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Amplified Love in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*: A Jar of Nuances

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Abstract

Sarah Kane's play *Cleansed* created headlines in 1995 due to its violent and shocking content. While the theme of love has been acknowledged in the discourse on the play since its original staging, the emphasis has been on its grotesque nature. This thesis aims to bring attention to the theme of love in *Cleansed* and argues that the violence is merely a tool in amplifying the experience of love. By reading the play as dramatic literature rather than a script that is to be staged, the emphasis is moved away from violence, and rather focuses on the expression of love. Through analyzing the couples presented, it is evident that violence becomes a device for demonstrating the extreme lengths the couples will go to in order to protect both their love and their lovers. In the end, this thesis illustrates not only the relation between love and violence in *Cleansed* but also how the play shows the nuances of love in a way that transcends stereotypical expressions of it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Roland Barthes wrote “A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments,” a book that explores love and the expression of it. In this book, a particular quote grapples with “the amorous catastrophe,” referring to love gone wrong. He compares this situation to being in a concentration camp.

The amorous catastrophe may be close to what has been called, in the psychotic domain, an extreme situation, “a situation experienced by the subject as irremediately bound to destroy him”; the image is drawn from what occurred at Dachau. Is it not indecent to compare the situation of a love-sick subject to that of an inmate of Dachau? Can one of the most unimaginable insults of History be compared with a trivial, childish, sophisticated, obscure incident occurring to a comfortable subject who is merely the victim of his own Image-repertoire? Yet these two situations: situations without remainder, without return: I have projected myself into the other with such power that when I am without the other I cannot recover myself, regain myself: I am lost, forever. (Barthes, 48-49)

Inspired in part by Roland Barthes’ comparison of rejected love and the situation of a prisoner in Dachau, playwright Sarah Kane wrote her third play *Cleansed* (1998). The play is often considered the second installation of an incomplete trilogy starting with her debut play *Blasted* (1995) (Greig xiii), and was first staged in April of 1998, less than a year before her suicide in February the following year. Among other things, obituaries named her the most disturbing voice of her generation (Sierz 90). Her plays contain extreme violence and explicit sex scenes that can leave audiences both shocked, disgusted, and uneasy. Controversy has followed her throughout her career, starting with *Blasted*. In her debut play, she tried to demonstrate the connection between rape in a Leeds hotel room and the devastation of civil war, but this was by critics misunderstood as a childish attempt to shock. This controversy followed Kane into her work with *Cleansed*, and the public perception of her work did not evolve beyond this until the following play *Crave*, staged later on in 1998 (Greig x). Looking beyond the shock value, Kane doesn’t hesitate when shedding light on deeper themes. Concerning *Cleansed* and the quote by Roland Barthes, she is quoted saying “when you love obsessively, you lose your sense of self. And if you lose the object of your love, you have no resources to fall back on. It can completely destroy you” (Sierz 116). In this sense, she found truth to Barthes’ reflection.

This thesis will explore the relationship between the grotesque and violent actions and the theme of love in *Cleansed* and argue that the disturbing violence is primarily acting as an amplifier for the concept and experience of love. This is exemplified by how the extreme conditions the characters are forced to endure also demonstrates how extreme the experience of love is. The characters of the play do not give up their love in the face of violence, but rather the love grows stronger.

What makes *Cleansed* a worthy endeavor is the artfully executed complexity of the play. Sarah Kane stated that she wanted to keep it as minimalist as possible, including not wasting any words (Sierz 116). The play is designed to leave the reader with more questions than answers, like postmodern literature often is inclined to do. The English instructor James Fleming defined postmodern literature as a “form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference” (Fleming), and this captures the essence of the experience of reading *Cleansed*. Kane’s minimalist writing coupled with postmodern traits such as the fragmented structure and a tangled plot results in a play that is ambiguous and not immediately revealing its purpose and meanings to the reader.

The blurb on the back of the 2001 edition of *Cleansed* reads “In an institution designed to rid society of its undesirables, a group of inmates tries to save themselves through love.” Over the course of 20 scenes, we follow seven characters practically divided into four couples as they find themselves in grotesque situations. While the stage direction starting off the play describes the action as taking place “just inside the perimeter fence of a university” (Kane 3), everything beyond this moment is read more like a concentration camp. The play blends the extreme situation of a war-like setting, with the experience of love – which arguably can be considered an extreme experience as well, especially love under the conditions found in the play.

Almost any scene in *Cleansed* can be interpreted in several directions, and the play as a whole can be seen through a wide array of frameworks. It can be seen solely through a theater framework, evaluated and analyzed alongside other contemporary work, or be read through a historicist lens, looking at the obvious parallels to concentration camps during the Second World War and the victims of these camps. Delving further into the characterizations, the play deals with situations that can be evaluated to concern homosexuality, transgenderism, drug abuse, incest, and mental health, which creates ground for a feminist or gender-oriented

reading of the play. *Cleansed* can also be read as a social critique related to our apathy towards war outside our own borders, especially when relating it to *Blasted*. Kane stated once that the seeds of war can be found in peacetime civilization, emphasizing that the wall between such life and, for instance the Yugoslavian genocide, is very thin and can get torn down at any time (Kane qtd. in Sierz 101). It is more challenging to be indifferent when experiencing a staging of the play up close and uncensored. The gruesome acts that take place confront us with a reality that in Kane's mind exists or has existed for someone. By confronting the audience with images of war, they are reminded that war is both unendurable and must be endured (Sierz 107). In that way *Cleansed* critiques society's indifference and tries to cure it within the same frame of time. Even though the play itself does not explicitly focus on war, it presents to the audience how animosity and violent behavior become highlighted in a war-like situation. War has always been a part of the human experience and failing to acknowledge this as a real circumstance is possibly at the root of the indifference found in peacetime society, imagining that the idea is that war is an issue for the other. By recognizing this message in *Cleansed*, the play should not be dismissed as a play filled with unnecessary violence, but rather violence that amplifies not only the expression of love, but also the reality of the human condition.

The ambiguity of *Cleansed* is important to note. Love as a central theme of the play is evident and at the heart of all action, but the complexity and analyzable contents of the play allow for plenty of additional discussions to bloom. This creates the opportunity for *Cleansed* to be used as classroom material in Norwegian upper secondary school. This rings particularly true in certain elective classes with proficient students. Literature and drama are also great tools for exploring identity, social context, and developing language skills. This will be addressed further and discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, about the potential didactic perspective of the play.

1.1 Kane's Work in the Context of the History of Drama

David Greig writes in the introduction to Sarah Kane's "Complete Plays" that she was "a playwright who was acutely aware of her work's context in the history of theatre" (xv). Throughout her body of work, she is recirculating themes from a series of classic plays, and this is very apparent in *Cleansed*, a play that is incredibly rich with intertextuality and references to those plays that came before it. Both plotlines, themes, and also stylistic choices are, as we will come to learn, influenced by the playwrights Kane herself admired.

The history of theater in Kane's *Cleansed* can be traced back to the ancient Greek tragedies, and *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles (born c. 496 BCE) in particular. Outlined by Aleks Sierz, "the greatest of the ancient Greek tragedies deal with extreme states of mind: brutal deaths and terrible suicides, agonizing pain and dreadful suffering, human sacrifice and cannibalism, rape and incest, mutilation and humiliation" (Sierz 10). They are described in the same vein as Kane's work is commonly associated with, grappling with taboo themes and morally outrageous content. The only thing Sierz outlines as common in Greek tragedy that is not found in any shape or form in *Cleansed* is cannibalism, which is a concept Kane does visit in her previous play, *Blasted*. Kane was also possibly inspired by the role of the Greek drama in ancient times, as it was not intended to attack the audience, but rather make them better able to face their time through a form of shock therapy (Sierz 10). Plays such as *Cleansed* force the audience to be confronted with aspects of the human condition that we would much rather shy away from and avoid acknowledging as real circumstances.

During the late 15th and 16th century, spectators wanted drama with sexual allusions and characters disguised as someone else. They also applauded plot developments that revolved around incest and physical mutilations (Zarrilli et al. 178). The former is something that is seen in for instance Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1602), which *Cleansed* alludes to in the plotline regarding the incestuous relationship between Grace and Graham, where Grace tries to take on her brother's identity following his passing. Greig also sheds light on this, referring to elements like "gender confusion, the play's lyricism and its central theme of sister searching for a lost brother" (xii). While this is one way in which Elizabethan theater has influenced Kane's work, it is also apparent that *Cleansed* is a postmodern play that approaches these topics differently. There is for instance no comedic relief in the execution of gender confusion.

Later romantics have also left an impression on Kane's work. An example of this is Georg Büchner (1813-1837) who wrote pessimistic plays about history's ironies and life's absurdities. He found few companies willing to produce them, and his work would await discovery and production until the 20th century (Zarrilli et al. 273). In fact, one of the people who participated in the production of Büchner's work was Sarah Kane herself, who directed *Woyzeck* while writing *Cleansed* (Saunders 87). This might also have affected how Kane worked with her play, which we will touch on later in this thesis.

Modernism in theater is considered the period generally between 1880 and 1970. After a 400 year fight for legal protection, independence, and bourgeois status, modernist playwrights

could now make at least part of their livelihood by writing. By the 1920s, many dramatists considered their plays autonomous works of art (Zarrilli et al. 322). Many big names in theater found their fame during the modernist era, and for the sake of this thesis, the one worth mentioning in particular is Samuel Beckett. His plays consisted of poetic minimalism that controlled what his actors could do and what his audience would experience as reality (Zarrilli et al. 397). In Kane's work, one finds traces of both his absurd drama and the minimalistic style he imposed on the actors.

As a part of modernism, Antonin Artaud's surrealism and "theatre of cruelty" came to be. He wrote manifestos throughout the 1930s while being declared insane and living in a mental hospital. These manifestos were published in 1938 and have had a substantial influence on world theatre. Artaud wanted theatre to return modern humans to primitive mysteries. The purpose of the "theatre of cruelty" was to evoke extreme emotions, and that an actor-spectator communion could provide the basis for a utopian society without violence, conformity, and anxiety. He wanted to confront people with images stripped of their referential meanings, resulting in a primitive emotional response (Zarrilli et al. 367-68). A link between Artaud's idea of "theatre of cruelty" and Sarah Kane's plays have been found and evaluated before; in his work "Cruelty and Desire in the Modern Theater" Laurens De Vos argues that Kane was influenced by Artaud and the Theater of Cruelty, and gradually understood the implication of the concept, going "beyond the massacres and cruelties that have disproportionately been ascribed to his project" (12). The link between Artaud and Kane is interesting, and they undoubtedly explore similar concepts, but for the sake of this thesis, the link will be dismissed. This is particularly due to Kane's statement on the matter, in an interview with Nils Tabert done mere months before the staging of *Cleansed*. She stated that she had only recently begun to read and appreciate Artaud, while simultaneously acknowledging the relevance of his work, stating that "I was amazed on how it connects completely with my work" (qtd. in Saunders 16). While De Vos's work is highly relevant for the interpretation of some aspects of the play, this interview also challenges whether she could be influenced by Artaud directly in her earlier work in particular.

Aleks Sierz coined the term "in-yer-face" theater to describe the work of Sarah Kane and selected contemporaries of the 1990s and credits the movement for injecting a dose of extremism into British theater, resulting in a change of theatrical sensibility (Sierz 10). Inspired by those mentioned throughout this chapter, Kane was central to the development of British theater in the 90s, starting with *Blasted*, which was staged in January 1995. It was both surprisingly progressive in form and profoundly unsettling in content, with graphic scenes of

sexual violence and cannibalism, overt language, and the rawness of its emotion (Sierz xii). These qualities all became common denominators of in-her-face theater. When defining the term, Sierz states that “the language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each other, experience unpleasant emotion, [and] become suddenly violent” (Sierz 5). The movement also taps into more primitive emotions, breaks taboo, references the forbidden, and causes discomfort by questioning moral standards and affronts the ruling ideas about what should or should not be seen onstage. More importantly, it reveals something about our true selves (Sierz 4). This is also very similar to the ideas of the Greek tragedies and is possibly why the work of Sophocles is so prevalent in Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*.

As stated previously, Sarah Kane is to be considered a postmodernist. Although the term is debated regarding a certain definition, this thesis addresses it as a work that is critiquing traditional processes of representation, a reaction to modernism’s desire to wrap experience in a single, unified, cohesive vision. The viewer is not allowed to rest on a stable meaning or value when experiencing a play (Zarrilli et al. 515-16). While having a voice that was powerful and unique, there is also no doubt that Kane is influenced by those who came before her (Greig xv). Her work heavily references Greek tragedies, carries resemblance with both Büchner and Beckett, has borrowed plots in part from Shakespeare, and she produced plays in line with Artaud’s vision.

1.2 Methodology & Previous Research

While there has been previous research conducted on *Cleansed*, it is fairly limited compared to plays written by the people Sarah Kane was inspired by. This thesis will as a part of its methodological approach address *Cleansed* as dramatic literature, while it has previously been approached as a staged play. Susan Feagin outlines in “Reading Plays as Literature,” two main ways of identifying a playwright’s product: a script, which is written to be performed, and as dramatic literature, which is written to be read in the sense that it can be appreciated in the reading (107). Kane’s play can certainly fall under both categories. While it can be read with a sensitivity to the performance potential, in the case of this thesis it is more favorable to read it as dramatic literature. By doing so, elements such as the pace of the action in relation to the audience can be dismissed as unimportant. Additionally, a script can have merits when considered as dramatic literature, which are not merits when read as something to be performed (Feagin 108). In the case of *Cleansed*, it is an advantage to be able to move back and forth when reading through fragmented plotlines. It maximizes the potential of the written word because the process of reading itself allows for easily refreshing one’s memory

with respect to plot, characters, and use of metaphors at one's own pace (Feagin 111). For *Cleansed*, reading the play as literature facilitates the discussion of love, because the theme does not disappear between the organized chaos the fragmentation and violence can potentially create on stage. By approaching the play as dramatic literature, the third-person interference is also eliminated. Performances cannot be fully relied on, as they go through a production where a wide variety of decisions about how to interpret the script are made (Feagin 114). By reading the play as dramatic literature, questions of costumes and lighting do not have to be considered, and furthermore, one can grapple with several ways of interpreting any scene without challenging the structure and overarching message of the play.

Even when approaching the play as dramatic literature, it is still helpful looking to previous considerations of *Cleansed*. Katie Mitchell, who directed the third staging of the play in England, was admittedly making the same argument in an interview with Matt Trueman as this thesis does. She argues for the necessity of violence in *Cleansed* to contrast the vulnerability as a way to remind the viewer of the fragility of the human body.

I think that's the brilliance in the writing. Violence, violence, violence, and then people standing there naked, or a young man standing there and covering his genitals. And you feel the fragility of the human being. Then, if you do more violence, then you do tenderness, then you do lovemaking, it has the same kind of effect. The violence for me intensifies the tender, humane part of the material.
(Mitchell 14:15)

This thesis will develop Mitchell's observations further, looking beyond how the violence and nudity are experienced on stage. Not only does the violence contrast the fragility of the human being, but it is riddled with symbolism throughout the entire play. A tongue is not merely cut out, it symbolizes the spoken expression of love and by removing it, Carl is robbed of his ability to express love through words. This happens after Tinker has watched him use his words as a method of expressing his love to his lover and is hence a deliberate act of suppressing Carl's love.

Other scholars of Kane's work have had less to say about the meaning of love in *Cleansed*. Aleks Sierz has written one of the most well-known considerations of Sarah Kane's plays in his book "In-Yer-Face Theatre." He has dedicated a chapter to her works, and it is heavily based on previous conversations and interviews with Sarah Kane herself. The book explores a variety of plays in the same violent vein as Kane's *Cleansed*, all falling under the term "in-yer-face theatre". While Sierz does not argue against the fact that the main theme of

the play is love, his focus outside of conversations with Kane herself mainly revolves around the violence that caused reactions among critics. This is demonstrated through statements such as “while it does convey a sense of redemption through love, it also has a sado-masochistic feel. People are cleansed by pain and terror; Grace is burnt clean by torture” (Sierz 115). This observation is largely emphasizing the pain and terror, being too dismissive about the love experienced between the characters.

Graham Saunders’s book “Love me or Kill me” has a thorough consideration of Kane’s plays, but is particularly interested in the perspective of intertextuality. Besides this, Saunders delves further into the theme of love than Sierz. For instance, he does to a larger extent offer reflection upon the connection between the quote from Barthes’ “A Lover’s Discourse” and the play, by acknowledging the duality between tenderness and affirmation in love contrasted with annihilation and loss of self-hood (Saunders 93). While this thesis will not discuss the intertextuality of *Cleansed* in-depth, it is also particularly interesting that Saunders also demonstrate how Kane has been influenced by George Orwell’s 1984:

“One of its [Orwell’s 1984] principal themes is also about the exploration of love, both as an act of defiance – a counteraction against repressive forces – and also how those very forces police and crush through torture any attempt at expression of love. Both Kane and Orwell seem to be aware of the paradox of durability and fragility, whereby ‘As an emotion love is stronger than anything else in the world but as a social force it suffers from a great disadvantage. It is purely individual in its action. The condition of love is isolation from the rest of the world’.” (Saunders 92).

This notion of love is observed in *Cleansed* as well. Love is policed and attempted to be crushed through torture, which is a necessary circumstance to demonstrate both the durability and the fragility of love.

Sean Carney addressed briefly in “The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*,” that the two major academic considerations of Kane’s work were the chapter from Aleks Sierz as well as “Love Me or Kill Me” by Graham Saunders, and that they are “insightful and sensitive examinations of Kane and her work; but their titles alone emphasize the shock value of her plays” (276). This may be particularly true regarding Sierz, while Saunders has a more nuanced approach. Both authors do discuss the reception of Sarah Kane’s plays that were heavily affected by the violence, but beyond that Saunders’ analysis of *Cleansed* is as mentioned, particularly occupied with the intertextuality of the play and its relation to

Elizabethan and Jacobean theater. Regardless, there is still an emphasis on the shock value of the play in sections of both considerations, and thus, the deeper value of love easily becomes dismissed. By focusing on the expressions of love that are found in *Cleansed*, this thesis aims towards not being distracted by the shock elements, but rather examine the violence and torture through a love-oriented lens.

One scholar who has done a thorough reading of *Cleansed* and offered careful consideration to the theme of love is De Vos in “Cruelty and Desire in the Modern Theater.” De Vos also recognizes love as a theme in Kane’s collection of plays and points to this as an overlooked force in Artaud’s work (15). In this thesis, it’s De Vos’s reading of the relationship between Grace and Graham that is particularly interesting. He draws a parallel between the siblings in *Cleansed* and the siblings in *Antigone*. His emphasis is not primarily on the relationship between violence and love as in this thesis, but his work is central to both the analysis of Grace/Graham and Tinker.

While being considerate and appreciative to those who approached Sarah Kane’s work before, this thesis aims to shed further light on the theme of love in *Cleansed*, particularly by addressing the play as dramatic literature. While love has been acknowledged as an important element in the play by all scholars mentioned, this thesis will further develop the existing field by going in-depth about how this theme is expressed, and what role violence has in the promotion of love as a theme.

1.3 Love & Violence

Love is acknowledged by all major considerations done on *Cleansed*, because as a theme it is impossible to dismiss. It is evident in every scene, and throughout the entirety of the play the characters all explicitly express love toward one another. It is often present as the motivation for actions taken, just as much as it is the reason for why the characters endure the torture inflicted on them. Yet, the same description can be given the presence of violence, that infiltrates most of the scenes in the play. This subchapter aims to discuss love and violence in *Cleansed*, as well as how these components interact.

Love as a theme is an abstract term that can be challenging to pin down to a simple definition. Marcus Nordlund questions whether love can be defined at all in his book “Shakespeare and the Nature of Love,” and further states that “for many literary and cultural theorists, the word ‘love’ has become something of a professional embarrassment” (19). This is perhaps rooted in a wide variety of approaches to love, often contradictory or limiting in

nature. Few would disagree that love is an emotion, but this makes it no easier in seeking a definition. It is relatively recently that emotions have become objects of systematic study, in part because of a long heritage of separating passion from reason, and favoring the latter (Nordlund 21). Even within the context of *Cleansed*, serving a firm definition of love proves to be challenging. The entire play can easily be considered an exploration of love and the different ways in which it can be experienced. This is in line with Kane's inspirational material by Barthes. Koestenbaum writes an excellent introduction to Barthes's "A Lover's Discourse", describing it as "a jar of nuances" (ix) It is an attempt to unpack love and explore what is left once the stereotypes, mythologies, and figures of speech have been stripped (x). When reading *Cleansed*, it is not hard to acknowledge that if the play is indeed about love, then it holds nuance in the same way as Barthes's book does. Love is portrayed and expressed in a wide variety of ways. Readers become familiarized with contrasting expressions of love through inseparable love and repression of love, but also a maternal type of love, and the classic romantic love relationship.

Cathrine Belsey also grapples with the contents of Barthes's book when she in "Postmodern Love: Questioning the Metaphysics of Desire" approaches the metaphysics of love. At the heart of her paper, is the issue of love expressed in words. Because, if we are all unique and autonomous, how can we capture the extraordinary experience of desire by repeating a worn-out phrase such as 'I love you' (Belsey 685)? The truth is, we cannot. The individual experience is lost in the universal phrase so commonly uttered. A conclusion Belsey agrees with, stating that love itself is a metonym in place of a desire that is unable to name itself (685). This speaks to the individual experience, an experience that is affected by a plethora of circumstances. Love is dependent on favorable conditions and vulnerable to interference. Furthermore, it can be experienced and expressed differently depending on the circumstances. Love can be a source of joy, but likewise a source of shame or suffering if it is felt for the wrong person, unrequited or deemed socially unacceptable (Nordlund 23). It is this Sarah Kane plays into, her "extreme love" is simultaneously hopefully idealistic, like in the case of Carl, and the source of suffering both due to internal and external forces. In many ways, *Cleansed* does not hold a strictly postmodern notion of love. While it is postmodern in its structure, and while certain concepts from the postmodern understanding of love is carried over into the play, relativism is not apparent in *Cleansed*. Love does in all circumstances turn people vulnerable, either to inner or outer forces. Furthermore, the play presents a message of love as a cleansing force, love is pure.

Kate Kellaway wrote a review of *Cleansed* for *New Statesmen* in 1998 where she described the love in the play as phony, thinking characters are supposed to experience sentimental education through torture, and wisdom “about the meaning of living in the present tense” (42), but by coming to this conclusion Kellaway has dismissed the most important aspects of love as expressed in *Cleansed*. The characters are not primarily obtaining wisdom about living in the present tense, but rather that even after torture and hardship, love cannot be removed from the present tense. This is emphasized by Kane when she states that “both *Blasted* and *Cleansed* are about distressing things which we’d like to think we would survive. If people can still love after that, then love is the most powerful thing” (Kane qtd. In Sierz 116). This is an argument that is difficult to dismiss as phony. Yet, it is understandable how Kellaway could fall to this wrongful conclusion. Belsey questions whether desire is a matter of fact or fiction, and it is worth the debate. Kellaway might experience the love in *Cleansed* as ingenuine, in part because it does not align with her individual experience of the concept. However, Belsey argues for desire being both fact and fiction. Fact, because its effects are visible, experiencing love and desire changes lives. But on the other hand, the role of fantasy cannot be overestimated, as the same events, differently imagined and interpreted, generates different effects (Belsey 688). For Kellaway then, she does not imagine and interpret the play in the way Kane did while producing the material.

Concerning Grace and Robin, who is discussed at length in chapter 3.2 looking to Freud might be the most revealing in understanding their relationship and the love Robin expresses towards Grace. The simplest reading of Freud’s Oedipus complex revolves around being in love with one parent and hating the other. The complex got its name from the Greek myth of Oedipus, by Sophocles. Oedipus was exposed as an infant because an oracle had warned that he would be his father’s murderer. The myth has it that he, unbeknownst to him, eventually would murder his father and marry his mother (Freud 789). Freud argues that we are moved by the Oedipus myth, because “it is the fate of all of us, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our fathers” (790). While Grace is not Robin’s biological mother, she takes on a nurturing role, similar to that of a mother. This maternal role creates a power imbalance, which may awake some of the feelings of repulsion Freud would expect from an adult with symptoms of the Oedipus complex.

The same way Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* is at the core of understanding maternal love as expressed in the plotline of Grace and Robin, *Antigone* can shed light on some of the emotionality that is found in Grace’s relationship with her brother. The Greek tragedy

Antigone, also by Sophocles, tells the story of a sister who is willing to sacrifice her own life to give her brother Polyneices a proper burial that is forbidden by her uncle and king, Creon. “Obeying all her instincts of love, loyalty, and humanity, Antigone defies Creon and dutifully buries her brother’s corpse” (Woodard, 1998). This is representative of inseparable love; Antigone loved her brother so much that she looked beyond any of his wrongdoings and wanted him to be treated right by getting a burial. She did not leave Polyneices’s side regardless of circumstances and was willing to confront the highest man-made law, symbolized by King Creon. The story of *Antigone* will echo throughout the storyline of Grace/Graham in chapter 2.1.

This thesis aims to emphasize love as a theme in *Cleansed*, but the grotesque violence that is found in all plotlines is impossible to ignore. Kane has written a play about love, and a relevant question to then ask is what is the role and purpose of the gruesome acts the characters need to endure? Regarding *Blasted*, Kane made a point of how the violence was drawn from real life, and that it simply reflected what one could read in the newspaper. The only reason a play such as *Blasted* had such a great effect on people was that “all the borings bits have been cut out” (Sierz 103). In other words, the audience was presented with an uncensored view of the violence that does exist in the world. As an intended second part of a trilogy that never came to be, *Cleansed* holds some of the same qualities as *Blasted*. As will be referred to through the analysis section of this thesis, *Cleansed* too has borrowed stories and practices from real life. Thus, the audience as well as the reader is presented with a depiction of violence that is not fabricated, but actual conditions for someone. And are the people experiencing violence completely lacking any encounter of love? No, naturally love and the experience of violence can co-exist.

The play has clear references to a war-like setting, especially regarding the institution in which the play takes place, but also demonstrated by the inspiration Kane found in the quote from Barthes comparing love and Dachau. However, while the play alludes to World War II and concentration camps, it would be minimizing to consider *Cleansed* a play about the war. In fact, Kane stated herself that the play is not about Germany and the Jews and refused to give *Cleansed* that context beyond the allusion: “Because then you are being cynical, you are using people’s pain in order to justify your own work which I don’t think it acceptable” (Kane, qtd. in Saunders 94). This statement speaks volumes in terms of Kane’s ethical views on appropriating the pain of the Jews and other victims of the war crimes committed during the second world war. In respect of Kane’s creative vision, then, it is better to view the violence found in *Cleansed* completely separate from any real-life event, but with the

awareness that the gruesome torture that is found in the play reflects the reality we live in. The play is not *about* any genocide that has taken place, it is not about any previous wars, but it questions the notion of love under such conditions. For that reason, chapter 2.2 will discuss the atrocities taking place in concentration camps in relation to Tinker's motivations as the administrator of violence in the play.

Katie Mitchell, a director of one staging of *Cleansed*, discussed the portrayal of violence in the play. She considers her approach to the play feminist, referring to a theory that men are the initiators of violence. She goes on to argue that such a theory might be useful in terms of understanding Kane's writing. If violence is a gendered activity, then a feminist would possibly want to create understanding by framing it in a way that only a woman can do, as she is framing an activity that is challenging for her to comprehend. Mitchell concludes her argument by stating that "maybe the feminist rage at that is why the violence is so intense" (Mitchell 18:31), referring to the many violent scenes in *Cleansed*. While Kane hasn't stated anything that directly correlates with the feminist approach to *Cleansed*, she did touch upon gender and violence when summing up *Blasted*: "The logical conclusion of the attitude that produces an isolated rape in England is the rape camps in Bosnia, and the logical conclusion to the way society expects men to behave is war" (Kane qtd. in Sierz 104). Kane is not alone in her conclusion. Susan Sontag introduces her book "Regarding the Pain of Others" by referring to an exchange of letters between Virginia Woolf and a lawyer in London who asked how to prevent war. The argument is that "men make war. Men (most men) like war, since for men there is 'some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting' that women (most women) do not feel or enjoy" (Sontag 3). This is also evident in *Cleansed*, where Tinker is higher up in the social hierarchy and directs his violent action towards those who are more vulnerable, oftentimes because they are in love. Furthermore, the male characters who do not participate in the violence are often introduced as fragile male characters taking traditionally more feminine roles. Carl and Rod are both homosexuals, a sexuality that is rarely associated with masculinity, while Robin is dressed in women's clothes and often carry the demeanor of a child. When it comes to the play's male characters then, there is a strict dualism. On the one side, you have the powerful, masculine man who gets satisfaction from violence, and on the other, you have the more weak, feminine ones.

The violence in *Cleansed* has several purposes. Carney writes in "The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*" that *Cleansed* seems to be a "deliberate aestheticization of violence and the dismemberment of the human body with the goal of articulating a highly coherent and deeply tragic message about the indestructibility of love" (288). The play does demonstrate a

clear message about the indestructibility of love and is in that sense filled with optimism. Love is a force able to withstand even the direst circumstances. This message also facilitates the claim of this thesis. The intensity of love as an extreme emotion is amplified not only because love is indestructible in the face of violence, but the characters of the play is willing to endure torture to preserve both love and the object of their love.

Cleansed is written with an episodic structure that is inspired by Georg Büchner's play *Woyzeck* that Sarah Kane directed while finishing it (Saunders 87). Because of the fragmented style of the play, the violence may seem more prevalent and the plotlines of the characters and the love they express toward each other may be lost. For this reason, this thesis is structured based on how Kane worked while writing it, by organizing the scenes into their respective plotlines. The analysis is divided into two chapters, one dedicated to the protagonist and antagonist, and one dedicated to the minor characters. Furthermore, there are four couples in *Cleansed*, Grace and Graham, Tinker and Woman, Carl and Rod, and Grace and Robin. These are organized in subchapters following each of the four plotlines. Following the analysis of the play couple by couple, the thesis contains one chapter dedicated to a didactics approach; how can you utilize literature, drama, and *Cleansed* specifically in a classroom setting? Lastly, the thesis ends in a section devoted to the conclusion.

Chapter 2: The Extreme Ends of Love

In *Cleansed*, Grace and Tinker are the central characters. While the story is fragmented and disorienting when read from beginning to end, these two characters are central to every plotline and every action that takes place throughout the twenty scenes of the play. To fully understand the stories that unfold for the other characters, Grace and Tinker need to be examined and understood as the force of action in the play. They are complete opposites in all aspects regarding the theme of love. Grace explicitly and relentlessly expresses her love for Graham, her deceased brother. Willing to go to extreme lengths to protect and preserve their love, Grace loses herself. On the other end of extremes, Tinker protects his position of power by relentlessly doing the opposite of Grace: he represses any expression of love both from himself and from others. This chapter will closely examine their relationship to their respective love interests and to love itself.

2.1 Grace & Graham: Inseparable Love

Grace is the protagonist of *Cleansed*, demonstrated by how her character is intertwined in several of the plotlines. Her main concern is her deceased brother, Graham, with whom she has a romantic relationship. Traces of the quote from Barthes that Sarah Kane was inspired by while writing the play has plenty of resonance in the storyline revolving around Grace and Graham; at the core of their plotline is Grace's attempt to merge identity with her brother after his passing, eventually fulfilled through an amateur sex change operation in order to become more like him. When Barthes compares unrequited love with the experience of a concentration camp, the similarities are in the loss of self: "I have projected myself into the other with such power that when I am without the other I cannot recover myself, regain myself: I am lost, forever" (Barthes 49). Barthes argues that one eventually loses oneself when under conditions such as those at the concentration camp in Dachau, much like how one is lost when love is projected into someone who does not return it. Graham cannot return Grace's love directly as he is deceased, leaving her in a state where she gradually loses herself in search of his love.

The very first scene of *Cleansed* acts as a prologue to what is to come. The reader is introduced to Graham when he persuades Tinker to give him enough drugs to commit suicide. From the dialogue between Graham and Tinker, where the latter describes himself as a dealer (4), it becomes apparent that Graham suffers from substance abuse. By extension, this can be assumed as the reason why he is in this institution. Beyond that, we are given no real

explanation as to why Graham has decided to end his life, and at the point where he is about to disclose any kind of information, Tinker interrupts him.

GRAHAM. Are you my friend?

TINKER. I don't think so.

GRAHAM. Then what difference will it make?

TINKER. It won't end here.

GRAHAM. My sister, she wants –

TINKER. Don't tell me. (3)

The only thing we have to go by is the mention of his sister, Grace. If we as readers are to assume that their incestuous relationship started prior to Graham's death, his suicide could likewise be a consequence of this. Incest is a typical circumstance that in most societies is deemed socially unacceptable, in other words, it is possible that Graham's love and desire for his sister became a source of shame and suffering that he no longer was able to withstand. In any case, Graham's torture precedes the storyline portrayed in the play.

It is important to note, that beyond the first scene, Graham exists primarily in Grace's world and is only present when accompanied by Grace. By extension, then, it is arguable whether the siblings acted out an incestuous relationship before his death. Kane has several times admitted to omitting information and leaving as much as possible up to interpretation, which in this case makes the very existence of Graham in *Cleansed* particularly vague. While this thesis takes a position of the former alternative, that Grace and Graham had a romantic relationship preceding the storyline of the play, it could be argued that Graham's suicide was not motivated by shame due to a sexual relationship with his sister, but other factors such as his substance abuse. And then the "want" Graham describes his sister having before being interrupted, could be a desire he was unwilling to give into in the first place.

Grace is introduced in scene three of *Cleansed*. Six months have passed since Graham's suicide, and she has arrived at the university sanatorium to retrieve his belongings. Grace eventually gets Graham's clothes off the back of Robin and changes into his clothes. This marks the beginning of Grace's transformation. Over the course of the play, her identity merges more and more with her brother's. After putting on Graham's clothes, Grace has a breakdown, which results in her being handcuffed to one of the beds and injected with an unidentified substance administered by Tinker. When she has calmed down, she insists on staying at the institution.

GRACE. I'm staying.

TINKER. You'll be moved.

GRACE. I look like him. Say you thought I was a man.

TINKER. I can't protect you.

GRACE. I don't want you to. (10)

In this early stage of merging with Graham, she insists on taking the place of her brother. It is evident already from this point that Grace aims towards becoming Graham through her obsession with looking like him. The physical appearance is her first step in giving away her own identity and becoming one with her brother. Grace is also warned that the institution is not a safe place to stay when Tinker tells her that he can't protect her. Tinker is hesitant to let Grace stay, but his resignation is demonstrated once he medicates her with yet another unidentified substance, this time in pill form, while relieving himself of responsibility by stating "I'm not responsible, Grace" (10). Tinker leaves after medicating her, and the rest of the scene revolves around the interaction between Grace and Robin, which will be explored further in chapter 3.2.

When De Vos writes about *Cleansed*, he headlines the topic with "Antigone Revisited" (89) and goes on to clearly outline the parallel between the plotline of Grace/Graham and that of Antigone and Polyneices.

Similar to Antigone, this is a situation in which a sister wants to remember her brother, be it by way of burying him or accepting clothes as a sign of memory. Both want their brothers to be proper human beings, which entails that even after dying, they remain part of the symbolic chain by the traces they have left behind. (De Vos 89)

This need to keep their brothers, either by giving a proper burial or by taking on their identity, is grounded in what I'd like to argue is inseparable love. The love expressed in *Cleansed* in the relationship Grace is having with her brother, parallel with the Antigone myth, is a result of the refusal to separate from a loved one. Where Antigone can fight for a proper burial for her brother, Graham's remains have been burned, there is nothing left of him except his belongings. Another similarity between *Antigone* and *Cleansed* is how they are obstructed by an authority. Creon's edict prohibits enemies of the state to be buried properly, and the laws of the institution stop Tinker from giving Grace what she wants. Furthermore, both Tinker and Creon warn the sisters not to trespass on hidden soil (De Vos 89-90). Grace has to beg in

order to stay at the institution, and already at this point, she insists on looking like her brother as an argument for why she will fit in.

Grace and Graham are first reunited in scene five. Grace awakes in the sanatorium with Graham at the end of the bed. The first thing Grace says when meeting Graham is “you’re clean” (14), referring to him no longer being under the influence of drugs, while simultaneously alluding to the title of the play. What is curious considering the transformation journey Grace is on, is the fact that she is *not* clean, in the sense that she is medicated with unknown substances by Tinker. This may play a part in why Graham is appearing, as he did not appear upon arrival at the university, but rather after she met with Tinker.

Where Grace adopted Graham’s appearance in scene three, she adopts his mannerisms in scene five, after Graham remarks that she is “more like me than I ever was” (15). Grace urges Graham to teach her, presumably how to be him, which turns into a dance, describing how her movements develop to closer and closer resemble Graham’s:

GRAHAM. (Dances – a dance of love for Grace.)

GRACE. (Dances opposite him, copying his movements. Gradually, she takes on the masculinity of his movement, his facial expression. Finally, she no longer has to watch him – she mirrors him perfectly as they dance exactly in time.

When she speaks, her voice is more like his.) (15)

The stage directions describe it as Grace taking on Graham’s masculinity. Even at this very stage she is losing a little bit of herself and gaining a little bit of Graham by expressing her love for him physically. Through the dance, Grace merges with Graham by the way he moves, and the mirroring of the dance continues through the dialogue, where they eventually speak in unison.

Grace tells Graham, “they burned your body” (16), perhaps in a sense questioning his presence, but Graham reassures her that he is back. As readers, we never fully get to understand Graham’s presence. It could be, like mentioned, a possible drug-induced figment of Grace’s imagination, or it could be as a ghost or a spirit. The emphasis on Grace being medicated might speak to the former, but as we will later on come to learn, Robin sees Graham when he is committing suicide by hanging. One can only assume that Kane left Graham’s presence consciously ambiguous. While potentially being contradictory, it would be limiting to fall on a firm conclusion on an analysis of this. The result remains the same, Grace is in the company of her brother. Scene five concludes with the siblings making love,

closely coming together and finding that “each other’s rhythm is the same as their own” (16). A sunflower bursts through the floor and the last word uttered is “lovely” (17) by Graham. The sunflower is one of two instances of flowers appearing on stage, it happens again in scene ten. This first instance is a symbol of love breaking through and surviving regardless of circumstances, and this imagery will be strengthened once it happens again. We will encounter Graham’s final utterance again later in the play. First following the next flower bloom, and later on when it will mark the development in Grace’s transformation.

In scene seven Grace is assisting Robin in learning how to read in the university library, and the interaction between them is thoroughly analyzed in chapter 3.2 of this thesis. In this chapter, the analysis of scene seven will exclusively be seen in light of the storyline revolving around Grace and Graham. And in that light, Graham is watching as Robin interrogates Grace about previous relationships, love, and her brother. Many of Robin’s questions are spoken in unison with Graham asking them, such as when they ask whether she still loves her previous boyfriend, Paul.

GRACE. I –

No.

I never did.

ROBIN. Did you –

GRAHAM. Fuck him. (20)

When the interrogation continues, Robin does not finish his question. Graham’s utterance is replied as if it was a completion of the question when Grace replies affirmative, yet it is not written as such. It is instead a declaration, a cursing of Grace’s ex-boyfriend who is described as abusive.

When Robin goes on to ask what in her life Grace would like to change, followed up by “wouldn’t you wish Graham alive?” (21) both she and Graham laughs, stating that she doesn’t consider Graham dead. While Graham’s body is burned, Grace has started the process of bringing him back by taking on his identity. She represents his flesh and bones through her own body, and Graham’s person is present with her. Thus, when she eventually answers the question, she replies: “My body. So it looked like it feels / Graham outside like Graham inside” (22). De Vos describes this utterance as Grace’s wish to “take this final step and merge with [Graham’s] image” as she irrevocably runs toward her disappearing as a subject (91). Grace’s physical change into a man is the final step of her transformation, but she is not yet ready for it. While her mannerism and physical appearance are mirroring Graham, and

while she claims that she feels like Graham inside, she is still Grace. This is demonstrated by how she talks about her past as Grace when Robin questions her about her past, and by the way she takes on a maternal role for Robin. Graham is also still there, separate from Grace. By the end of the scene, he has continued to speak in unison with Robin, explaining that he loves her, and is in love with her.

Grace is in the red room in scene ten, the university sports hall. She is “being beaten by an unseen group of men whose voices we hear” (26), and that is all the play reveals explicitly about the Voices. They are personified through the script with dialogue dedicated to them, present on several occasions. Primarily, they represent the same war-oriented masculinity as Tinker, represented in the same way Sontag described men. They seem to find “some glory, some necessity, [and] some satisfaction in fighting” (Sontag 3) and inflicting torture on others. At the beginning of the scene, the Voices seem motivated to beat up Grace because of her relationship with her brother. This is demonstrated by their comments such as “she was having it off with her brother / Weren’t he a bender? / Fucking user” (27) followed by repeatedly beating her while stating that Graham can never save her. Any blatant disapproval of the sibling’s relationship is only uttered by the Voices, and the presence of this expression could likely be considered a representation of society’s reaction to an incestuous relationship. Incest is, after all, one of the few things that has, with differing limits for when something is considered incestuous, always been considered taboo.

While the beating goes on, Graham is watching in distress, and eventually tries to make contact with Grace: “Can’t hurt you, Grace. Can’t touch you” (27). He goes on to tell a story of a shared memory with the punchline of “If you know it’s coming you’re prepared” (28). This story gives Grace the strength to surf through the beating. Graham’s compassion continues to protect her once one of the Voices rapes her. This is demonstrated by how Graham looks into her eyes and holds her head between his hands while the rape is happening. Later on, Graham’s body “begins to bleed in the same places” (28) as Grace’s. They are so attached that he shares her wounds.

It is only when the scene is closing in on its conclusion that we learn that the scene does not entail only Graham, Grace, and the voices of unseen men. This is revealed only when the Voices command to “Kill them all” (29). The reader never learns who surrounds them, but the scene quickly switches into something more similar to a war scene, with “a long stream of automatic gunfire” (29) that continues for several minutes while the walls of the suddenly aptly called red room becomes splattered with blood. None of this blood belongs to

Grace, though, as her body is being shielded by Graham, who previously in the same scene promised that no one could hurt her. Then, similarly to scene five, the stage directions state that “out of the ground grow daffodils. / They burst upward, their yellow covering the entire stage.” Daffodils are known for being a forgiving flower, not very sensitive to rougher treatment, and surviving through not-ideal circumstances. This strong symbol of Grace and Graham’s love is in stark contrast to the war imagery presented only moments earlier.

The fact that there are more people surrounding Grace and Graham is further emphasized once Tinker enters and the Voices ask if they are “All dead?” (29). Tinker kneels beside Grace and takes her hand, before telling her that “I’m here to save you” (29). Tinker’s good deed is in response to a conversation he has had with the Woman and will be explored closer in the following subchapter. The scene concludes in precisely the same manner as scene five. Graham picks a flower and smells it while saying “lovely” (29).

In scene five Grace said, “You’ve always been an angel” (15), referring to Graham. De Vos discussed the religious imagery in his work examining *Cleansed*. He connected the portrayal of Graham as an angel in scene five with his role as Grace’s guardian angel when she is now being beaten and raped by an unseen group of men. Furthermore, he argues, Graham’s body is endowed with the stigmata as “his own body begins to bleed in the same places” (Kane 28) as Grace’s body (De Vos 91). This religious imagery can be extended to the inseparable love between the siblings. The love resembles the one God has for us through Jesus Christ: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*The Holy Bible*, Romans 8:38-39). In the same way, neither death nor life, nor rulers nor powers can separate Graham from the love of Grace. De Vos describes this by Grace literally becoming God’s grace. She leaves behind all moral certainties and remains unyielding with respect to her goal, very similar to Antigone (De Vos 91). This is at the very core of why Grace and Graham are the representation of inseparable love in *Cleansed*.

It seems safe to assume that when Tinker vowed to save Grace, he brought her to the university sanatorium. This is where we once again meet Grace in scene twelve, lying down between Tinker and Graham, and sunbathing from light coming through a shaft in the ceiling. Chapter 2.2 will discuss this scene with emphasis on Tinker and his discourse with Grace in depth. For now, the focus will remain on Grace and Graham.

The twelfth scene of *Cleansed* is a brief one, but it serves several purposes. It excellently demonstrates the gradual decline of Grace's mental health. From being able to stay present and carry conversations with Robin in scene seven, to being considerably more removed from reality at this point. She is no longer interacting with the third party, in this case Tinker, but only carrying conversations with her brother. This decline is further emphasized by the Voices in the background calling her "Lunatic Grace" (30) and demanding to "Burn you clean" (30). She also states that "my balls hurt" (30), while she is still a woman and does not have male genitals. De Vos elaborates on this statement in his analysis of the play, stating that "Grace is imprisoned in a suffocating identification with Graham based on the terror that his desire might be disclosed. She identifies herself with the imaginary phallus; through this complete imaginary identification she wants to hold onto Graham's love, and it does not in the least bother [her] that he is deceased already" (De Vos 91). In her effort to love Graham, she is losing her sanity while also willingly giving up her identity as Grace. Furthermore, the scene is a clear-cut love declaration between Grace and Graham. While Graham is present in Grace's reality, even all-consuming, there is anxiety within their dialogue, a fear of losing one another. This is, as De Vos pointed out, even though Graham is already deceased. This anxiety shines through from statements such as "Like to feel you here" (30) from Grace, and later "Don't cut me out" (31) from Graham. In between, words of endearment are scattered.

Over the duration of the scene, the Voices are continuously interfering with incoherent requests to burn something out of Grace. This intensifies closer to the end of the scene, and it seems as if it has been planned all along. Tinker has promised to save her in their previous scene and has also stated that he "Can make you better" (31). The concluding stage direction reads:

An electric current is switched on.

Grace's body is thrown into rigid shock as bits of her brains are burnt out.

The shaft of light grows bigger until it engulfs them all.

It becomes blinding. (31)

At this point, it might be read as if Grace is dying. While we do continue to meet Grace throughout the play, she will no longer be the same person. Grace as we know her has by all respects died. Where she previously has taken on Graham's appearance and later mannerisms, I argue that at this point in the play, Grace loses her personality, and it is replaced largely with an echo of Graham's. Evidence of this is found in scene fifteen. Tinker has demanded that

Robin burns all his books, and when Grace enters, she is “*vacant and tranquilized*” (37). She completely disregards the fact that what she and Robin were working towards ended by going up in flames, and her only utterance in response to the scene is “lovely” (37) – a phrase we have several times before heard uttered only by Graham. The merging of Grace and Graham into one is increasingly evident after the electroshock on her brain.

Scene seventeen picks up right where scene fourteen leaves off, and Grace continues to be completely apathetic to the situation with Robin. The gradual decline of her mental health has reached its bottom. Where she would not speak to Tinker in scene twelve, she does not speak or interact with the world at all in scene seventeen. Robin desperately tries to communicate with her, demonstrating how he has learned to count by telling her how long he is staying at the institution with the help of the abacus from scene seven. Chapter 3.2 will examine the motivations for Robin’s actions more closely, but he commits suicide by hanging with no response from Grace. Graham, on the other hand, does respond. First by approaching Grace, telling her that “He’s dying, Grace” (40). She doesn’t respond, and Graham looks at Robin. Robin looks back at Graham, suddenly able to see him. While choking he holds out his hand to Graham, which Graham takes before wrapping his arms around Robin’s legs and pulling them until he dies. I’d like to argue that the reason Robin can now see Graham, is not because he is passing into the afterlife, but rather that Graham now has increasingly merged with Grace. While they are still two separate beings physically, the extent to which Grace has projected herself into him, has brought him back to the point that Robin can see him in his final moments of life.

Scene seventeen concludes with Tinker saying “Say good night to the folks, Gracie” (41) and leading her off. He presumably leads her right into scene eighteen and the university sanatorium. There she awakes naked “*apart from a tight strapping around her groin and chest, and blood where her breasts should be*” (41). A penis has been transplanted on her from the other inmate Carl whom we will get to know in chapter 3.1, and her breasts have been removed. In the words of Graham, “it’s over” (41), and the transformation from Grace and into Graham is complete. This completion is confirmed by Tinker, who says that he cannot call her Grace anymore, and further elaborating that he can “call you...Graham. I’ll call you Graham” (42). After stating this, he begins to leave, and the complete merging of Grace and Graham is further illustrated. Where Robin could see Graham in his dying moment, Tinker can now sense him when he speaks. Graham calls out Tinker’s name, to which Tinker responds by turning around and looking at Grace. They are now one.

In the first scene of *Cleansed*, Graham was without his sister. He returned to her when she was admitted into the institution, and in scene eighteen the presence of Graham that is detached from Grace leaves again. In unison with Tinker, he says his goodbye, before they both turn away. Yet, Graham is still there in the sense that Grace is now the embodiment of him. In scene twenty of the play, Grace/Graham is written out as one character, and “Grace now looks and sounds exactly like Graham” (45). Throughout the entire play, Grace has tried to reunite with her brother, refusing to be separable from him, and in the final scene, she has succeeded.

The final scene consists mainly of a monologue held by Grace, sitting next to Carl. The monologue leaves the impression that it is coming from Grace, but she is simultaneously Graham as well. It expresses a clear self-awareness of the accomplishment. This is clear in the concluding third of the monologue:

GRACE. Felt it.

Here. Inside. Here.

And when I don't feel it, it's pointless.

Think about getting up it's pointless.

Think about eating it's pointless.

Think about speaking it's pointless.

Think about dying only it's totally
fucking pointless.

Here now.

Safe on the other side and here.

Graham.

(A long silence.)

Always be here.

Thank you, Doctor. (46)

Graham is now safe here and the other side, meaning he has returned to life through Grace, while also remaining dead. They remain inseparable due to the determination Grace showed in refusing to let go of the man she loved. This ending monologue is optimistic in that Grace

receives a resolution of her problem. From now on Graham will always be there, and life in his absence would have been pointless if not.

In the concluding moments of the play, the rain stops. Carl and Grace/Graham are connected through touch. Carl is crying, but Grace/Graham is smiling, in her case love has won. “The sun gets brighter and brighter” (47) until it is blinding and sounds of rats grow louder until it’s deafening. There is nothing more to see, and nothing more to hear – love conquers all. There is a contrast between Carl’s fate and the one of Grace/Graham. The bright sun overwhelming the scene is representative of Grace’s ending and all her reasons for optimism, while the loud rats have followed Carl through his entire storyline. The ending will be interpreted in light of his journey in chapter 3.1.

Grace and Graham’s inseparable love may resonate with the reader by reflecting the kind of longing one experiences when separated from a lover, but through Kane’s artfully executed storytelling she demonstrates the uncompromising extremes of longing where separation becomes dismissed as unthinkable. Grace’s love for Graham is so great that she discards any consideration to herself. Some of the torture she experiences is self-inflicted as a part of her mission of merging with her brother. She willingly asks for the sex change operation and shows no resistance when Tinker uses electroshock therapy on her. The extremes of her love are amplified because she is unconditionally working towards her brother’s love, even when losing herself in the process. In the end, love does indeed conquer all, but it also hurts people. Grace is left with nothing *but* love, and it is arguable whether that is ideal. The immediate impression of the conclusion to Grace’s story is one of hope and optimism, but slowly questions arise. What is love once you have lost yourself? Maybe not something worth prescribing to anyone.

2.2 Tinker & Woman: Repressed Love

Where Grace is the protagonist of the play, Tinker can easily be considered the antagonist. He is often described as a sadist – a term previously used in this thesis as well – yet, that is simplifying the complexity of Tinker as a character. Sarah Kane does not create easily analyzable characters who are simply good or evil, “everyone is at times victim, perpetrator, or bystander” (De Vos 95). This is demonstrated throughout all plotlines. Carl sacrifices his lover, Grace watches Robin commit suicide and Tinker both orchestrates violence and is a victim of the same circumstances as the others. Saunders problematizes Tinker’s character when describing him as a “chameleon-like presence throughout the play” (Saunders 96). He tells Graham that “I’m a dealer not a doctor” (3) in scene one, but goes on

to say, “I’m a doctor” (18) to the Woman in scene six. He tells Grace “I can’t protect you” (10) in scene three, but in scene ten he takes her hand and says, “I’m here to save you” (29). Saunders states that “this fluidity of identity ranging from torturer to redeemer, makes Tinker one of the most problematic characters in all of Kane’s plays. His puzzling and contradictory identity seems in part to come from the amalgamation of several of the literary sources that influenced *Cleansed*” (Saunders 96). For the sake of revealing the nature of Tinker as a character, it might be more helpful looking to concentration camps under the Nazi regime, than looking to the literary sources that influenced *Cleansed*, even though she undeniably was inspired by those who came before her. The aim of shedding light on this parallel should not be confused with the implication that the play has any further ties to concentration camps under Hitler’s regime. Rather, the argument is that similar circumstances create similar results.

Some of the parallels between WWII and *Cleansed* cannot be completely dismissed. This is especially related to the war-oriented masculinity seen in both instances. The early Nazi camps were run by the SA, the original paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. It was used to spread fear, kill politicians and deprive the opposition of their leaders, motivated by SA-men’s desire for revenge towards their opponents as well as members of the higher classes (Arendt 55). The SS under Himmler took over the concentration camps during WWII, and the SA was eliminated from control and administration of the camps. Under the SS, political opponents were few, and the majority of inmates were criminals or people of asocial elements such as homosexuals (Arendt 57). *Cleansed* more closely resembles concentration camps as they were under the SS administration. Large parts of the inner administration were handled by the prisoners themselves, and in several instances, the SS was expressly ordered to have executions executed only by prisoners. In the beginning, this was carried out by criminals who formed the unchallenged camp aristocracy, but later on, certain prisoners were promoted to the position of the camp elite. This category of inmates never consisted of innocent Jews or homosexuals, but rather murderers and others who had a long track record in the camps (Arendt 58-59).

Because we don’t meet any higher authority, it’s easy to assume that Tinker is a leader figure within the university that *Cleansed* takes place, but by considering the circumstances of concentration camps, it is just as reasonable to assume that he is another prisoner who has simply climbed higher in the social hierarchy. We are also left with a little clue to this when he in scene three states that “I’m not allowed to let anything leave the grounds” (9), implying that there is someone above him, at least as a legislating force. Shedding light on this aspect

of the institution the characters of *Cleansed* find themselves in, it could be easier to understand the ambiguity of Tinker. It makes his position as someone in power all the more fragile, and any visible hesitance to serve his duty could result in a loss of respect and consequently his security.

By extension one can conclude that Tinker has already lived through a longer stay at the institution than the other characters and has possibly suffered the consequences of it. The SS administered concentration camps were laboratories in the experiment of total domination, a goal that according to Arendt in “Social Sciences and the Concentration Camps” could only be achieved “under the extreme circumstances of a human-made hell” (60), which is the circumstance we see in *Cleansed*. It is possible that Tinker prior to the play taking place inhabited qualities that made him suitable for promotion to his position of power, and that someone higher up in the administration has domination over him after carefully and over time breaking him down. Yet, this does not implicate that Tinker is relieved of any moral responsibility for his actions. Primo Levi, an Italian holocaust survivor and writer, introduced the term “gray zone” in the debate on accountability among prisoners of concentration camps. He argues that it is unreasonable to judge the actions of the victims of genocide based on moral tools appropriate to everyday life (Lee 280). Similar to the setting of *Cleansed*, concentration camps were “far removed from the niceties of everyday reality” (Lee 280). This creates a gray zone where it’s challenging to take a firm moral stance. Nonetheless, Tinker cannot be completely absolved from his moral accountability. He actively chooses to be an executing part of the atrocities that take place in the institution. Meanwhile, the other couples not only endure the torture, they actively express the love that often leads to violent punishments. This further contrasts Tinker’s decision to take on the role as the institution’s sadist and create another layer of complexity and ambiguity to his character.

Most of the violence and torture in *Cleansed* spring from Tinker. Time and time again, he enables or executes grotesque actions towards the other characters, oftentimes in response to witnessing their expressions of love. Carl systematically loses all ability to communicate his love towards his partner because Tinker dismembers his limbs in the order they are used to express love. Robin, who tries to express his love for Grace through gifts, is forced to eat the chocolate he has bought for her in one sitting, the books that bring him closer to her are burned by Tinker, and the flower Robin drew for her meets the same fate. These expressions of love may provoke such violent reactions from Tinker because he recognizes the vulnerability the couples are showing each other and the world in which they exist. Love will always come with the risk of amorous catastrophe, to borrow Barthes’s phrase. Expressing

love always runs the risk of suffering if it is felt for the wrong person (Nordlund 23), and Tinker's reaction to expressed love almost serves as a metaphor for any worst-case scenario that can come from loving someone.

We will come to learn that Tinker is capable of emotions like love, but an emotion such as love leaves one vulnerable, which is demonstrated throughout the other plotlines. A man in the position of the kind of power that Tinker beholds could be portrayed as weaker if he were to reveal his emotions. De Vos describes the character of Tinker as “a magnificent example of repression in contemporary drama” (De Vos 92), and he is, because that is the one way in which he can keep his position in the social hierarchy. This results in a situation where Tinker not only suppresses everyone else's expression of love, but also his own feelings. Tinker turns into a character who systematically attempts to destroy love in others, while yearning to express and experience love himself. This is conducted through the figure of the Woman (Saunders 98). The Woman is isolated from the rest of the characters, she is only met in privacy, which makes it a safe space for Tinker to be vulnerable.

Love in *Cleansed* is constantly being tested because Tinker tries through torture and suppression to eliminate it. In part, this reaction might also stem from envy of an experience he is deprived of. This deprivation might be caused by his fear, or potentially just that the urge to behave sadistically is simply stronger than his urge for an affectionate relationship. Regardless, he cannot experience the kind of love that Grace expresses to her brother, or the idealistic love of Carl, because there are unnamed voices that might be quick to take his position if he slips away from his image as a forceful leader figure. This is also demonstrated by how even though Tinker can't be seen by anyone as vulnerable, there is not the same need for torturing Grace or the Woman. As females, they are inherently weaker than him by default and do not need to be rendered harmless by brute force. The motivation for Tinker's behavior greatly supports my thesis, that the experience of love is amplified by the torture he inflicts. Firstly, because he is, at least in part, driven by his own repressed needs. He reacts to any sign of affection because he, by choice or by fear, is unable to experience what the other characters are experiencing in terms of love. But even more so, the other characters' experience of love is amplified because even during the immense violence that is inflicted, love prevails, demonstrating flawlessly how it is indestructible. Only an extreme experience of love would motivate someone to endure the violence they are subjected to.

The one place Tinker eventually shows vulnerability and open up to the possibility of love is in the university sports hall showers, converted into peep-show booths. Here Tinker

pays tokens to see the only other female character besides Grace, an unnamed dancer only referred to in the stage directions as the Woman. She too can be challenging to grasp upon first reading the play, as her character and the character of Grace at times seems to flow into each other. When Nils Tabert, who translated the play into German, addressed this in an interview conducted by Saunders, he recalled the German director Peter Zadek asking Kane whether the Woman should be played by the same actress as Grace, in which Kane clearly stated that they are two different women (Tabert 141). This analysis of the relationship between Tinker and the Woman will be somewhat intertwined with the relationship Tinker wants to have with Grace, and it must therefore be emphasized that the Woman is a sex worker. By extension, her main aim will always be to please the client, and in the case of Tinker, that means to take on a persona of Grace for the majority of the play.

Tinker first goes to visit her in scene six, and previous to this he has administered Graham's suicide, refused to call himself a friend of Graham, admitted Grace to the institution per her request, and tortured Carl and Rod for expressing their love. Tinker's visit to the booth is in many ways an extension of his first meeting with Grace, with no regard for the torture he executed towards the gay couple in between his meeting with Grace and his meeting with the Woman. His manners toward these women are gentler than his behavior towards the men put in the institution, thereby threatening to weaken his dominance over the others if anyone witnesses a more vulnerable side of him. This is why Tinker tells Grace that "I can't protect you" (10), relieving him of any responsibility for what happens to her in the institution. This is following his statement that "it's not right" (10), referring to her wanting to stay in a place that is preserved for men. This is the narrative that most connects scene three to scene six. The latter statement is echoed almost immediately in Tinker's meeting with the Woman:

TINKER. What you doing here?

WOMAN. I like it.

TINKER. It's not right. (17)

Tinker has paid with a token to see the Woman, sitting down with his jacket in his lap, masturbating. Yet, before saying anything else, he asked the sex worker to stop dancing, he looked at the floor, just like he does in scene three when Grace undressed in front of him. After echoing his conversation with Grace, he asks the Woman "can we be friends?" (17), similarly to how Graham asked Tinker if they were friends in the opening scene of the play. Before the Woman has time to reply to this request, the flaps of the booth close,

demonstrating in no uncertain terms that the Woman is a prostitute. She is offering her services for pay, she is no friend.

Tinker pays another token, and the entire scene resets. The Woman is dancing again, Tinker is yet again not looking at her, and he repeats “you shouldn’t be here. It’s not right” (18). The Woman acknowledges this, but this time Tinker offers to help and repeats the question of friendship. De Vos discusses how female nudity creates discomfort for Tinker, and how this is demonstrated through parallelism between Grace and the Woman, stating that

The fear of looking these women in the eyes is but one of the many parallelisms between Grace and the dancing woman, which is proof of Tinker’s initial feelings of love for Grace that he projects upon the peepshow lady, since her inferior position corresponds much more to his hierarchical standards. The displacement of his love to the striptease dancer follows the way of least resistance. (De Vos 92)

This observation by De Vos, confirms my analysis of Tinker as a character. By projecting his love and by extension vulnerability onto the Woman, he is not revealed as vulnerable to the other characters in the institution. While they share a moment of privacy, Tinker still has all the power over the Woman. The other love affairs are between equal human beings, removed from any capitalist transaction. The Woman is paid to play the role of Tinker’s lover for the duration he is there.

Tinker spends the remainder of scene six throwing his urge to help at the Woman. He tells her “I’ll be anything you need” and begs “Please. I won’t let you down” (18) when she is unwilling to receive his helping hand. The parallelism between Grace and the Woman is finally explicitly revealed when Tinker tells the women that “I’ll give you whatever you want, Grace...I promise.” (19). This statement is also echoed directly to Grace later on in the play, further stressing the parallel. The flap closes again, and the scene comes to an end.

Tinker visits the Woman again in scene nine, after burning Robin’s expression of love, and cutting off Carl’s hands. In spite of his relentless effort to suppress any expression of love between others, he is still searching for emotional connection with the woman he refers to as Grace when he reverberates his previous question and again asks her “Are we friends?” (26). This time, the sex worker is not immediately rejecting his inquiry, but rather asking if he will help her (26). Perhaps her warming up to the idea is caused by the lack of masturbation from Tinker. He is in this moment not explicitly treating her like a sex worker, and he is facing her,

going as far as requesting to see her face for him to look at her. When Tinker asks what he should do, the Woman replies “save me” (26) before the flap closes. Up until this point, it is the dialogue between Grace and Tinker that has been echoed in his scenes with the Woman, but interestingly, following scene nine they also merge the other way around. When Grace is being beaten by the unseen group of men, it is eventually Tinker who enters, takes her hand and says “I’m here to save you” (29), per requested by the woman in the booth. This demonstrates that at this point, the sex worker in the booth and Grace are in Tinker’s reality indistinguishable. While undoubtedly being two separate women, residing in different areas of the institution, with different motivations for staying there and with different challenges during their stay, Tinker has projected Grace upon the woman in the booth with a force that has left him unable to differentiate them at this point.

Tinker’s troubles with distinguishing the women from another are proven through another parallel utterance as well. Tinker told the Woman that he would do whatever she wanted in his initial meeting with her. In scene twelve he is with Grace who is lying down between him and Graham and repeats the words “Whatever you want” (30) with no context as if it is simply a reminder of the previous promise to the Woman. On the other hand, when Grace refers to her balls, Tinker replies “You’re a woman” (30), further extending the link to the sex worker, by pointing out the common denominator they alone share in the institution. His conversation is intertwined with the conversation Grace is having with her brother. De Vos discusses scene twelve and states the following regarding Tinker’s position in the situation:

We see that Tinker, although he is obviously not aware of Graham’s “presence,” literally comes between them and manifests himself as a potential love candidate. The love words that Grace and Graham direct to one another clash with Tinker’s self-centered obtrusiveness. His isolation is even more accentuated by the aggressive voices, which imprison – or accompany – him like two bodyguards.
(De Vos 93)

Tinker is trying to manifest himself as a potential love candidate for Grace, but his attempts fail. When Grace says “Love you” (31), she clarifies that she is talking to Graham by stating his name. And while Tinker corrects her, it goes unacknowledged. It is after this that Tinker gives in to the Voices, and executes electroshock therapy on Grace, leaving her with bits of her brains burned out. In some respects, scene twelve leaves Tinker rejected. As stated by Nordlund, this kind of rejection causes suffering, because the vulnerable emotion of love is

not reciprocated. This is also at the very heart of the quotes from Roland Barthes that inspired the play. Yet, it is complicated to view Tinker as exclusively a hurt lover, as he also chooses to take on the role as the torturer by inflicting brain damage on Grace. Tinker's cruelty is in the end a result of choices he makes, and those choices are stark contrasts to the other characters, who also experience rejection.

Just like in scene nine, when Tinker goes to visit the woman in the booth in scene fourteen, the previous scene consisted of him watching love declarations between Carl and Rod and trying to stop it by dismembering another body part of Carl. Furthermore, he has been rejected by his own love interest. By this point, it should be increasingly clear for the reader that there is an apparent struggle for Tinker between being deprived of love and affection, and observing it everywhere in the institution. When Tinker, following the interaction with Grace and the torture of Carl, is reunited with the Woman he is more aggressive than ever towards her and ready to have a confrontation. Contrary to the previous scenes with the sex worker, he sits down and "masturbates furiously until she speaks" (32), this time without covering himself. When the Woman eventually addresses him, Tinker is having none of it, telling her to not waste his time.

Scene fourteen without the context of Tinker and Grace's relationship reads as an unprovoked sexual assault of the woman in the booth. He aggressively forces her to open her legs, to look at her genitals, and touch herself while she is crying. By reevaluating the scene in the light of the undistinguishable relationship Tinker has created between Grace and the Woman, the scene reads a little different.

TINKER. TOUCH FUCKING TOUCH.

WOMAN. Don't do this.

TINKER. YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU?

WOMAN. YES

TINKER. THEN DO IT

WOMAN. Don't want to be this.

TINKER. You're a woman, Grace. (33)

In his own twisted way, Tinker is making an effort to help Grace. She is showing signs of mental illness with her obsession with her brother and becoming him, and the denial of her gender in efforts of taking on Graham's identity. By making the woman in the booth touch her female genitals, Tinker hopes to burst the bubble and reveal reality to Grace. Meanwhile, the Woman and Tinker are talking past each other. When she states that she does not want to

be “this,” she is most likely referring to her role as a sex worker. She does not want to be in a position where she has to open her legs and offer sexual services to her clients. This miscommunication continues when the Woman tries to confront Tinker with his previous promises, to which Tinker replies “I lied. You are what you are. No regrets.” (33). Again, he is referring to Grace being a woman, while this is received as if he is talking about the Woman’s occupation.

The miscommunication continues as the Woman is becoming increasingly desperate, possibly because Tinker’s vow to help her has been the one beacon of hope in a situation like hers. The problem is resolved, though, when the Woman does something that is out of character for Grace, which we learned in scene twelve.

WOMAN. I love you.

TINKER. Please.

WOMAN. Thought you loved me.

TINKER. As you are.

WOMAN. Then love me, fucking love me (34)

When Grace said “love you,” she spoke to Graham, but the Woman is directing her love directly towards Tinker, giving him the affection he is so desperately wanting. During her confession of love, Tinker is still talking as if it is Grace before him, preoccupied with her gender, but before he has a chance to reply, the flaps close. In his last utterance of the scene, “If I’d known – / If I’d known. / I’ve always known,” (34) the realization dawns on him. He realizes in this moment that it is not Grace in the booth, and the identity of Grace and the identity of the Woman separates within Tinker’s reality. This separation happens as the Woman’s act of expressing love directly contradicts Grace’s rejection. Now that it has become apparent without a doubt that they are two separate women, and that the Woman apparently loves him, Tinker is no longer a rejected lover.

Following Tinker receiving a declaration of love from the woman in the booth, the torture he inflicts on others is increasing. Marcus Nordlund debated, like previously mentioned, how literary and cultural theorists have avoided studies of love, possibly because passion has been set aside in favor of reason and rational thinking (21). As an extension of his thoughts, passion – or in this case love – could be considered irrational. It is an emotion, which traditionally is not a reasonable thing to act on. Perhaps, for the sake of the argument, one could be considered weaker when showing and acting on emotion. In the case of Tinker, a show of weakness would threaten his position in the institution. This means that once he is

experiencing intimacy and emotional affection from the Woman, he overcompensates outside of their relation. He is no longer driven by envy of those who get to experience love, but rather protecting himself from losing his position in the social hierarchy. He kills Rod and watches Robin die without interfering because any other behavior could reveal his weakness. As for Grace, Tinker hits two birds with one stone. The genital transplantation takes away Carl's penis, the one thing he had left to physically express his love, while simultaneously obliterating Grace.

De Vos argues that in his evolution toward true love for the Woman, Grace has served as a substitution, even though Tinker considered it the other way around. The operation conducted on Grace was not an altruistic act towards Grace, but a way of bringing him back from the platonic love ideal that he projected on Grace in order to love the striptease dancer (De Vos 95). Saunders states something similar when he says that "once Grace's identity has become obliterated both Tinker and the Woman seem free to become lovers" (Saunders 99). I argue that Tinker was relieved from his attraction towards Grace when her identity became detangled from the Woman's, which happens after the Woman declared her love to Tinker, and not once Grace got the sex change operation that Tinker originally did not want to give her. As Grace is inherently inferior to him due to her gender, it is not completely dismissible that her operation *is* an act of altruism from Tinker. There is no need to torture her, so letting her favor from the conclusive torture of Carl when he is castrated might just be a positive consequence of silencing Carl's last option for expressing love and intimacy.

The Tinker we meet in his concluding scene of scene nineteen is a vulnerable man and a side of him not seen before. When McQuarrie, who played Tinker in the first staging of the play, talked about the scene, he noted that Tinker speaks tenderly to the Woman and in many respects reveals himself to be weak, "and I think it's the only time you get a chink in the armor and see behind him to a certain degree" (McQuarrie 183). Scene nineteen does by all means present us with the most honest and emotionally undressed Tinker. He sparks conversation by stating that "she's gone" (42), referring to Grace, but rather than this topic developing any further, the Woman initiates a series of kisses. These are followed by Tinker's vulnerable confession of fault.

TINKER. I'm confused.

WOMAN. I know.

TINKER. I think I –

Misunderstood.

WOMAN. I know. You're beautiful.

TINKER. Grace, she –

WOMAN. I know. I love you. (43)

Tinker is seemingly met with warmth and understanding. The Woman is expressing her love to him, her words reflect an acceptance for the situation as it has been. She follows this by initiating more intimacy, kissing Tinker, and undressing.

Curiously, for the first time during their interaction, the Woman echoes Grace's words to the object of her love from scene six, when stating "I think about you when I.../And wish it was you when I..." (43). Grace spoke those words right before having sex with Graham, just like the Woman is doing now. They both start to cry when making love to one another, and the Woman continues to tell him that she loves him, but at the end of the day, the Woman is a sex worker. Tinker has paid for the flaps in her booth to open, he is still paying for her services, and she is giving Tinker what he has indicated that he needs. The soft expressions of love are contrasted with harsh, sexualized language.

WOMAN. I love your cock, Tinker.

I love your cock inside me, Tinker.

Fuck me, Tinker

Harder, harder, harder

Come inside me

I love you, Tinker (44)

Tinker replies by ejaculating prematurely, which the Woman laughs off. She comforts him and continues to express her love to him even though he does not express it in a similar manner a single time up until this moment. What he does, is assure her that he is present, he is with her now.

Tinker in many ways demonstrates his dedication to the Woman when he finally asks for her name, rather than calling her Grace. He is trying to break down the anonymity and give her an identity outside being a "someone." Her reply does not allow this to happen.

WOMAN. Grace.

TINKER. No, I meant –

WOMAN. I know. It's Grace.

TINKER. *(Smiles)* I love you, Grace.

The scene ends with Tinker's first profession of love, the emotion he has systematically repressed and prohibited from others throughout the entirety of the play. Yet, there is no resurrection or happy ending to Tinker. The Woman in the booth does not give herself completely to him, but rather she has taken on the identity and the role he has projected onto her. He is her ticket out of this situation, and she does what she must to please her client.

Chapter 3: Dying in the name of Love

Robin, Carl and Rod have plotlines tightly knit into Grace and Tinker's experience and relationship to love. Carl and Rod are constantly being watched by Tinker and suffer his torture following every expression of love. Robin's presence demonstrates Grace's transformation into Graham by how her treatment of him changes over the course of the play. Furthermore, Carl and Robin share some clear similarities in that they are both naïve lovers, seeking love from someone older. They depend on their lover and although they express their love differently, they are both explicit in their expressions of what they want and need. Another common denominator is death. This was discussed by Daniel Evans, who played Tinker in the original staging of *Cleansed*. When Saunders interviewed him, he pointed out that characters in Kane's plays have to prove their love by killing themselves, to which Evans replied that "I suppose it's the ultimate sacrifice – would you die for someone? If the answer is yes, then I think that is Sarah's proof of unconditional love. It's back to Shakespeare again – *Romeo and Juliet*" (Evans 173). Rod eventually sacrifices himself to save Carl, and Robin commits suicide when he loses Grace. Their relationships with love are not as impactful on the surroundings as that of Tinker, and not as relentlessly extreme as Grace's. Yet, they do demonstrate just how much they would be willing to sacrifice for the one they love, and their experience of love is extreme. This is demonstrated by how they are willing to die for their love interest.

3.1 Carl & Rod: Unconditional Love

Carl and Rod in many ways reflect the typical relationship and the power struggle that happens when two people try to merge their lives and values. There is an apparent age difference, and Carl represents a younger and more idealistic lover by wanting commitment and professions of eternal love, while Rod represents the realistic lover, hesitant to commit to Carl, and refusing to promise eternal love. Their first scene in the play, scene two, introduces these values through a dialogue taking place regarding the exchange of rings that Carl tries to initiate. Rod considers a commitment of such sort a suicide, but Carl goes on to declare that he'd die for Rod upon asking, and when asked what he is thinking about, he says:

CARL. That I'll always love you

ROD. (Laughs.)

CARL. That I'll never betray you.

ROD. (Laughs more.)

CARL. That I'll never lie to you. (6)

This grand expression of love echoes Belsey's discussion. The extraordinary experience of loving someone is summarized in a worn-out promise of eternal love, the true extent and experience of his love is lost in a universal phrase that is so commonly uttered that it almost loses its meaning (Belsey 685). Rod unwillingly takes part in the ring exchange, but his expression of love is an honest one, discarding all regard for the stereotypical "rose-colored glasses."

ROD. (Takes the ring and Carl's hand.)

Listen. I'm saying this once.

(He puts the ring on Carl's finger.)

I love you *now*.

I'm with you *now*.

I'll do my best, moment to moment, not to betray you.

Now.

That's it. No more. Don't make me lie to you. (7)

The ring exchange is central to the storyline that takes place in the case of Carl and Rod. It is introduced as a symbol of loving commitment, and they each explain their respective attitude towards this symbol by both expressing what kind of love it symbolizes for them. While Carl promises eternal love when exchanging the rings, Rod is only willing to do the exchange as long as it is clear that his only promise is to do his best, and anything else would be a lie. Graham Saunders points out that the ring exchange and Rod's initial refusal to take part in it, recall similar moments from some of Shakespeare's comedies, namely *Much Ado About Nothing* (c 1598) and *As you Like It* (c 1599) (Saunders 97). This demonstrates Kane's previously mentioned awareness of the history of theater and is an excellent example of how she has borrowed themes and symbols from those who came before her. It is also important to note that scene two concludes by stating that "Tinker is watching" (8). This is seen throughout the entirety of their storyline, and it is at the heart of the torture they have to endure.

In scene four we meet Carl and Rod again. The symbolism of the ring is put to the test and Carl's earlier promise is being tested. Without any explanation, he is being "heavily beaten by an unseen group of men" (12), controlled by Tinker's order to stop or continue. As we know from chapter 2.2, Tinker administers and executes torture in response to people's expression of love. Love makes people vulnerable, and by hitting their most vulnerable spot he is able to demonstrate his position of power, and because he watched Carl and Rod's

discourse on love, he knows when to strike. He eventually puts an end to the beating Carl endures, only to introduce the idea of more gruesome torture: he explains that “there’s a vertical passage through your body, a straight line through which an object can pass without immediately killing you” (12). He touches the entry point on Carl, the anus, and the exit point, Carl’s right shoulder, and explains that it avoids all major organs and the victim eventually dies either from starvation or other causes. The story acts as a warning before a pole is pushed a few inches up Carl’s anus, testing his limits. Interestingly, Kane has explained that this method of torture is a form of crucifixion which Serbian soldiers would use against Muslims in Bosnia (Saunders 90). The threat of violence that Carl is facing, is hence violence that a large group of people historically has been subjected to. This is in line with Kane’s philosophy while writing: “anything that has been imagined, there’s someone somewhere who’s done it” (Kane, qtd. in Sierz 117).

While being raped by a pole, the ring exchange is kept relevant as Tinker reverberates Carl’s statement of being willing to die for Rod from scene two. At this moment, the reader, as well as Carl, is under the impression that this is a life or death moment. Carl has the opportunity to be true to his words and to be crucified in the name of love. Instead of validating his own words, he does the opposite of what he stated during the ring exchange scene and betrays Rod. He demonstrates that there are limits to his love and it is conditional in the sense that his life is prioritized higher than the life of his loved one: “Not me please not me don’t kill me Rod not me don’t kill me ROD NOT ME ROD NOT ME” (13). At this point, it seems as if love has lost. Carl tries to apologize to Rod but is interrupted by Tinker’s interference. His betrayal results in what Saunders describes as a “symbolic act of violence to signify the death of love: with a pair of scissors he removes Carl’s tongue – the organ of betrayal – and makes him swallow Rod’s ring” (Saunders 98). The act is certainly a removal of the organ of betrayal, but more than being a symbol of the death of love, it is taking away the organ Carl used for expressing his love. It is, albeit a failed attempt, a way of taking away Carl’s ability to express love through words.

The swallowing of the ring is not explained but could be seen as a literal play on the idiom “swallow your words,” as the ring symbolizes the love that Carl verbalized in scene two. The Cambridge Dictionary definition of the idiom is “to be forced to admit that something you have said has been shown to be wrong” (“Swallow Your Words”), and this is exactly what is the case for Carl. As we will come to see, this would not end the love story between him and Rod, but it is all things considered safe to assume that Tinker wanted it to be the end and that it for the moment seems to have been successful, as he has proven Carl

wrong. Therefore, he makes Carl swallow the ring that symbolizes his words of endearment towards Rod.

The next time we meet Carl and Rod is in scene eight, where we meet them out in the rain, just inside the perimeter of the fence. The stage directions introduce the rats for the first time, reading “a single rat scuttles around between Rod and Carl” (25). Carl is mute following the loss of his tongue, but he is trying to write in the mud when Rod confronts him. While he is scribbling, Rod continues to talk, making it clear that he forgives Carl by stating that “I’d have done the same only I never said I wouldn’t. You’re young. I don’t blame you. Don’t blame yourself. No one’s to blame” (25). Rod is calm and stays rational under the immense pressure Tinker makes them endure. His expectations are well-grounded in reasonable arguments, even when Carl is unable to express himself properly.

When Carl is finished scribbling in the mud, Tinker appears. In the same way, he tried to silence him by removing his tongue, Carl’s ability to express himself is once again taken away when Tinker proceeds to cut off his hands. At this moment Carl can no longer speak, and he can no longer put his words into writing either. Sarah Kane addressed this particular stage direction, explaining it like this:

It’s not about the actual chop. It’s about that person who can no longer express love with his hands, and what does that mean? And I think the less naturalistically you show those things the more likely people are to be thinking what is the meaning of this act rather than ‘fucking hell, how do they do that!’ That’s a far more interesting response to elicit from an audience. (Kane, qtd. in Saunders 89)

Sarah Kane is not adding torture inflicted on Carl, simply for the sake of shocking an audience and creating a violent and grotesque play. It is a symbolic act more than anything, creating an image of how Carl is continuing to be silenced by Tinker who attempts to annihilate love. Tinker does however fail, for even when Carl can no longer speak, Rod forgives him. Furthermore, when Carl’s hands are cut off, Rod “picks up the severed left hand and takes off the ring he put there” (25) and goes on to put it on his own hand. This renews the bond of love with Carl (Saunders 98). The rings carry the same defined meaning as was given to them in scene two, and when Rod puts it on his own hand, he reaffirms those words. It is also demonstrated that Rod’s added “now” to the universal phrase of “love you” still rings true. His love has not ceased with the threat that Tinker has imposed on them. In a way, Rod reaffirming through the ring makes the word become more than the metonym Belsey

ascribed the phrase of love declaration. While love is unable to name itself, Rod gives it meaning through action.

The rat becomes relevant at the closing of the scene, when the stage direction states that it “begins to eat Carl’s right hand” (26). The appearance of rats in their storyline is puzzling, but a number of explanations can be discussed. Primarily, viewing rats as symbolism, it is a discreet way of condemning the relationship as taboo and “unclean” in that it is a homosexual one. Rats are commonly associated with unclean spaces and is also commonly referred to as a major factor in the spread of the black death during the late middle ages. Reading the symbolism as a something unclean in relation to their relationship is also supported by how they are growing in numbers as the couple’s love becomes more secure. Furthermore, the rats actively remove any hope of resurrecting the body parts that are removed by for instance, eating away at them.

Scene thirteen takes place on the same patch of mud as scene eight, now surrounded by a dozen rats. Rod is the only one speaking, as Carl still has no tongue to articulate words, and no hands to write. Rod is therefore only thinking out loud, uninterrupted. He speaks of alternative outcomes if Carl had not betrayed him when Tinker threatened him, debating whether he might have been killed. This is followed up with “He ever asks me I’ll say ‘Me. Do it to me. Not to Carl, not my lover, not my friend, do it to me.’ I’d be gone, first boat out of here. Death isn’t the worst thing they can do to you” (32). Rod’s monologue is followed by stage directions describing a child singing Lennon and McCartney’s ‘Things We Said Today.’ The song is an upbeat contrast to the dire circumstances surrounding Carl and Rod, and prompts Carl to start dancing “a dance of love for Rod” (32). It is described as a dance without rhythm but filled with desperation as he is unable to express himself in any other way, trying to convey his regret through dance. Tinker is yet again watching, before he forces Carl to the ground and cuts his feet off. There is a clear pattern. This time Carl was expressing his love with his feet by dancing for his lover, and consequently, his feet are cut off, leaving Carl without any means of communicating. In the previous scene, the single rat started eating his hand. Scene thirteen concludes with the rats carrying Carl’s feet away.

The sixteenth scene of *Cleansed* is in many ways the conclusion to the relationship between Carl and Rod. They are by the perimeter fence, but this time most of the rats are dead (37). Following the symbolism of the rats, this might indicate that their love is now cleansed. Not by no longer being taboo, but from the sheer intensity the love has grown to have. The staging directions also speaks of “scorching heat” and “the sound of fire” (37), which are also

commonly associated with love through describing it with metaphors like burning flames and warm feelings.

Lennon and McCartney's 'Things We Said Today' from the previous scene could easily be considered foreshadowing for what was yet to come, with lyrics like "Someday when we're dreaming / Deep in love, not a lot to say / Then we will remember / Things we said today" (McCartney, Lennon). In scene sixteen, dialogue from previous scenes are remembered and reverberated. While making love, Rod echoes Carl's declaration from the ring exchange scene:

ROD. I will always love you.

I will never lie to you.

I will never betray you.

On my life. (38)

Once again Rod reaffirms the love and commitment to Carl, and this time he does it on Carl's terms, leaving behind his rational idea of loving Carl only from moment to moment. Furthermore, the context of torture removes the banality of the statement of love that was present when it was Carl who declared his love through these universal phrases. The extreme conditions under which their love exists forces a deeper commitment to each other, and this time Rod is ready to explicitly make the commitment Carl did in the beginning. Love is no longer a metonym, to borrow Belsey's term (685), it is intensified through the circumstances they exist in. When Rod swears on his life, it is in the face of a very real threat. He further reaffirms their original commitment by taking off his ring and putting it in Carl's mouth for him to swallow. Returning to the idiom of swallowing your words, this is Rod's way of admitting he was wrong. He is able to love beyond moment to moment and would die for Carl if it came to it. Which it does come to.

Tinker appears after watching Carl and Rod making love and falling asleep in each other's arms. He pulls Rod away from Carl, and their relationship faces the final test:

TINKER. You or him, Rod, what's it to be?

ROD. Me. Not Carl. Me. (38)

Rod has his final declaration of love by sacrificing himself for the sake of his lover. Provoked by their love, Tinker cuts Rod's throat, and he dies. Yet, in certain ways love wins. Rod has fulfilled his promise to Carl, and he demonstrated that the idealistic love that was originally

introduced by Carl is rooted in reality. Rod proved that their love was unconditional, by rather facing death than see his lover go through any more torture. Love transcends beyond the utterance, and though a universal phrase cannot demonstrate the individual experience, actions can. Through his sacrifice, Rod eliminated the “now” in his declaration and demonstrated that his love for Carl was larger than life.

By the end of the play, Carl is nothing but a shell of himself, a prisoner in his own body as well as the institution. He has lost his lover, his ability to speak and write, and his feet have been removed. When his penis is transplanted to the body of Grace as she is becoming Graham, he also lost the last way in which he was able to express love to Rod: through sex. In the final scene of *Cleansed*, he is in the company of Grace and is simply crying as the sun comes out and shines on them. Two rats are present, chewing on their wounds. Grace has sacrificed her own identity, while Carl has sacrificed any physical ability to express himself except for the tears. Dan Rebellato possibly described the relationship and the story of Carl and Rod the best when he described *Cleansed* as a play that “strips romantic love of all its unknowable promises, its claim of eternity, and asks what is left...this irreducible core is the extraordinary and hard-won affirmation of the play” (Rebellato 280). Carl’s fate also resonates with the quote from Barthes that inspired *Cleansed*. Carl eventually becomes quite literally a prisoner in his own body after the loss of Rod. He has lost himself while fighting for love and is now without his lover and without the ability to ever express love again. In the end, Carl reaches out his arm and Grace grabs his stump, signifying some care towards each other as they have both sacrificed everything for love.

As discussed in chapter 2.1, for Grace the play has a happy ending in the sense that she reached her goal. The sun shines, light engulfs them, and love has conquered all. In Carl’s case, the ending reads very differently. Within the same final moments, he has lost everything except his life. For Grace, “the sun gets brighter and brighter” (47), but the rats that have followed Carl through his journey of love with Rod is now more aggressive than ever before. He is no longer protected by Rod’s love. The squeaking of the rats grow louder until the sound is deafening, and it reads as if the two rats are multiplying judging by the intensity of the sound. The cleansing effect of extreme love left with Rod, and Carl is left with sorrow and misery. In a sense, the ultimate love is directly transferred into an experience of the ultimate pain and suffering, far larger than what Tinker could subject Carl to through torture. The play ends in a mastery depiction of the extreme contrast between love and suffering, all within the same closing sentences.

If we return to the blurb on the back of the 2001 edition of the play, we are informed that the setting of the play is “an institution designed to rid society of its undesirables.” In the case of Carl and Rod, they find themselves in a similar situation as some men did during WWII, in that they are in this institution due to their sexual orientation. Yet, it is possible to argue for the fact that the torture Tinker makes them endure, is not in response to their sexual orientation, but more in response to their explicit and open-hearted expression of love. Stuart McQuarrie played Tinker in the first production of *Cleansed* and ruminated on the torture Tinker subjected them to. He commented that “there was something that [Tinker] found really distasteful – perhaps less distasteful in that it was a gay relationship, and more the fact that it was unconditional love. And he couldn’t understand how far it could go” (McQuarrie 181). Even more so than not being able to understand how far one can stretch the boundaries of unconditional love, Tinker is witnessing something he is unable to experience under the circumstance they exist. He is not just testing their love, but also acting out of envy because they do not let the institution silence their love. This supports my thesis that the disturbing violence in *Cleansed* is primarily acting as an amplifier for the concept and experience of love. This is not to say that the homosexuality is not met with a feeling of disapproval, but this is emphasized more by the appearance of rats as a symbol of something dirty. Regardless, it is only under the extreme circumstances Tinker creates, that the limits of unconditional love can truly be demonstrated. Carl is the most tortured character in the play, because he has the most naïve and idealistic idea of love, and hence also the approach to love that should in theory be the one easiest to debunk.

3.2 Grace & Robin: Maternal Love & The Oedipus Complex

Grace and Robin form a bond when Grace realizes that Robin is illiterate, and she immediately takes on a maternal role for him. Grace’s reaction to this information reflects maternal nurture, and this creates the foundation for looking at their relationship through a lens of maternal love and the subsequent reaction to this kind of compassion. She treats Robin gently as she is trying to teach him how to read, to which Robin responds by falling in love with Grace. According to Sarah Kane, the storyline concerning Robin is based on true accounts. He is based on a young black man who was imprisoned on Robben Island.

He was eighteen years old; He was put in Robben Island and told he would be there for forty-five years. Didn’t mean anything to him, he was illiterate. Some of the other prisoners taught him how to read and write. He learnt how to count, realized what forty-five years was and hung himself. (Kane, qtd in Sierz 117)

We learn about Robin in scene three of the play, when he is introduced wearing Graham's clothing and has to undress in front of Grace for her to put them on. This results in them switching outfits, and for the remainder of the play, Robin is wearing Grace's clothing. Through lines like "Voices told me to kill myself" (11), it is in a sense revealed to the reader what he is doing in this institution. Daniel Evans, who played Robin in the first staging of the play, explained in an interview with Graham Saunders that when working on the play, it was decided that they would interpret it as Robin being a schizophrenic, adding "I mean it could be anything but I think that was what we decided – that he's probably there because they think he's ill" (Evans 169). While it is left uncertain whether Robin is schizophrenic or not, he does display infantile behavior, as well as being mentally ill.

The inspiration Kane drew from the case on Robben Island is evident from the first meeting with Robin. Grace, who has been handcuffed to the bed by Tinker, asks him to write a letter to her father letting him know where she is, but Robin ignores her requests and speaks incoherently in response to the conversation she is trying to have with him.

ROBIN. Could be pretty soon, me leaving.

Could be in thirty, Tinker said.

Could be –

GRACE. You can't write, can you. (11)

Robin's illiteracy is quite central to his plotline. When we meet them again in scene seven, Grace is trying to teach him how to read and write – just like in the case on Robben Island.

While teaching Robin to read in scene seven, Grace is under what almost seems like a childlike interrogation, where Robin asks questions such as "Grace, you ever had a boyfriend?", "What was he like?", "What was his name?" and "Do you still love him?" (20). This dialogue is intertwined with the dialogue Grace is simultaneously having with Graham, but the conversation in which Robin part-takes appears to be highly innocent. Grace in turn is brief but paints a picture of an abusive relationship with a man she did not love, saying "He bought me a box of chocolates then tried to strangle me" (20).

Grace acts gentle and nurturing towards Robin, and like a mother introduces him to the linguistic order. Under the circumstances in which they exist, the Oedipus complex becomes very relevant, with Robin reflecting the role of a child experiencing attraction towards his maternal figure. He considers himself the one who's able to fulfill his situational mother's desire as a symptom of the Oedipus complex and thinks of himself as a fundamental

part of the union of his mother (De Vos 96). Robin's consideration of Grace as a mother-like figure is shown through his simultaneous expression of desire and familiarity, as seen here:

ROBIN. My mum weren't my mum and I had to choose another, I'd choose you.

GRACE. Sweet boy.

ROBIN. If I –

If I had to get married, I'd marry you. (22)

For the entirety of the play, Robin does not mention a paternal figure in his life outside of the institution, but within the play, he is contesting Grace's affection with both Tinker and Graham. According to De Vos, it is Graham who takes the third position as the father in the Oedipal constellation, an argument based on how they at times cooperate in questioning Robin, and other times Grace and Graham collaborate against Robin (De Vos 96). Yet, Tinker's position should not be underplayed either as a part of the opposition that seems to hinder Robin in receiving what he wants from Grace as a maternal figure. While the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex considers the subject of it to be jealous or hateful towards the same-sex parent, in the case of Robin he is not hateful as much as he is dismissive of the other men's love for Grace. This is especially evident in the case of Tinker. When Robin expresses his love for Grace, telling her that he is in love with her, Grace is refusing to accept his love, questioning it:

GRACE. How can you be?

ROBIN. I just am.

I know you –

GRACE. Tinker knows me.

ROBIN. And I love you. (24)

In this interaction between the characters, Robin is trying to demonstrate what he is capable of giving Grace in terms of love and affection. Tinker's qualities as someone who knows Grace are dismissed and hence not acknowledged by Robin at all – in his eyes, it is only him that can sufficiently cover the needs of Grace.

The case of Graham, on the other hand, is quite different. Grace's obsession with her brother has been apparent from the beginning, as she is still wearing his clothes, and Robin brings him up several times. For one, he wants to remove Grace's obsession with Graham. Because it seems to have been strengthened by his passing, he wishes for the opposite, saying "I had one wish I'd wish Graham alive again" (22), possibly as an intended way of

withdrawing Grace from her obsession with her brother, especially if assuming that it in part is a result of grief from losing a loved one. Furthermore, Graham is, in the same way Tinker will prove to be, an obstacle between Robin and his maternal nurturer. When Robin is trying to formulate the question “Will you be my girlfriend,” he is interrupted when Grace and Graham in unison reply “no” (23). This is Graham firmly prohibiting Robin in the role of a son, from being sexually attracted to Grace as the maternal figure (De Vos 97). I argue that both Tinker and Graham share the role as the third party in the Oedipal constellation, and in different ways hinder Robin from participating in a sexual or romantic relationship with Grace, largely motivated by their own interest in those attributes for their respective relationships with her.

Robin does receive limited reciprocation of his feelings toward Grace. Even though she is unwilling to become his girlfriend, she does state that “If I was going to kiss anyone here, and I’m not but if I was, it would be you” (23) when Robin proclaims that he has never kissed a girl before. A fundamental challenge in their relationship is that Robin does not recognize the man – Graham – Grace is trying to identify as. Even though Grace care for Robin, she is slowly dissolving her identity as she is turning into Graham, and will therefore consciously or unconsciously retreat from Robin, who is trying to receive love from a person that is on her own journey. Despite this Grace is trying to lead Robin to an optimistic path where his needs will eventually be met by someone else under different circumstances. This is done by trying to address life after the institution by bringing up a future situation when Robin will leave. Robin, on the other hand, is not going down the same mental path.

ROBIN. Don’t want to leave.

GRACE. This is –

ROBIN. I want to be with you.

GRACE. What are you saying?

ROBIN. I like it here. (24)

It’s important to note Robin’s unwillingness to leave. This is the point where his storyline differs from the man incarcerated on Robben Island. While Robin spoke of time until he would leave in his introductory scene, his desire to be with Grace is now larger than his desire to be free. When by the end of scene seven, Tinker appears and burns the piece of paper Robin has been working on, he is unaffected. His sole concern is Grace.

Robin does not appear again until scene eleven when he visits the Woman, the sex worker Tinker regularly visits and refers to as Grace. The scene consists of only stage

direction, no dialogue. Robin sits down and uses his only token to open the flap, making him able to see the woman dancing. “Robin watches – at first innocently eager, then bemused, then distressed” (30). Once the flap closes, Robin “sits and cries his heart out” (30). While interviewing Daniel Evans, Saunders described the scene as “the most puzzling episode in *Cleansed*” (Saunders 169). And it is puzzling, especially upon the first reading of the play. As a casual reader, it might be challenging to acknowledge the full depth of Robin’s emotional life. Upon addressing this particular scene, Evans explains that there might be many reasons why Robin cries, including shame, pity, and love (169). He is definitely onto something. Robin is fighting to keep Grace to himself but is rejected and pushed away by Grace and Graham. While he has previously towards Grace only discussed kissing, the Woman becomes a representation of a far more sexualized version of Grace than he has previously envisioned. It is possible that what brings him to tears, is the shame of sexually desiring Grace, who has taken on a maternal nurturing role. Another reading of the scene can imply that Robin shows care for the Woman. He meets a sexualized version of Grace under circumstances that are commercialized and that commodifies human love. Tinker goes along with this and is not affected by the system of commodified love, but to Robin it might feel more disturbing. It is also far more contrasting from his everyday life in the institution than it is for Tinker. This is the only scene where Robin is superior, happening by default because he has bought a service from the Woman. Meanwhile, Tinker is superior in any social interaction, minimizing the gap between the reality in the booth, and the reality elsewhere.

In scene fifteen Robin is still found pining after Grace. Tinker walks in on Robin sleeping amongst a pile of books, paper, and an abacus, as well as a pencil in his hand. This indicates that while he has not shared a scene with Grace since scene seven, he is continuing his work towards learning how to read and write. He also has a box of chocolates next to his head, an intended present for Grace. Tinker wakes Robin by grabbing him by the hair and putting a knife to his throat.

TINKER. You fuck her?

Fuck her till her nose bleed?

I may be a cunt but I’m not a twat. (35)

Tinker is acting on what appears to be primarily jealousy, investigating the relationship between Grace and Robin. This also demonstrate how Tinker’s inability to distinguish between the Woman and Grace, as it is following the scene of Robin’s visit to the peep-show booth. He goes on to force him to eat the chocolate intended for Grace, while Robin cries and

chokes on his tears, presumably because his good intentions toward Grace are ruined. This entire séance is written out in the screenplay, where every single piece of chocolate is thrown at Robin, and he eats them. This retelling intensifies the experience of the reader, as it seems as never-ending to them as it must have felt like for Robin. Tinker's action is, similarly to in the case of Carl and Rod, completely motivated by the expression of love that is demonstrated by Robin.

Once the box of chocolates is empty, Tinker "notices that Robin has wet himself" (36). Tinker shames Robin for this while Robin is in distress. Eventually "Tinker grabs Robin's head and forces it down, rubbing his face in his own urine" before telling him to "Clean it up, woman" (37). This act by Tinker is interesting and relevant in substantiating the thesis that the violence in the play amplifies the concept of love. Tinker is motivated by extreme jealousy and an apparent cruelty when he humiliates Robin. Incontinence is commonly associated with children, and in that moment, Robin is himself reduced to a child. When Tinker rubs Robin's face in the urine, he is also rubbing his face in evidence of the infantile position he has in his relationship with Grace. By extension, the indecency of his attraction towards Grace is being emphasized. Furthermore, Tinker by referring to Robin as a woman underlines the fact that he has yet to cross the river. When Rhona M. Fear talks about the resolution of the Oedipus complex, she presents that the boy needs to repress his sexual wishes towards his mother and allow for the subsequent internalization of his father to take place (Fear 17). She further refers to Skynner & Cleese (1983) who used the relevant metaphor of "crossing the river" for the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The little boy should cross the bridge from his mother's side of the river, the feminine side, to his father's side of the river, the masculine side. If the boy does leave the safety of his mother, the first identificatory object, and make secondary identification with his father, there is less necessity for repressing his sexual wishes towards his mother (Fear 17-18). If in this instance Tinker is the main competitor to Grace's love and affection, Robin shows no identification with the masculinity Tinker portrays, especially when standing in front of him dressed in Grace's clothes and soaked in urine.

The scene concludes with Tinker forcing Robin to burn all the books he was surrounded by. As they watch them go up in flames, Grace enters "vacant and tranquilized, with Graham" (37). Robin tries to apologize to Grace, not explaining Tinker's role in the burning. His apology signalizes that even though he moments before was so struck by fear that he wet himself, Robin is still seeking love and confirmation from Grace. In this way, the torture he endured from Tinker does amplify his expression of love, because fear of

consequences does not stop him from addressing her. Seemingly unfazed by his apology, Grace simply warms her hands on the flames while exclaiming “Lovely” (37). This is the first time Robin experiences the change in Grace’s behavior that will eventually be the end of him. While it is unbeknownst to Robin, Grace is undergoing her transformation into becoming Graham. Grace from scene seven, who took care of him and nurtured his needs, is lost after she had her brain damaged by electric currents in scene twelve. The object of his love is merely a shell of whom she used to be, and she is no longer capable of giving him what he needs, she is barely the Grace he desired at all.

Scene seventeen picks up more or less where scene fifteen left off. Robin, Grace and Graham are still surrounding the ashes from the fire. The abacus from earlier scenes is retrieved by Robin, as he is about to demonstrate his newfound ability to count and read. Just like in the previous scene, Grace is mentally absent even though she is physically there, she cannot fill the role Robin wants her to.

ROBIN. Been working on the numbers. Think I’ve cracked it.

GRACE. (Doesn’t respond)

ROBIN. Shall I show you?

GRACE. (Doesn’t respond)

ROBIN. Right, I’ll –

Days left. Try that. (39)

Robin uses the abacus to count how many days he has left, ending at “Thirty fifty-two sevens” (40), presumably meaning thirty years. Thirty years remaining in the institution. While coming to this conclusion he tries to interact with Grace, both by looking at her and addressing her, but she continues to ignore him.

Possibly as a means of getting Grace’s attention, Robin uses his tights to make a noose before getting on a chair, attaching it to the ceiling, and putting his head through.

ROBIN. Grace.

Grace.

Grace.

Grace.

Grace.

Grace.

Please, Miss.

The chair is pulled from under Robin. (40)

Grace doesn't respond. In fact, she is no longer Grace at all, just the physical form of what used to be Grace after Tinker's electroshock treatment. The empty shell of Grace watches as Robin dies, and the reader is in on the process as the moment Graham appears to Robin as well is revealed. As discussed in chapter 2.1, the reason Robin now can see Graham is the gradual merging Graham and Grace have experienced over the course of the play up until scene seventeen. While they are physically separate, Grace has projected herself into Graham to the point that he is present in Robin's final moments of life. Robin holds out his hand to Graham, and while this can be read as him wanting to be saved, Graham is already passed away, making him a symbol of death, not life. In a sense, Graham taking his hand before pulling on his legs to tighten the noose around his neck can be considered as a way of Graham leading Robin into death.

Knowing that Kane drew inspiration from the story of the illiterate inmate on Robben Island who learned how to read, realized how much time he had left, and then committed suicide, it might be easy to consider that Robin now as well commits suicide as a way of escaping the situation of being imprisoned in this institution. Yet, we know from scene seven, that Robin did not want to leave after being introduced to Grace. Kane is demonstrating extreme love under extreme conditions, and when Robin's affection is unrequited, he seeks extreme resolution. Even when his head is threaded through the noose, he is desperately calling for Grace's attention. It might be an act of desperation as much as a wish for death, anything to get his mother figure's recognition.

Whether Robin holds out his hand to Graham to be saved from life or saved from death does not matter. What matters is that Robin acted because he was unable to get the affection he needed from his maternal figure. He was no longer just left in an institution by his actual mother, but his institutional mother figure had also left him, if only mentally. The self-inflicted violence Robin suffers is a result of his experience of love. It demonstrates the lengths to which he would be willing to go in order to get to Grace, and the desperation when nothing seems to affect her. It demonstrates what is debated as Kane's idea of extreme love: the willingness to die. In Rod's case, he died to save his lover, while Robin kills himself once he does not receive the love he so desperately longs for. If unrequited love feels like being in a concentration camp, Robin cannot take the burden of the institution he is in coupled with the feelings of abandonment concerning Grace. He was willing to love through torture inflicted by Tinker, but not to live without Grace. In the end, Grace and Tinker become passive bystanders as he inflicts his own death.

Chapter 4: Didactic Perspective

Over the course of twenty scenes, often filled with violence, *Cleansed* manages to shed light on a wide variety of themes that can create a great pay-off in a classroom setting. Nevertheless, there are some complexities to putting the play in a didactic perspective, namely the more grotesque content of the play. *Cleansed* is a play with simple, minimalistic language suitable for English language learners. At the same time, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, the play is incredibly dense and has a rich variety of approaches when analyzing and grappling with it. The ambiguity of the play gives it the ability to unfold itself to the reader as he delves deeper into it, and the individual experience of the play can differ, and readers can be left with different and even contrasting impressions of the play. All these qualities on top of the violent content, make *Cleansed* a challenging play to approach in a classroom setting. However, it also creates an opportunity for a rewarding experience by potentially creating an opportunity for discussions of topics that could otherwise be challenging to address. Furthermore, due to the fragmented style of the play, it does in no way demand to be used in its entirety in order to be a beneficial experience. This chapter will discuss the potential of *Cleansed* in a classroom setting, first by looking at the potential benefits of using literature and drama in the second language classroom, and later by addressing how specific qualities of *Cleansed* fit with the values and competence aims of the subject curriculum of Norwegian upper secondary school.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training considers the English subject important in developing cultural understanding, communication, and identity development, making the subject aim towards giving students the foundation for communicating with others, regardless of cultural and linguistic background (“Relevance and Central Values”). With overarching goals primarily related to intercultural competence and communicative abilities, literature can be a major tool in developing these skills. By structuring lessons around literature, students are introduced to a wide range of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose. It can also be an effective tool in developing cultural awareness and encourage critical thinking (Van 2). An approach that is closely related to the use of literature, and that is commonly found in classrooms today is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It was developed after teachers in the 1970s and 1980s, became increasingly aware that language instruction often failed in enabling students in developing communicative competence in the target language (Hummel 115). While there are a wide variety of methodologies in CLT, applied linguist H. Douglas Brown (2007) created a synthesis of defining features. These include goals that are focused on communicative competence and not solely grammatical or

linguistic competence, techniques that are designed to engage learners in functional use of language for meaningful purposes, and fluency and accuracy are complementary principles for communicative techniques (Qtd. in Hummel 115). A meaningful approach to literature in the classroom setting can meet the values and facilitate the obtaining of goals seen in CLT.

There is a major emphasis on a “meaningful approach” when bringing literature into the classroom setting. One common criticism of using literature in the English Language Learner (ELL) classroom is that works from the traditional canon are often over-represented, meaning that students are introduced to language that is difficult for the learner to comprehend. Furthermore, the historical, social, and political context of these works add complexity for non-English speakers (Van 3). The teacher must be mindful of the material brought into the classroom, with sound ideas of how it can be used in a meaningful way. In the case of *Cleansed*, the minimalistic and simple language makes the text approachable for the student. While the meaning might have to be revealed through a process of working with the text, the reader will still be able to do an individual reading and be left with an initial impression where the words on the page are comprehended. The mindfulness when evaluating *Cleansed* in a classroom setting needs to be much more oriented towards the content that is presented. Not only do the students need support in understanding and unpacking the text in order for it to be rewarding, but the teacher must also show emotional awareness if potentially triggering scenes are being used. While it is not uncommon to subject students to violence through war movies, for instance, presenting written out scenes relating to sexual assaults might be too overwhelming.

In creating a meaningful use of the text, the principles of the Reader-Response approach may lay a foundation for a rewarding classroom experience in line with the goals of the Directorate for Education and Training and CLT. Reader-Response supports activities that encourage students to draw on their personal experiences and opinions when interpreting literature (Van 5). In “The Relevance of Literary Analysis to Teaching Literature in the EFL Classroom,” Van discusses the Reader-Response in relation to CLT and states that “My colleagues agree that activating student’s schemata in reading literature is important and that personalizing the learning experience increases student participation and motivation. These are core principles of CLT that are known to encourage language learning through student-centered and process-oriented activities” (Van 6). She goes on to present some of the benefits of a Reader-Response approach, that she has observed in the ELL classroom. These include empowering students to give opinions without fearing that they differ from the teacher’s, giving an excellent opportunity for collaborating in groups when debating a topic, and reading

poems and performing scenes from plays, bringing laughter and contemplation into the classroom (Van 6). Isolated scenes from *Cleansed* could be particularly suitable for a Reader-Response approach. For instance, scene two – where Carl and Rod demonstrate their different perspective on love. Not only is this one of the few scenes without any notion of violence, it can also be a starting point for fruitful discussion related to different views on life, and different ways of experiencing an emotion that is commonly boiled down to worn-out phrases. This will be discussed further later on in this chapter.

By now a few things should be established: that communication should be at the center of the ELL classroom, that the purpose of language learning is not only the acquiring of a new language, but also developing intercultural competence and understanding, and lastly that literature can be a very effective tool in hitting these aims. Then the next question to ask should be “where does drama fit in with this?” Kao and O’Neill are two who have done immense research on the topic, which has resulted in the book discussing drama and education, among other things. In “Words into Worlds: Learning a Second Language Through Process Drama” they draw a parallel between the topics covered above, and the use of drama:

Drama does things with words. It introduces language as an essential and authentic method of communication. Drama sustains interactions between students with the target language, creating a world of social roles and relations in which the learner is an active participant... The language that arises is fluent, purposeful and generative because it is embedded in context. Students are required by this context to be alert, to listen, and to demonstrate their understanding in immediate and imaginative responses. By helping to build the drama context, they develop their social and linguistic competence as well as listening and speaking skills. They grow the capacity to engage in increasingly complex and creative communicative situations. (Kao & O’Neill 4)

Where a novel can spark discussions and reflections, and certainly belongs in the classroom setting, working with plays allows for a different interaction with the text, allowing the students to a larger extent enter into the context of the play. For instance, scripts like *Cleansed* offer very few stage directions determining the tone and emotional state of the characters in the dialogue, meaning that if students are to perform a scene from the play, they need to assess what kind of emotion they want to put into the lines, as well as possibly adjust to the students they are interacting with. This is one way the learner becomes a more active participant, and it furthermore encourages increased use of the target language during class.

Approaches when using drama in the classroom can be categorized into text interpretation and performance, improvisation and roleplay, and process dramas. What's been described throughout this chapter concerning *Cleansed* is in line with text interpretation, where performance and emphasized communication through characterization and vocal and physical dexterity is important (Stinton & Winston 481). Improvisation and role-plays on the other hand, involve spontaneous and active interactions that often simulate real-life events, while process drama may incorporate all of the above, but those concepts are undertaken within a coherent dramatic frame that delineates the imaginary world context that the participants interact with (Stinton and Winston 481). Kathleen McGovern has done a thorough review of research relating to drama and second language pedagogy in "Conceptualizing Drama in the Second Language Classroom." The majority of the research done revolves around process drama and role-plays in the classroom. These are often spontaneous actions, done with little to no preparation, and are not particularly relevant in bringing *Cleansed* into the classroom setting. Yet, it should be stated that activities while working with plays like *Cleansed* could include creating one's own play or follow up with an improvised scene after a scene from *Cleansed* has created a foundation of the world in which the action takes place. Through text interpretation of plays, as is more relevant when working with plays as literature introduced to the class, there is also potential for slight improvisation, as mentioned previously in relation to tone and emotionality, but it is primarily focused on revealing the meaning in between the lines.

A combination of acting out scenes, group discussions, and analyzing creates a diverse array of approaches for exploring a play. Axtmann (2002) argued that by exploring and creating dramatic texts, students can explore their own culture and identities rather than just rehearsing language in a behavioristic fashion (qtd. in McGovern 9-10). Medina and Campano (2006) reach a similar verdict when assessing the use of drama, asserting that drama can create room for students to negotiate diverse perspectives and generate knowledge (qtd. in McGovern 10). While general literature can be a tool for developing cultural awareness, drama can in addition increase how much the students interact with the text, and therefore also reveal something about themselves. This is in line with the aims of the English subject in Norwegian upper secondary school. As established earlier, one of the goals for the subject is the development of identity.

Introducing this chapter, I stated how *Cleansed* is a play with simple language, but with incredible complexity and ambiguity. These qualities serve well in a classroom setting and creates opportunities for discussions and make *Cleansed* very suitable for a Reader-Response

approach. Yet, there are challenges in introducing the play in its entirety. The play could easily be considered graphic, with scenes of rape and mutilation, extremities of mental illness, and intense violence. At VG1 level English with new students taking English as an obligatory course, I would be hesitant to use *Cleansed* as material for ethical reasons. While the play could be very rewarding, it could both be triggering for some and it could potentially spark harmful discussions if not very teacher-driven. However, the potential pay-off of using *Cleansed* as classroom material is present. First off, it might be motivating for students to experience how the meaning unfolds while working with the material, which in turns builds confidence. Secondly, even though it contains emotionally disturbing material, it can confront any reader with ideas of moral complexities that encourages personal growth. While not suitable for any age group, *Cleansed* is perfect for the elective class English Literature and Culture that is commonly offered for VG3 students. The subject deals with the relationship between language, culture and society, and “key issues related to literature and culture in the English-speaking world and includes literary texts and other artistic means of expression such as visual art, theatre, music and architecture from various time periods and different parts of the world” (“Main Subject Areas”). *Cleansed*, with the rich reference to theater throughout history, awareness of the world in which it exists, and the complex plot offers a great entry point for reaching the aims of the subject. The teacher needs to be considerate of the student group, and evaluate whether it is ethically reasonable to use the play in its entirety, but one option would be to only use certain pre-selected scenes suitable for sensitive readers – for instance scene two, as previously mentioned.

Even in an elective English class, it is important to consider the student group when evaluating whether to use *Cleansed* in its entirety or just carefully selected scenes. Because of the fragmented style, the play offers plenty of opportunities even when only presenting certain scenes. One example of approaching an excerpt of the play is like previously mentioned scene two of the play. One of the competency aims of English Literature and Culture is to “analyse and assess a film and a selection of other artistic forms of expression within English-language culture” (“English literature and culture”). Scene two of *Cleansed* could be discussed as an isolated scene, students could be allowed to evaluate what Carl and Rod implicate about their dedication to the relationship. Later on, it could be compared to scene sixteen, where Rod sacrifices himself for his lover. Attention to Carl and Rod’s differing perspective also covers another competence aim, stating that students should “summarize, comment on and discuss differing viewpoints in fictional texts” (“English literature and culture”). Their relationship could also spark further investigation into the treatment of sexual minorities in different

societies, relating it back to the overarching theme of intercultural competence. As a step in analyzing, scene two is very suitable to be played out in the classroom, as supported by CLT, as the students become even more active participants. This also creates grounds for discussing what is omitted in the text. What do we as readers have to individually assume, interpret in order to act out the scene? What makes a play different from a novel? Engaging in questions like these follows competence aims such as being able to “elaborate on and discuss distinctive linguistic features of texts from different genres” (“English literature and culture”). Questions can also be turned inward, reflecting upon which stance one would take regarding love. This can potentially create identity awareness, allowing the students to know themselves better, and by extension becoming more secure in who they are.

Cleansed can also be used in approaching difficult topics. There has become an increasing awareness of mental health over the course of the last decade. In scene one we witness the suicide of Graham, and in scene seventeen we witness that of Robin. This could be tied to the competence aim related to elaborating and discussing current issues in international culture and the news media (“English literature and culture”). How are their situations different, what seems to be the motivation to commit suicide and how is the portrayal of their death? Is it possible to draw a parallel between how both suicides have witnesses, and how we are aware of men’s overrepresentation in suicide statistics, yet there is limited effort to reduce this statistic? Does that make us bystanders? Furthermore, by bringing these texts into the classroom, it is possible to have a healthy discussion related to mental health, and the ethics of discussing suicide in media.

If one were to use the entire text of *Cleansed*, teacher assistance would certainly be needed to navigate the text. Yet, working with it for a long period might qualify to cover the competence aim that asks for students to “elaborate on and discuss lengthy and linguistically demanding discourses with general, specialized and literary content” (“English literature and culture”). While the language is not demanding at a lexical level, the fragmentation of the play still creates obstacles in revealing its meaning. Furthermore, the punctuation and flow of the language can make it challenging to read quietly, but it could appear some revelations if certain scenes were to be read as intended: out loud.

In conclusion, there is a clear purpose to using literature, and in particular plays, in the ELL classroom, and *Cleansed* has qualities that make it a potential tool for creating a fruitful learning situation, either when used in parts, or its entirety. Through a Reader-Response approach, the play promotes oral participation in the classroom, reflection upon differing

perspectives, one's own identity, and a wide variety of ethical issues. It is particularly well suited in elective courses with high-performance students and can satisfy the need to cover a plethora of competence aims. However, it is important that the teacher knows the students well and is mindful of the conditions of the classroom, especially conditions related to the environment in the class and any potential trigger points the students may have. *Cleansed* can potentially be extremely disturbing to young readers, and as a teacher it is incredibly important to carefully prepare them for the task of taking on material such as this play. While working with drama in a classroom setting invites students to be active participants, the teacher's involvement cannot be understated, both in supporting the students through difficult material and in digesting the more violent parts in a healthy way.

Conclusion

Sarah Kane's plays were met with much criticism when they were staged during the 1990s, primarily due to the shocking, grotesque, and violent actions that took place on stage. However, in this thesis, the goal was to put the spotlight on the central theme of love, and rather look at how the gruesome and violent acts played out over the course of twenty scenes were an important element in emphasizing love. In contrast to previous considerations of *Cleansed*, the play has been read as literature rather than something that is to be staged. Doing this has allowed for the dismissal of how something can be realized on a stage, and thus the theme of love has not disappeared in visualized violence.

It is evident throughout the entire analysis that the purpose of the violence and torture goes beyond being a shock factor intended to jolt the reader. The protagonist, Grace, suffers through beating and rape, gun violence, electroshock therapy, and eventually what can arguably be considered genital mutilation. Yet, as demonstrated through the analysis, any torture Grace was put through, was either motivated by, protected by, or endured because of love. Grace's determination to persevere through the conditions at the institution, would not seem as impressive if said conditions were good and comfortable. The reader's experience of Grace's love for her brother was indeed amplified by her relentless effort to keep him present. Regardless of warnings, she demanded to be admitted into the institution. When she was being beaten, raped and shot at, Graham's presence protected her to the point that she no longer acknowledged anything that happened, he was the only thing that mattered. When she suffered through electroshock therapy, an effort made by Tinker in hopes of helping her from the mental illness that followed the passing by her brother, she seemed to lose herself. This happened due to the brain damage she suffered following the treatment and resulted in her personality being less present. Yet, the eventual result of this treatment turned out to be a push in the direction of her ultimate objective, as it drove her even closer to her brother. When she eventually receives a penis, through an amateur sex change operation administered by Tinker, she becomes completed. The entire effort paid off, and her plotline concludes with her not being Grace, but Grace/Graham as a unit. Her transformation into her brother made sure that he did not leave the living after all, that he was safe on both the living and the dead side of existence.

Due to Grace's determination to stay united with her brother, they represent the kind of inseparable love commonly associated with God. Grace's love for Graham is uncompromising the same way religious people experience God's love through Jesus Christ.

This lack of compromise could only fully be demonstrated by a plethora of situations where the easy way out would be to retreat. Grace was not without admirers, she had other options and easier options, but her love for Graham was the only focus she had. In the end, love in the plotline of Grace and Graham is much like the flowers that bloomed even in the starkest of situations. Their inseparable love would not stop blooming in the face of violence, but rather grow stronger and more beautiful.

While Tinker is the administrator and oftentimes executor of most of the violence and torture that happens within *Cleansed*, love is also the main incentive for his action – whether it be executing torture towards those who explicitly express their love or in search of affection himself. Due to his seemingly fragile position of power, it is a necessity that Tinker represses any need and desire for affection and love. Tinker is trying and failing to annihilate any expression of love, an experience he is robbed of. Love is the backdrop to all the torture he inflicts on Carl, the murder of Rod, jealousy drives him to humiliate Robin and rejection from Grace compels him to sexually assault the Woman. His conviction of love as a weakness is only strengthened when he tries to weaken those who express love. This is also demonstrated when his torture increases after he receives a declaration of love from the Woman. After a prolonged time of repressing his need for affection, Tinker appears vulnerable and weak when faced with what he perceives as love from the Woman in the booth. He is barely emotionally equipped to handle the situation he has wanted from Grace and eventually receives from the Woman once their identities are detangled.

There is a clear connection between Tinker’s sadist tendencies and love, demonstrating the relationship between love and violence that this thesis is trying to prove. Especially when analyzing Tinker as a hurt and desperate lover, the violence can be seen as an amplifier not only because it demonstrates the lengths other characters are willing to go to in the name of love, but also because it must be an intense experience of emotions that drives Tinker to act violently. However, excluding the perspective of Tinker actively making the decision to torture the other characters takes away too much of Tinker’s complexity as a character, and removes any of the moral ambiguity of the situation. In *Cleansed*, Robin serves as a strong parallel to Tinker. He too, is rejected by Grace, but at no point does he reveal any sadistic tendencies or aggression. His desperation for love and affection from Grace is expressed through him showing his affection with increasing intensity and dependency on her. Meanwhile, Tinker acts out by trying to treat her mental illness, and furthermore takes out his frustration on the Woman. This parallel can be extended to their respective meetings with the woman in the booth as well. While Tinker finds comfort and safety in the privacy of a paid

interaction, Robin reacts with discomfort and cries when the flap closes. The bottom line is that this parallel demonstrates the difference between Tinker's circumstantial behavior, and what is due to an innate desire to inflict pain on others.

Carl and Rod do not see eye to eye regarding the concept of love when the reader first meets them. Carl idealizes the experience of love into something certain and eternal, while Rod refuses to promise anything beyond love from moment to moment. Despite this, they reveal themselves to be close to the personification of unconditional love. Their love is unconditional for several reasons. For one, Rod does not stray away from Carl once he betrays him and is willing to sacrifice Rod to save his own life. Hence, Rod does not love Carl on the condition that he never betrays him. In return, Carl spends the entirety of their remaining plotline proving his love to Rod. He refuses to be silenced even when there is a clear pattern correlating between expressions of love and torture inflicted by Tinker. In the end, they both stay true to the promise they gave each other when exchanging rings in the first scene, and even if Rod only promised to do his best from moment to moment, he did not compromise on his best effort when he was given the choice between losing his life or losing his lover. His unconditional love drives him to save Carl in that moment.

Robin's love towards Grace is heavily founded on her maternal nurturing of him. He is seemingly the youngest character, and also the one to suffer the least amount of physical violence. Over the course of his storyline, he is primarily verbally abused by Tinker, and his expression of love through gifts, acts of service and drawings suffers destruction more than his physical being. This may be in part because his expression of love towards Grace is less mature, and his position on the social hierarchy is already so low that he does not pose a real threat beyond the fight for Grace's attention. What is interesting in the case of Robin, is that it is eventually self-inflicted violence that is the end of him once he hangs himself. This too has a backdrop heavily influenced by the need for affection. It is in the moment that he no longer gets the bare minimum of affection from his love object, Grace, that he commits suicide. As we know from Nordlund's book, love can be the source of shame and suffering, and after being rejected by Grace, Robin no longer saw any reason to stay in the institution or life at all.

Throughout the entire analysis of *Cleansed*, it is increasingly clear just how much the Barthes quote about love rings true within the world created by Sarah Kane. The amorous catastrophe is indeed bound to destroy the subject. Grace completely obliterates her own identity in search of her brother, Carl becomes a prisoner in his own body and Robin would rather die than go on without Grace. Love is indeed an extreme emotion not universally

possible to define, but over the course of twenty scenes, Kane manages to use violence as a tool in demonstrating how indestructible extreme love is, how durable, how patient, how all-consuming it can be. At the same time, these circumstances also make love's desirability questionable; are the sacrifices the characters make worth it? In the introduction, I presented a passage from Graham Saunders's book, discussing the similarities between love in *Cleansed* and Orwell's *1984*. He pointed to the paradox of durability and fragility in both of the works in relation to love (Saunders 92). Within the world of *Cleansed*, we see characters at their most vulnerable, yet they actively make decisions to expose their feelings in front of their loved one, showing bravery and strength. Love in the play simultaneously becomes the greatest feeling one can experience, and at the heart of all pain and suffering. In a way, love becomes both the safety and the danger in the characters's lives.

Cleansed presents the reader with a series of extremes. The institution is presented in a way that makes it close to incomprehensible, with few people having any experience from their real life to reference back to. The very concept of love is presented as an extreme emotion that makes one willing to do and endure close to anything, the characters are constantly pressured to sacrifice in the name of love – not only their life, but also their very identity. This is seen through the fluidity of identification. Grace becomes Graham, the Woman is entangled and detangled from Grace, and Robin is dressed in Grace's clothing throughout the entirety of the play.

Taking the message of *Cleansed* into the real world, what does it implicate about love as a concept? Is it worth it? To a large extent, *Cleansed* reveals qualities of love beyond being a universal phrase and metonym in place of something else. Take away the extreme conditions and the extreme expressions of emotion, and we are left with an experience so many of us have been willing to sacrifice for. One may argue that at the heart of any relationship is a series of minor sacrifices in order to merge two lives together. We do not exist in the world of *Cleansed*, where love is a matter of life or death; we live in a world where the thermostat is too high because our partner easily gets the chills and where we avoid eating peanuts because our loved one has a nut allergy. Perhaps we even do give up pieces of ourselves in the face of love, as a way of merging with our partner, even if we do not go to the same lengths as Grace. Ultimately, the love found within our everyday life also comes with a risk. We too are vulnerable when exposing our feelings to someone else. While it is not life or death, songs about heartbreak will never stop being sung, because of the risk of getting hurt while encountering love. Perhaps love is worth all the risk, as it comes with an undeniable hope.

This thesis has done a thorough analysis of love in *Cleansed*, but there are still plenty of aspects of the play open to additional exploration. The rich intertextuality, the historical references, and the social criticism are particularly interesting topics for further research. Drama as a tool in the second language classroom is also an area that needs further evaluation, even though it is founded on very promising ideas and thorough research on the positive effects of active and oral participation from students. *Cleansed* as classroom material in particular is also open for further evaluation, especially when considering challenges of using violent materials as a part of education. All these things aside, one thing is certain: *Cleansed*, just like Roland Barthes' "A Lover's Discourse" is a jar of nuances. Love is expressed and experienced in a variety of ways and explored as a potentially extreme emotion when existing under extreme conditions. The experience of love is amplified through violence and torture because the characters do not yield when facing the risk of getting hurt. While illustrating that love can be the most powerful force of them all, *Cleansed* also reflects some core ideas of love that resonates with the experience of love outside extreme circumstances.

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