather, the important questions is: What effects do such encounters have on the bodies of others who become transformed into objects of hate? (60).

Ahmed’s analysis highlights how language works a form of power in which “Emotions align some bodies with others, as well as stick different figures together, by the way they move us”(195).

Emotions in the ‘Politics of Emotions’ functions as forms of social power that are not recognized as Power. So Mark, as a symbol of power exercises a full control over Gary for sexual gratification and would pay him a handsome amount of money. Invoking Affect thus functions as a homosexual establishment and financial needs force boys to accept homosexual transaction and Violence also shapes the beginning of false negative Affect. As Gary himself gives a ‘fucking’ title to his story he is represented as young-boy who is sexually marred and abused by his father who uses him to his sexual advantage. Crisis of masculinity also forces him to accept homosexuality as a lack of father-figure whose loss of tenderness and fatherly warmth has a negative bearing on the mind of small lad like Gary whose identity has been curbed down and washed away in the dreary sexual ‘give and take’ transaction where love was dissolved and emotional attachment was just a reflection of nothing but a false dream which overtook him in a passion-riddled dark world.

Mark and Gary thus establish a homosexual ‘fin-de-aisle’ where each transaction finds its way out cuddled with love and affection for each other and sexual gratification soon establishes a sound relationship where both the homosexual couples

enjoys and reap a personal pleasure. Violence at the face value of the play can be traced as an essential element as each character display In e’r face sensibility onstage and nudity itself makes character rift apart. Homosexual violence and Psycho – traumatic effect can be seen at large looming upon and the Homosexual trio of Mark, Gary and Robbie does fellatio with each other where Gary is hitten hardly and ‘Shock’ as a part of theatrical device is seen as In e’r face renders a realistic tendency and commoditization guarantees homosexual feelings and act. Gary remains so far a depressing figure who lost all his values and beliefs and his emotions are metaphor of negative affect which does not have any relationship and are indeed the work of activism. Mark emerges as a social power who overpowers Gary, does homosexual intercourse and in the end not only establish a cold relationship but also rapes him to their fullest. Gary’s emotion as a part of Affect theory is seen as a negative affect which brings with it a sense of bereavement and ultimately death. Homosexuality, through Affect theory, culturally creates a materialistic historical rendering where gloomy world and Rape is seen as something which is turned up in close harmony with shopping as a central subject and theme. Queer narratives also form an ‘Affect’ which functions as a shared bodily resonance and to create community through shared experience. Gary’s Rape by two homosexuals consumes love and pushes him towards his death drive. Gary is represented as a young boy pent –up along the line of building up relationship but ultimately dies. Gary’s rape and his death are both an enigma to society in general and humanity in particular.

In finis, it can be justly said that the play ‘Shopping and Fucking’ is an excellent piece of work in postmodern times which on deep analysis, we arrive at a conclusion that men like Mark and Robbie use young boys to their sexual pleasure and Sexual passions acquires a psychological deviance. It is a shocking play and dramatist without any qualm of conscience undervalues homosexual young boys and men and attaches importance to shopping story where Fucking looms largely by catch phrase ‘I am Adam and You are Adam’. It has pronounced a sexist and chauvinistic undertone. Raven hill out of sheer

confrontational fury has portrayed depressing characters, which, in their psychological misfits disappears and vanishes in mire and are doomed to perish forever. Mark, Robbie and Gary gendered the selves and displayed homosexual awareness but finally disappear disastrously and bear a violent outcome in their lives.

**Work Cited**

- Svich, Caridad., "Commerce and morality in the theatre of Mark Ravenhill". *Contemporary theatre Review*.13.1(2003):81-95.ISI. 17 May 2003.
- Sierz, Aleks., "In-Yer-face theatre: British Drama today". London: Faber and Faber 2000.
- Wandor, Michelle née., "Post war British Drama: Looking back in Gender". London: Routledge, 2001.
- Urban, ken., "Towards a theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, cruelty and the Nineties". *New Theatre quarterly*, 20.4(2004):354- 372. CUP. 17 May 2009.
- Giardini, F. , "Public affects: clues towards a political Practice of singularity', *The European Journal of Women's studies*, vol.6 no .2 pp. 149-160.
- Ahmed, S., "The cultural politics of Emotions".Newyork: Routledge pp.224, 2004.
-