

A Critical Analysis of Mark Ravenhill's *The Cane*: Hegemonic Subjects' Revolt against Authority

Mark Ravenhill'in *Sopa* Adlı Oyununun Eleştirel Analizi:
Hegemonik Öznelerin Otoriteye Başkaldırısı

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the hegemonic approach taken toward students in the British education system in the past from the perspectives of both the students and the teachers within the framework of structure and superstructure and to search for the erroneous disciplinary beliefs prevalent then. Mark Ravenhill chooses *The Cane* for the title of his play ironically, a choice which draws attention to the cane as a punishment tool employed by the authority to exercise its hegemony, and to the deficiencies of the previous educational system. Turning into a display of hegemonic power and authority, this punishment act will be analysed through the term hegemony, believed to have been given its final meaning by Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist theorist. To Gramsci, this term is defined as the sovereign demonstrating its supremacy through ideological devices/techniques in institutions such as schools and churches, where large numbers of members present in civil society. *The Cane* (2019) by Mark Ravenhill, a pioneer of In-yer-face movement in British theatre, is the product of a flawed discipline-based hegemonic practice England used in the past when ideologies produced theses and antitheses, based on a chain of events revolving around a chain of mistakes.

Keywords: hegemony, education, *Cane*, punishment, power

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, geçmiş yıllarda İngiltere'nin eğitim sisteminde öğrenciler üzerinde gerçekleştirilen hegemonik yaklaşımı öğrenci-öğretmen açısından yapı-üst yapı bağlamında ele almak ve o dönemin disiplin anlayışındaki yanlışlıkları irdelemektir. Oyununun başlığını ironik şekilde *Sopa (The Cane)* olarak seçen Mark Ravenhill, iktidarın hegemonyasını uygulama aracı olarak kullandığı bir cezalandırma aracı olan sopa üzerinden geçmiş dönem eğitim sistemindeki yanlışlıklara dikkat çeker. Bir hegemonik güç ve otorite gösterisine dönüşen bu cezalandırma eylemi, Marksist düşünür Antonio Gramsci'nin nihai anlamını kazandırdığı hegemonya terimi üzerinden değerlendirilecektir. Bu terim, Gramsci'ye göre, egemen olanın, güç göstergesi olarak kendi üstünlüğünü ideolojik aygıtlar/yaklaşımlar kullanarak, sivil toplumun kitleler halinde bulunduğu okul, kilise gibi kurumlarda uygulamaya koyması olarak tanımlanabilir. İngiliz tiyatrosunda In-yer-face akımının da öncülerinden biri olan oyun yazarı Ravenhill'in *Sopa* (2019) oyunu, ideolojilerin kendi içerisinde tez ve antitezler ürettiği bir zaman aralığında İngiltere'nin geçmiş zaman diliminde uygulamaya konulan disiplin temelli yanlış bir hegemonya pratiğinin sonucunda meydana gelen bir dizi hatanın merkeze alındığı olaylar dizisini temel alır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: hegemonya, eğitim, *Sopa*, ceza, güç

Introduction: The Idea of Hegemony and its Historical Manifestations

As a means of securing unity and togetherness within any community, hegemony has been applied in a variety of ways throughout history. The term hegemony is defined in

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Cambridge Dictionary as “the position of being the strongest and most powerful and therefore able to control others” (Hegemony, 2023). The root of this word derives from the Greek *hēgemonia*, a noun formed from the verb *hēgeisthai*, meaning ‘to lead’ in English. Thus, hegemony can be described as a general expression of the superiority intended to be applied over the civil society formed by people coming together in masses. The term civil society, as such, is accepted to have come, in western society, to the forefront with the ideas of thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau from the mid-17th to the late 18th century. Being one of these figures, Hegel defines civil society as follows:

The creation of civil society is the achievement of the modern world which has for the first time given all determinations of the idea their due. It is, moreover, indeed the case that civil society is a realm of appearance where particularity and egoism lead to measureless excess and ethical life, which is essentially social, that seems to be lost in a riot of self-seeking. (Kumar, 2001, p. 145)

Hegel extends his reflections on civil society with the ethical order he calls *sittlichkeit*, which is structured around “family, civil society and state” (Kervegan, 2018, p. 108). This doctrine is designed as a hierarchical triangle to include the state, which is positioned atop civil society and family, following the state, respectively. The idea is the possible outcome following the non-existence of the state, which would drive both civil society and family into chaos.

Hegel’s moral philosophy is, however, criticized by Karl Marx. This critique is expressed by Fontana, who suggests that “[w]hat Hegel had achieved in thought, Marx asserted, could only be achieved socially and materially through an understanding of social forces in history and through the political and ideological organization made possible by such an understanding” (1993, p. 17). Marx and Engels argue in *The German Ideology* that the state and civil society are inextricably linked, particularly economically and that the former may influence the latter. Marx offers his understanding of the logic of the issue as follows:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has the control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (1998, p. 67)

Another important figure of the above list, Gramsci considers the theories of Marx and Friedrich Engels about sovereignty in the framework of civil and political society. Structure and superstructure are the lenses through which he examines the ideas of political society and civil society. The links the sovereign sets up with the structure to guarantee output are likewise a part of the superstructure. Since capitalism plays such a central role in superstructure interactions, bourgeois notions inevitably permeate the underlying framework. Because of capitalism’s pre-eminence in superstructure interactions, bourgeois notions have seeped into the foundation. Gramsci, who sees this as a cultural problem, therefore attacks the bourgeois culture that seeks to impose itself on the proletariat’s social order. If the people inside the system embrace the values of the bourgeoisie before they have a chance to develop their own, they will be exploited. In this context, Gramsci shows his understanding of the working class and the importance of adult education by highlighting the need for the proletariat to create its own culture:

To the extent that the masses are educated, they will create an independent culture and an independent view of the world in opposition to the existing ones and thus

be able eventually to replace the *alta cultura* of the established intellectuals by a new and different one. (Fontana, 1993, p. 26)

Gramsci considers education the most essential factor in achieving it and argues that it is intellectuals that will provide such an excellent education, so he places a premium on intellectuals who take on the task of transporting information between the structure and the superstructure. Another argument he stresses is related to academics and thinkers. He classifies intellectuals into two camps: the conventional and the organic. As Fontana also emphasizes, the traditional intellectual is related to a certain social construction while organic ones provide help to the advocating the dominant ideology (Fontana, 1993, p. 27).

To explain the constraints imposed by political society and its superstructure on civil society and its structure, Gramsci ultimately adopts Lenin's idea of hegemony. In his definition of hegemony, Lenin means "the leadership of the proletarian forces" which "had to be developed independently" (Howson, 2008, p. 35). Not surprisingly, Gramsci accepts Lenin as "the principal contemporary architect of the modern theory of hegemony" (Howson, 2008, p. 35).

On the other hand, Gramsci considers hegemony to be a kind of repression used by politicians to propagate their beliefs. However, this oppression is not visible to the naked eye and will be accomplished via the pre-eminence of consent. In his view, hegemony is made possible through consent, which enables the system to advance further. Also important is the production and exertion of ideologies on "schools, churches, clubs, journals, and parties – which contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social consciousness", related to the civil society, by the actions of "the government, courts, police, and army" that "exercise direct domination", all of which belong to the means of political society (Bates, 1975, p. 353). As Manokha also stresses, for Gramsci "a hegemony necessarily requires a moral dimension, that is, a set of universalizable moral values that a ruling group or class adheres to in the exercise of its leadership" (Manokha, 2008, p. 23).

Gramsci, Hegemony and Education

Between the years 1905 and 1908, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was acquainted with Marxism, which had a profound impact on his thinking. His education at the University of Turin included studies in a variety of disciplines, including Philosophy and Literature. He aimed to conduct a comprehensive analysis of society based on Marx's ideas and come up with concepts that could lead to the emancipation of the working class. However, he was forced to leave his university education unfinished owing to the political events in his country and the financial and economic hardships during his school life, which compelled him to consider the importance of education-based struggle in the freedom of less privileged classes (Borg et al., 2002, p. 4). Of the conviction that the existence of a more prosperous and wider mass in his country and the world is dependent upon the education of the working class, he turned his thoughts into a political, revolution-oriented direction and gained a certain amount of prestige within the Italian Communist Party. However, he became a frequent target of criticism for his revolutionary ideals once the fascists came to power in 1922. This criticism centred on the rise of fascism. Although he was entitled to immunity, he was arrested in 1926. Gramsci's time in prison was a demanding experience for him; however, he never lost his ability to observe others and tried to assist those incarcerated. He did so because he believed that even within the confines of a prison, adult education was necessary for the proletarian class to maintain its independence; he is also of the conviction that the subordinate classes needed to free themselves from their dependence on bourgeois intellectuals to develop and disseminate their own culture, as Gramsci often preferred to say and to elaborate their conception of the world and life (Borg et al., 2002, pp. 4-5).

Imprisoned for his belief that individuals should be taught to establish their impressions of the world, Gramsci read voraciously during his confinement, thereby examining society, politics, and the individual as an impartial person. Gramsci, being a versatile thinker, was in a position to examine numerous elements that had proved successful in reaching the inner and outer sections of society, basing his analysis on a particular chain of causes and effects. His work, *Prison Notebooks* (1947), which he authored when imprisoned, has numerous political themes on the issues of a cultural problem, the connection between structure and superstructure, worker dilemma, state, and education. These notebooks also include Gramsci's study and interpretation of the term hegemony. As suggested by Wolfreys, "Antonio Gramsci refers to the cultural or intellectual domination of one school of thought, social or cultural or ideology over another" (Wolfreys, 2001, p. 49). Gramsci's interpretation of the sphere of influence occupied by hegemony functions as "the dominant social group maintains its hegemonic control over subordinate or subaltern social groups not only through the non-coercive assertion of its cultural values and beliefs but also through the coercive potential of its political institutions, such as education and the church" (Wolfreys, 2001, pp. 49-50). He places so much emphasis on the issue that one of the most significant spheres in which hegemony is practiced is education. Borg et al. delve into this by summarising Gramsci's views on modern civilization and the role of institutions, saying:

Modern bourgeois civilization, in Gramsci's view, perpetuates itself through the operation of hegemony- i.e., through the activities and initiatives of a vast network of cultural organization, political movements and educational institutes that instill its conception of the world and its values in every capillary of society. (2002, p. 8)

As a result of Gramsci's research and investigations, the idea that the bourgeoisie views education as a control mechanism and uses even the curriculum as a tool to establish its hegemony over the working class more easily comes to the forefront as a factor that accelerates the spread of bourgeois ideology. This idea becomes clearer since the bourgeoisie sees education as a tool to establish its hegemony on the working class, for the institutions that provide education have the quality of being the cornerstone of an arrangement where the structure and superstructure are linked to one another via intellectuals. Borg et al. focus on this relationship regarding the inclusion of education:

Educational relationships constitute the very core of hegemony, that any analysis of hegemony necessarily entails a careful study of educational activities and institutions, and that neither the complexities of hegemony nor the significance of education can be understood as long as one thinks of education exclusively in terms of the "scholastic" relationship. (2002, p. 9)

Gramsci brings up the impact of hegemony not only on students but also on instructors, in the context of a discourse on the link between school and education as well as the student-teacher dynamic. Since teachers are required to carry out the tasks assigned to them, they are thrust into the spotlight as hegemonic subjects of the sovereign system in which they play the role of implementers.

Mark Ravenhill as a Playwright with Questions to Ask

Mark Ravenhill is renowned as a writer who can effectively capture the realities of his day and translate them into his plays. He brings all of the inconsistencies that exist within society to the stage with the aggressive plays he writes. He describes what inspires him to write and how he manages to compose his plays:

To capture the truth of this new world we live in is an exciting ambition. To write about the virtual markets of images and information spinning around us and

threatening to drag us into perpetual postmodern giddiness. To write about the hypocrisy of our calls for universal freedom and democracy as we destroy the world for profit. (2003, p. 45)

Peter Billingham contends that the moral sensibility shown in Ravenhill's plays is what sets them apart from the works of other playwrights: His is "a contemporary political and moral sensibility that is often in active resistance to what he perceives as the listless vacuity of many postmodern narratives" (Billingham, 2007, p. 135). Although Ravenhill is most often associated with the play *Shopping and Fucking*, which deals with sexuality, consumerism, and commodification, the social and political issues of society are also the elements that guide his understanding of art.

Dan Rebellato, on the other hand, places emphasis on the moral component of Ravenhill's plays and how they throw light on society. He also argues that the playwright is adept at highlighting the challenges faced by the current society:

He has a reputation among some critics as a theatrical enfant terrible purveying sexually explicit, sensationalist, shack-loaded dram. And there is stuff in the plays one could point to, but Ravenhill is profoundly moral in his portraiture of contemporary society. His vision is elliptically but recognizably social, even socialist. He addresses not the fragments but the whole, offering us not just some explicit Polaroids, but the bigger picture. (2001, p. x)

Ravenhill creates plays that go beyond the bounds of authority and morality by avoiding the scenes that would push the limitations of the audience, which is the distinguishing trait of plays known as In-Yer-Face (Svich, 2003, p. 89). *The Cane*, on the other hand, is about the impasse in which Edward finds himself because of his use of the 'cane' as a means of discipline in the past, though it was outlawed during the period when the play is set. As can be understood from Ravenhill's phrase "the sum of their actions" for the characters he created, Edward comes to a dead end, which is the sum of the dominant ideology he used to practice (Sierz, 2001, p. 131).

In writing his play *The Cane*, Ravenhill's attention seems to be drawn both to the use of physical punishment in English schools before 1986 and to the impact of this policy on students of younger generations. There is no overt act of onstage violence; rather, we find male students beaten in the past. This information is conveyed via dialogues. It is likely that Ravenhill has purposefully minimized the number of violent elements in the story and provided a restricted image for the audience to evaluate their own lives according to what they see.

***The Cane* through the Lens of Hegemonic Theory**

The cane as a notorious tool for punishment in previous decades, after which Ravenhill's play is named, is a palpable object and a potent metaphor (Billington, 2018). The play's central character is Edward, a deputy head close to retirement after 45 years at work. He, however, finds his home surrounded by his pupils demonstrating against his momentous role in institutionalized corporal punishment. He lives in his home with his wife, Maureen, who deviates between being a devoted ally and a bullied victim. A third character is his daughter, Anna, long rejected by his father. She is away from home but shows up that morning in an attempt to tranquilize the situation.

The students stoning Edward's house are his previous students beaten by him with canes in line with the system. Trying to learn the underlying reason for the now-emerging courage or daring of the former students to use the stones, Anna learns from her mother that the system no longer uses the cane because of a shift in ideology. His former students,

who are now adults, are after an answer to their question of why the cane is no longer used today though they experienced severe punishments with it. They take it as an act of inequality on them. Edward is accused of the violent act during his post as a deputy principal and a father figure. Dealing with competing ideologies and a societal issue generated by these generational inconsistencies, Ravenhill “offers up a metaphor for a distorted society” (Clapp, 2018, p. 76).

In the play, those who throw stones and bricks are hegemonic subjects of today though victims of the old system. That these subjects have chosen to stage their revolt near their former instructor Edward’s home is a direct result of his being the primary architect of the intellectual hegemony that existed under the previous system. This view of the students can be seen from the perspective of Gramsci, who considers the interaction that exists between instructors and students, as well as the ideological importance of this relationship:

Every relationship of hegemony of necessarily an educational relationship and every educational relationship is a political relationship; the relationship is political and hegemonic not simply because the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal and mutually interacting, but also because each emerges from, and gives rise to, the other, because each is informed by the interests and culture of the other. (Fontana, 1993, p. 26)

A teacher is the one who most effectively transmits the prevailing culture. At this point, the dominant class consistently transmits its own culture as the dominant culture, which is directly proportionate to the interests of the culture to be transmitted. Instructors fall under the category of intellectuals that Gramsci identifies as organic and traditional, and it is required that teachers should be able to readily adapt to the shifting concepts of ideology. If that is not the case, the system will deactivate them. Education has a well-deserved reputation for favouring the prevalent ideology of periodic inequalities that are seen as systematic. It never fails to prepare the way for the emergence of a competing ideology to compete with the existing one. Ravenhill, who adopts a dialectical understanding of theatre in which opposing ideologies can be clearly seen and confronted, illustrates the collision of opposing views through Edward and his daughter Anna. As Hartl states, Ravenhill’s is “[n]ot a theatre of relativism and consensus but a genuinely dialectical theatre where opposing ideas, forces, energies can be fully experienced, embodied and examined and the most difficult even insoluble problems can be witnessed and confronted” (Hartl, 2020, p. 73) This is why in the play Edward’s daughter Anna rejects her father’s influence and works in Academy Schools where, in her opinion, student interaction is handled more civilly than violently.

Anna: Academy schools are not the opposition.
 Maureen: Oh they are.
 Anna: I joined the Academy schools movement because it’s the best model to turn around failing schools.
 Maureen: Marketisation.
 Anna: To save young people who have been failed by their schools.

(2019, p. 10)

Anna’s willful preference for the Academy Schools is closely related to Gramsci’s concept of individuals: “historically people gained independence from the laws and social hierarchies imposed upon them by ruling minorities only after they attained a greater level of awareness, a higher consciousness” (Borg, et al, 2002, p. 6). Anna is much aware of her father’s attitude, so she tries to create the future she wants for herself and for future generations instead of the one her family wants for her. This shows that she has reached

the level of awareness and consciousness she needs. At this point, the institution that shapes the individual as the source of the production centre of ideas is her choice of school, which serves as the state's ideological apparatus. It is worth considering the ideas of Louis Althusser in this regard:

I believe that the ideological state apparatus which has been installed in the dominant position in mature capitalist social formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological state apparatus, is the educational ideological apparatus. (2014, p. 249)

Education is one of the simplest methods to captivate minds since it allows ideas and concepts to be transmitted along to future generations. The system establishes an ideology to avoid any unforeseen event in the process of producing obedient bodies, considering the potential that there would be people who violate the system. What stands out as the ideological device in Ravenhill's play is the thing that is traditionally known as 'cane'. Anna discusses Maureen's interpretation of the children's rebellion in-depth as "because of the cane" (Ravenhill, 2019, p. 47). When the cane is seen as an ideological instrument, it indicates that they are attempting to address some of the system's faults through violence:

Anna: Where did he cane boys?
 Maureen: Well at the school of course. Where else would you cane boys?
 Anna: When?
 Maureen: When it was legal to cane boys.
 Anna: That was
 Maureen: Over thirty years ago. The Head-not this Head, a much older-didn't want it as part of his duties so he made it the duty of the deputy to cane boys. You don't remember. You were a child.
 (2019, p. 47)

Changing Ideological Approaches and Shifting the System Perception

Althusser claims that this situation is "the reproduction of the condition of production" (2014, p. 148). The previous system's problematic practices, which Maureen also refers to as "a generally recognized practice", are replaced, as the situation evolves, by new ideological practices (Ravenhill, 2019, p. 15). Hegemony is used to form ideas in the manner they are applied because schools are one of the most evident places in which the sovereign's hegemony is implemented, according to Gramsci. Not only does hegemony promote the expansion of the dominant culture but it also detects people who find it difficult to function within it and provides solutions. In the previous system, the hegemony handed the duty of the administrator to the instructor, which indicates that the sovereign would not accept responsibility for their actions once they discover their mistake. Likewise, in his study on *The War Plays* by Edward Bond, Çelik concludes with Bond's intention of condemning "the schools as he sees them as part of the strategy of the governments in shaping the individuals to their taste and approval" (2010, p. 161). When children are raised in an environment characterized by violence and fear, such behaviours are more likely to be repeated when they become adults as evidenced by Anna's statement: "a man who is teaching you every day was, in fact, a beater of children" (2019, p. 49).

Zizek claims that this kind of violence, which he refers to as systemic violence, is "the often-catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economy and politic system" (2008, p. 2). The system's inefficiencies as a consequence of erroneous ideological decisions contribute to the tendency of caned students to react to violence by using

violence. The moment Edward says “these things happen. Schools are volatile communities. Things blow up and then blow again”, he appears to be referring to the methodical process of his shifting philosophy (2019, p. 53). The system’s inner contradictions are what leads the inspectors to identify Edward as the prime suspect when they visit the school. The new system affirms that Edward is responsible for the erroneous practices that he accepts under the previous system, even though he obtains the position of school administrator by doing the tasks required of him.

Anna: The inspectors’ findings that your school is-?
 Maureen: Stop that now.
 Anna: The inspectors were very damning of your school. The inspectors found poor management, weak discipline, inadequate implementation of pupil voice, terrible results.
 (2019, p. 54)

A majority is harmed by systematic methods in every century, and the ideological ways that the sovereign has the authority to select vary continuously with the effects of the globalizing world. By stating “school inspections are a major political weapon”, Edward knows who is responsible for the tendency to cane the students (2019, p. 55). This is especially crucial since “if popular thought and mass culture are inherently “political” and ideological, then the thought of the intellectuals and the culture of the “educated” are similarly political and ideological” (Fontana, 1993, p. 15). Edward, however, is afraid to speak up against the hegemonic reality he feels as the system has the potential to disable Edward as well in the event of any opposition. Knowing this, Edward claims that he did not cane the kids alone; rather, the families gave their consent when he realized that Anna was well aware of the situation:

Anna: You never canded without parental permission?
 Edward: That’s the way it worked. A phone call to the father or mother to give the go ahead.
 Anna: And if the parents withheld permission?
 Edward: They very rarely did. I can recall I think only two or three instances in which parental permission was refused.
 Anna: Hundreds of parents allowed.
 (2019, p. 66)

The fact that families allow their children to be canded is the most obvious indicator of the manufacturing of consent. The idea of establishing hegemony over the person by verifying one’s consent rather than using force is the key component of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. This consent can sometimes be caused by fear or sometimes by desperation. Making the consent of the people permanent eliminates obstacles to hegemony’s implementation:

Ideological hegemony exists when there is widespread acceptance throughout society of explanations or narratives about why things are the way they are. In other words, dominating ideologies help to create ideological hegemony. Gramsci termed this idea “consent.” However, Gramsci’s use of consent does not imply an active choice but rather an accumulation of belief built up over time as we participate in social institutions like schools and families and perpetuated through day-to-day experiences such as reading the newspaper, watching films, and talking with friends. (Schiff, 2003, p. 23)

With the permission of families in the play, individual violence becomes institutionalized. While all of this is happening, Edward, who wants to carry on writing the report as if

nothing had happened, becomes alarmed when Maureen informs him that his students have gone to the attic for the school show and taken his clothes because, in accordance with the shifting ideologies, Edward is still hiding the cane on the attic that he must destroy. In the event that the kids find the cane and use it, Edward will be in trouble.

Anna: What's in the attic?
 Edward: Work to be done.
 Anna: Is there something in the attic you didn't want?
 Edward: All forgotten now.
 Anna: Something you're worried that the kids could have discovered in the attic?
 Edward: I'm very much a systems man. When I feel my systems have been disrupted then I have a tendency to overreact. Apologies to all concerned.

(2019, p. 78)

After a heated verbal argument, Edward finally admits that the cane—the actual physical evidence of violence—was in the attic. Edward is identified with the system, which is why he is unable to get rid of the cane. Edward feels the need to hide the cane even though the system has changed because his devotion to the existence of the cane—in other words, the hegemonic authority granted to him, makes him feel stronger and holy and leads him to difficult and dangerous paths.

Scene two begins with Edward explaining some of his reasons for hiding the cane, saying that “the cane became part of the almost I suppose part of the furniture” (2019, p. 82). The fact that Edward is used to seeing the cane as an ordinary object indicates that he has placed the power of the sovereign at the centre of his subconscious since “the realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge” (Porgacs, 2000, p. 192). Edward's mind becomes one with the hegemonic power he can wield as well as the cane.

Anna asks Edward if anyone bled when he abused his students with a cane. The spots on the cane, according to Edward, are not blood, simply a little detail that should be overlooked:

Edward: There were marks. Red marks which in a day or so were gone.
 Anna: Ah well if it was only marks.
 Edward: The whole thing was by and large a ritual.
 Anna: Very painful.

(2019, p. 82)

It is clear from the stains, which Edward described as merely red spots, that he truly felt compelled to protect the system because every defect in the system, rather than being a product of the system itself, arises from a fault in the person who implements it. However, it is hardly possible to ignore the obvious fact of violence. Though aware of everything, Edward is unwilling to remove the cane despite Maureen and Anna's demands that it should be destroyed since it is “disrespectful”:

Edward: Yes, actually disrespectful to the generations of teachers and of boys, the cane which had left its mark on so many lives. I stood with it in my hands and bin below- ready to break but I decided no.

(2019, p. 84)

A hegemonic instrument that once gave Edward the power of expertise is now the one that does Edward the greatest damage. The notion of hegemony, in the sense above, “has a

purely instrumental strategic significance” (Femia, 1981, p. 25). Edward tries to explain everything, but he cannot hide the truth which he knows is in his heart. He finally tells them that he could not throw the cane, but he wrapped it in a blanket and put it in the attic. Maureen is shocked that the cane still exists and is in the attic of the house. Anna and Maureen eventually understand each other, and Anna tells Maureen about their children for the first time. Maureen’s brief emotional outburst is due to a decline in her love for her husband, who, during their marriage, put hegemonic pressure on her both at home and school as Maureen was expected to manage and even obey her husband for years. Maureen responded to the hegemonic pressure she faced by confirming all of Edward’s claims. She is, however, disturbed by the cane’s existence in the house. She had never seen the cane, even though she has known about it for some time. The cane that Edward tried to normalize by saying “it’s only a cane” affected Maureen for years:

Maureen: I would sometimes you know I’d be making your breakfast and I’d wonder is he going to be called upon to cane boy today? Or at the supermarket: I wonder if right now there’s a boy with his hand held out and the cane is being beaten into his palm? Or getting into the bed with you at night: perhaps this is a man who has today caned.

(2019, p. 97)

Visible and Invisible Marks of Violence

While the cane left visible effects on Edward’s students, it also left invisible marks on the minds of a generation on a massive scale. Edward also established the hegemonic power given to him at school over Maureen at home. When Maureen tries to assist Edward, he often treats her poorly as a response. The male hegemony Edward seeks to build is linked to his perception of himself as a powerful force over women. However, this sovereign authority’s strength has weakened as a result of its previous actions, placing it in a vulnerable position. The masculine crisis that arises in several of Ravenhill’s plays also appears in this play. Rebellato suggests, for instance, that “the long line of the surrogate and absent fathers in Ravenhill’s work is indicative of the ‘disappearing paternalism’ of the welfare state in the post-Thatcher era” (Ravenhill, 2001, p. xiii). Maureen does not even have the right to ask questions in this relationship, so she is quite surprised when she sees the cane because the cane is smaller than what she envisioned. And Maureen now begins to realize Edward’s mistakes, culminating in questions on her mind too. She asks whether the cane ever broke in half and Anna wonders if Edward has felt any remorse. Anna pours coffee on Edward’s computer to stop him from preparing the papers because she realizes that Edward attempts to justify himself rather than feeling regretful. Edward has a small anger problem after the coffee spills. Anna tells Edward about the system of the academy schools where she works to make him see that Edward’s system is full of mistakes. However, what Anna is not aware of is the fact that academy schools are also under the influence of a different hegemony. This is because “the moment of hegemony,” a dynamic process that is continuously built and analysed via “various class conflicts or “counter” hegemonic activities, develops by creating dialectics (Morton, 2007, p. 78). The hegemonic system practiced in Anna’s school is not founded on violence, but essentially on consent, on which the easier possession of minds is based:

Anna: All of our Academy schools operate an eyes-forward policy. Students must keep their eyes to the front of the class at all times. At all times, staff must be able to see into student’s eyes. The students must seek permission if at any time they want to turn their head or turn their back upon a teacher. Permission is of course never unreasonably withheld. It’s difficult often for students whose school has only recently acquired Academy status. Where

before there has been only chaos the transition to order can be very challenging. But after a few weeks- I've seen it happen time and time again- eyes forward becomes second nature and a great calmness falls upon the child and spreads through the school.

Edward: Acquiescence.

(2019, pp. 104-105)

While Anna is talking about the characteristics of Academy schools, the fact that students are not even allowed to turn their heads without permission is an example of a fear hegemony established in the school, and again the teacher oversees this. This is in line with the hegemonic power's shifting attitude whereby the form by which power is exerted can be altered (Kiely, 2005, p. 4). Anna believes that her father's approach is wrong, but she is unable to realize that her strategy is also questionable since "she has also inherited her father's inflexible belief in systems" (Billington, 2018). She tells her father that she will take over his school as "mass training has standardized individuals both psychologically and in terms of individual qualification and has produced the same phenomena as with other standardized masses: competition" (Forgacs, 2000, p. 308). Anna has created a hegemony opposed to the hegemony imposed by her father, and she is so preoccupied with her father's mistakes that she has no time to deal with her own hegemony.

Anna's first visit to Edward's house, where she tries to help him get things in order, shows that she also meets the intellectual criteria. However, "Gramsci is concerned both with the analysis of those intellectuals who function directly or indirectly on behalf of a dominant social group to organize coercion and consent and with the problem of how to form intellectuals of the subaltern social groups who will be capable of opposing and transforming the existing social order" (Forgacs, 2000, p. 308). Anna is almost against Edward's use of hegemony because of the extent to which he was dominant at school in the past. Hence, she wants to know everything about how Edward felt when he used the cane. However, after the coffee spilled on his computer, Edward realized it was too late for reports and remembered things he should have done on time but did not:

Edward: I suppose I would have spoken softly and calmly to the boy, I would have reassured the boy that there would be pain but the pain would pass and it was there for reasons of justice and learning.

(2019, p. 108)

In a way, Edward's conversation with Anna forces him to accept his errors. Anna says that the system is right every time she asks about Edward's school from the moment she arrives, but Edward is finally able to face his truth. When a counter-hegemony arises, the fact that teachers who act as implementers of the dominant's periodical ideology have no control over the system they implement shows that the dominant is a victim he can blame for his mistakes. While this sense of dominance once made Edward feel powerful thanks to the cane, now it gives him the role of being a victim of the system, just like children:

Edward: Tell them: there's hundreds of men. Tell them: they'll be in their sixties now, seventies, eighties. Tell them: if a man was a head or a deputy head of school, then the chances are that they gave the cane. Tell them: those men are too proud to ask for your forgiveness. Tell them: those men would be insulted-yes insulted and diminished by your forgiveness. Tell them: if you check the records, you'll be able to locate those men. And if the records have been lost or destroyed tell them to ask every man over sixty who has been a head or deputy head: how many boys did you cane? Tell them: on the whole these men aren't liars and they'll tell you honestly-as best as their memory allows-how many boys they've caned.

Tell them: if you feel it's necessary, set up tribunals, the schools hall, and the town hall, television or web cam. And bring those men-force them from their villas in Spain or their retirement homes, force them from the garden centres and the local history groups-and stand them before the tribunals. And let all the fat bald men who were once boys who were caned accuse those men and let the caned decide what the punishment for those old men should be. And do it so before all of us old men lose our memories and escape to our graves.

(2019, pp. 111-112)

This remarkable confession by Edward demonstrates that he is not the only victim of the system, but that there are many others like him. This situation, which at first does not bother Edward, turns into a nightmare for him. Levin points out regarding such a system's underlying nature of shifts and turns: "whereas, in the beginning, this hegemony brought forth glorious visions as well as visions of violence, it has, in modernity, turned increasingly nihilistic" (1993, p. 5). Edward tried to establish the hegemony of the dominant group over the other students at school. This was not his hegemony, but rather the hegemony of the dominant. Edward agreed to execute duties, showing consent. Edward rarely blamed the system for his consent unawares, and frequently blamed himself. His awareness indicates that he has formed invisible bonds with other victims because "developing a conception of social relations that goes beyond a 'theory of the state-as-force'" (Morton, 2007, p. 77). Although Edward is an intellectual, his behaviour is highly predictable and directable by the dominant. As such, "in the modern world the category of intellectuals, understood in this sense, has undergone an unprecedented expansion" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 307). Therefore, there are conventional intellectual and organic intellectual conceptions when Gramsci categorizes intellectuals. Edward is then included in the organic intellectual category "because he is, precisely, an 'organ' of the people that is in intimate and practical contact with the people." (Fontana, 1993, p. 34).

Conclusion

Ravenhill's *The Cane* is a drama on the failure of the hegemonic method imposed by the dominant centre in the context of Gramsci's idea of hegemony, and it focuses on the relationship between a teacher and his students. Education is one of the most publicized contexts in which hegemony is exercised. Teachers' responsibility for propagating the ideology of the ruling class is central to Gramsci's theory of education. Ideological methods, however, may vary in step with changes in context and need. The play's central conflict arises when the cane, an instrument of hegemony in the previous system, is now abolished in the new system owing to a shift in philosophy, prompting a student uprising on behalf of those already oppressed by the old methods. The students' decision to react to aggression with violence played a huge role in their decision to stone the home of their former instructor Edward. In the old system, this systemic violence was justified because it maintained dominance, but in the new system, it is condemned. At this point, it may be concluded that hegemony is the pursuit of the most effective domination system by the strategic placement of the opposing power and that the hegemony relationship itself follows a dialectical process. Anna, Edward's daughter, attends an Academy school that has a hegemonic stance in opposition to her father's. Silent politics at academic institutions are understood to place primary emphasis on student agreement, yet the predominance of fear maintains their smooth operation. The reality of unseen psychological violence is shown by this school's policy of punishing children even for glancing in a different direction without permission.

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