Studying the Concept and Effect of Power on the Matter of Identity in Sarah Kane’s play, *Cleansed*, a Foucauldian Reading

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to explore the meaning and the domineering effect of power on man’s identity with its function through discourse, gender, body and sexuality. The analysis is going to be done on Sarah Kane’s play, *Cleansed*, in the light of Michel Foucault’s poststructuralist theories. From the vantage point of Foucault’s idea, power is practiced everywhere, and throughout all men’s history. He examines power, in his works, from renaissance era up until modern time. Foucault looks at power as an agency, applying all its caliber, to cause obedience/docile body, an endeavor that if fails, it leads to madness. To get a better rapport of Foucault’s understanding of power requires the comprehension of some key concepts as discourse, panapticon, knowledge, and sexuality which will be discussed in the continuation. Moreover, the research signifies the impact(s) of power on the subject in its social context and follows the process and ways of normalization of power as it is dramatized in *Cleansed*. Kane’s play vividly, of course, in an astounding representation, pictures how resistance against normalizing rules results from the violence and brutality of power agencies as they manage to run their authority over the people. In the following, both destructive and productive outcomes of power along with the specific discourse chosen by Kane to represent its characters’ struggle for their identity will be lined up.

Keywords: power, docile body, discourse, knowledge.
“It has become almost automatic in the parlance of the times to define power as an organ of repression” (Michel Foucault, 1980, 90).

1. Introduction

Sarah Kane (born on third February, 1971) is acclaimed as English Postmodernist playwright. She wrote five plays in her short lifetime including *Blasted* (1005), *Phaedra’s Love* (1996), *Cleansed* (1998), *Crave* (1998), *4.48 psychosis* (1999), and a ten-minute television script named *Skin* (1997). Kane was a committed Christian first, but then she rejected her religious beliefs. After graduating from Bristol University, in drama, she went to the University of Birmingham where Kane received her MA. in drama under the supervision of a big name playwright, David Edgar. During her short life she constantly suffered from a bad case of depression; though in pain in years of hardship, Kane never stopped writing. She did write for Paines Plough and Bush theater companies. After two days of taking an overdoes of prescription drugs, Kane committed suicide by hanging herself by her shoelaces on 20 February 1999.

Kane originally liked to be a poet, but since the capacity of poetry was not sufficient to contain and convey her thoughts, she denied poetry and instead started her writing in genre of drama. She argues her interests in the stage as: “theater has no memory, which makes it the most existential of the arts…. I keep coming back in the hope that someone in a dark room somewhere will show me an image that burns itself into my mind” (Guardians 13 august, 1998). Basically she ponders on the issue of redemptive love, identity, pain and torture, either of physical type or psychological, sexual drives and death as the current motifs in her artistic career. *Cleansed*, known as her master work and the most complicated play of Kane, like the other plays highlights the extremity of violence on the stage and the subject of gender identity. It represents many qualities of torture chamber and concentration camp which is managed under the supremacy of a sadistic figure called Tinker. By means of his psychological wicked actions, the focal character, Tinker takes the others in control and ceaselessly tortures them. Through the course of events the audience witnesses the destruction of characters both physically and psychically, due to the constant pressure of Tinker’s sadism; for instance, limbs, skins, genitals, are removed and identities grotesquely, are transformed, so much so that near the ending the characters involved get fragmented identities, that is, each of the inhabitants takes some fragments of the other’s identity. Apparently applying Foucauldian theories of power and its impact on the concept of gender identity would help deciphering the confusing atmosphere where in Kane’s characters are unbearably trapped.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Consideration

Michel Foucault, born in Poitiers, 1926, France, has great influence on humanities after two decades of his death in 1984. Along with eminent figures like Jacque Derrida, Foucault has imposed a significant effect on various branches of thought and philosophy, today known as cultural studies, post-structuralism, post-modernism, feminism, and post-colonial theorizing. The impact of his work includes a wide variety of disciplinary fields, from sociology and anthropology to history. With no doubt the concept of power, beside ethics and truth, is one of
the three key terms in his works on subjectification. Foucault states that not power but the analysis of power is the point, hence he raises the questions concerning the way of its exercising and the outcomes of its application. Traditionally, with no regard to what power means and where its origin is, power perceived as the ability of someone to impose his will and demand on the others; it is a sort of possession, the privilege of ruling class. Foucauldian analysis of power criticizes the very notion and conceptualizes it quite differently. Barry Smart (2002) in *Michel Foucault* declares:

In short Foucault conceptualized power neither as an institution nor a structure but as a complex ‘strategical situation’ as ‘multiplicity of force relation’ as simultaneously ‘intentional’ yet ‘non-subjective’. Last, but by no means least significantly of all, Foucault argued that where there is power, that power depends for its existence on the presence a ‘multiplicity of points of resistance’ and that the plurality of resistances should not be reduced to a single locus of revolt or rebellion(70).

In this sense, power is no longer understood as an ability of someone to force the other to do something which is against his/her will. To elaborate the concept of power Foucault states that “power must be analysis of something which circulates, or as something which only functions in form of a chain …power is employed and exercised through a net like organization…and individuals are the vehicle of power”(1980, 98). Here, individuals are considered as the ones who are the agents of power to perform its function, and power is perceived as a verb/act which is to be performed in a certain context. This view upon power certainly violates the top to down notion of it, that is, it seems to be horizontal rather vertical. For Foucault, power does not signify domination and imposition of its rationality over the totality of social body, but power means power relations with its multiplicity and different form it takes either at play, family, institute or administration.

Power relations in its social form permeate and constitute the social body. The establishment and implementation of such power relations create the operation and circulation of related discourses. In fact, power works through discourses and discursive formations. But what is discourse? Foucauldian conception of discourse stands for the organization of knowledge providing the possibility of distinction between true and false. It is a cluster of statements/claims to knowledge wherewith power draws a line of distinction between normality and abnormality, sanity and madness, … . Precisely as Hans Bertens puts, “a discourse is a loose structure of interconnected assumptions that makes knowledge possible” (2001, 154). In other words, discourse establishes claims to knowledge and in return, these claims bestow it with power. Therefore, there is a close correlation between discourse/knowledge on one side and power on the other side.

In *power/knowledge*, Foucault, discussing the uncontested relationship between knowledge and power, describes knowledge as being a conjunction of power relations and information-seeking which he terms power/knowledge (1980, 52). This interconnectedness between two is very crucial for it emphasizes that knowledge is not merely dispassionate, but instead an indivisible part of struggle over power; moreover, it implies that through the process of seeking knowledge, one is making claims for power, too. Knowledge, Bertens declares, “is a way to
define and categorize others. Instead of emancipating us from ignorance, it leads to surveillance and discipline” (154). In its function and correlation with power, knowledge associates power in the formation of docile body. It helps power to control individuals and their knowledge, and to “reach into the grain of individuals, touch their bodies and insert itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses and everyday lives” (1980, 30). Foucault, in his definition of docile body reflected in *Discipline and Punish* asserts that a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1977, 136); for which he considers three stages: objectified, controlled, and disciplined body. Such a monitoring process derived from power and authority affects the individuals to be easily obedient and disciplined, due to the function of subtle and seemingly invisible and ever-present system of surveillance and regulation.

But if the disciplinary dictum of power to its subjects is restrictive and repressive, why is it that people accept it. Foucault’s attitude to power resembles Althusser’s ‘ideology’ and Gramsci’s ‘hegemony’ since it rules by agreement; it means, the subjects agree to follow and obey power, to be loyal to its dictates, even policing themselves voluntarily at the cost of getting a sense of belonging and feeling what they are. In *Power and Knowledge*, Foucault elaborates the point:

“If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs throughout the whole social body” (1980, 119).

3. Critical Analysis

In *Cleansed*, Kane dramatizes a miniaturized world restricted with the perimeter fences of a university or concentration camp. The opening scene pictures Tinker who seems to be the focal figure, “heating smack on a silver spoon” (Cl. I.) as Graham enters and asks him for some smack. To respond to his request, Tinker injects an overdose of smack into his eye and makes him die. The subsequent ambiguity in the relationship between Tinker and the other characters (student/prisoners) stands out as an elemental element of Kane’s post-modernist play. For instance, Tinker frequently reminds characters especially Graham that he is not a doctor, but after the injection, we hear from Graham saying “Thank you, doctor” (Ibid., I), or when Graham asks him: “Are you my friend?” to get an overdose, Tinker negatively replies: “Then what difference will it make?”(Ibid, I). The other aspect of this structural confusion goes with the setting. Is it a university? or something more like a concentration camp/aszylum. There are different rooms each one in a distinct color, the white room, the red room, the green room, signifying its symbolic distinction from the other room, rather than presenting the subject taught there. Concerning the characters, their coming and going on the stage and the role they take, there are big questions: Who are they? What do they require? Is Tinker a dealer, a doctor, a torturer, a lover, a helper…? If Graham is dead, what is the role of his ever-presence with Grace? Is Grace a doubled-man, is she really the unknown mechanized dancer? In the following, we try
to analyze this confusion, partially of course, under the Foucauldian studies of power and power relations.

To stay with the abovementioned points regarding enigmatic relation of figures in this concentration camp/university, from one perspective Tinker is viewed as God-like figure who exercises his sovereignty over his subjects. He claims to have (the right), and in fact, he does, to make his judgment and carry out sentences on the students/prisoners in this microcosmic campus world. Each and every one of the personages is examined and monitored under Tinker’s scrutiny, to see what their innermost needs/demands are, to be cleansed then in an Orwellian Justice fashion. What is surprisingly questionable is why the inhabitants, if not all but the majority of them, bring themselves to be a simple object of Tinker’s violent, and dehumanizing treatment, and how Tinker can easily objectify his subjective, cynical mind, in punishing the others.

Foucault, in *The History of sexuality*, 1984, argues that, “there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims or objectives” (94-95), and that these objectives are followed within social relations. He considers just two roles for individuals in their interaction of power. They can be either the subjects exercising power or the objects whereupon power is exercised. In first reading of Kane’s play, *cleansed*, there are hints aplenty hinting at the subjective role of Tinker. He is taken as a symbolic presentation of power while the others stand for people in society, in terms of Foucauldian terminology, the body of society or docile body. Tinker functions power initially to modify people in their actions. His intention is to compel obedience to establish a steady social obedience there in university, to have the dwellers to act proper to his own will. Being the representative of power he does not tolerate any resistance, and so to protect his power in security he makes a perceptible trace of his omnipresent power everywhere; put it another way, he localizes it over his objects. To do the important, at first, Tinker manages to internalize his presence within the innermost depth of the people’s unconscious to prison them in a panoptical position to watch any inch of their movement.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1995) Foucault forms the idea of panaptican. Here, he introduces panoptic style of supervision as a mechanism to discipline the occupants; for Foucault, it works like a disciplinary apparatus in hand of power. He asserts:

“He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”(202-203)

For certain, when each subject is located in a special place, upon whom there is a constant visiting, such a plan guarantees power’s function. Back to *Cleansed*, and in respect to Tinker’s position between the students, he seems to be a jailor who puts everyone in his/her own jail and observes them from the tower of panaptican. The characters involved in Tinker’s panoptical state of inspection nearly include all: Graham who dies of heroin, Graham’s sister, Grace who insists on retrieving her dead brother, Rod and Carl, homosexual lovers, ineffectual figure named Robin, and the unknown female dancer. In Tinker’s eyes, they are all people who are plagued by the infection of their personal desires; an epidemic disease needing dramatic measure of constant confinement and surveillance. Foucault, in *The Birth of Prison* elaborates the political case of plague:
“the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power, not makes that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his ‘true’ name, his ‘true’ place, his ‘true’ body, his ‘true’ disease”(1977, 198).

Tinker in his precautionary attempts to mobilize against the threat of plague in the camp, applies a detailed regulation and ceaseless inspection. Like his nineteenth century predecessors he deals with his people as “beggars, vagabonds, madmen, and the disorderly—in short, the abnormal individual” (Bertens, 150). So the distinctive colored rooms there at university used as many segregated cages, or small theaters wherein he locks the students/captives and constantly goes on visiting them. Tinker spies the characters everywhere they go and watches their least actions and listens to and acts against whatever they do without being seen.

In this institution, concentration camp, which is run by Tinker, all the inhabitants seem to have accepted their madness/abnormality since either willingly or deliberately they come to him and after revealing their subject of desire, which is the main cause of their problem, too, beg Tinker for cure. The opening scene, representing the unusual request of Graham for death reveals the strange power relation between Tinker and his subjects. Incessantly Graham asks him for injection of heroin and the fatal effect of overdosing it; he thanks his savior, Tinker, and calls him doctor.

Graham: I want out.
Tinker: (looks up) silence. No.
Graham: Are you my friend?
Tinker: I don’t think so.
Then what difference will it make?
Tinker: It won’t end here.
( [Tinker] ... then puts another large lump of snack to the spoon)
Tinker: Life is sweet
Graham: This is what it’s like.
They look at each other. Graham smiles, Tinker looks away
Graham: Thank you Doctor. (He slumps) (CL. I.)

One of the major surprises of the play is that some of the inmates are not patient in a way as addicted Graham is, yet they have entered the institute/campus on a voluntary basis such as Grace who has come there to retrieve her dead brother, or the homosexual lovers Carl and Rod whose only cause of their staying in the institute is just due to their love.

Carl: Rod, Rod, sorry. Please.
Rod: (Take 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 all. Don’t make me lie to you. …. They kiss.
Tinker: is watching. (Cl. II.)

In accordance with Foucault’s theory of discourse, these figures have had themselves committed autotellically since they have internalized the current discourse of normality; that is, out of society’s insistence on normality they are convinced to be abnormal and need treatment. This voluntary acceptance of insanity, one case of many of course, is depicted in scene seven when inefficual Robin asks Grace to see what it would be if she could change one thing in her life. After a short hesitation she confesses: “This is insane” (Cl. VII.), and then in the following she begs Tinker, being beaten and raped by unknown voices, to do something to rescue her. In response, Tinker commands them to kill all except Grace, then he kneels beside her and taking her hand says: “I’m here to save you”. (Cl. XI.)

To define discourse, Foucault accounts it as a set of cluster of claims to knowledge. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Foucault asserts that discourse is “a series of sentences or propositions” and that “it can be defined as a large group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (107). In addition, he favors an interaction between these clusters of claims/knowledge and the exercise of power. As before mentioned, to Foucault knowledge is not a medium wherewith people are emancipated from ignorance, but a means of categorizing them, a method leads to discipline and surveillance. Accordingly, there is an artificial relation between the subject and the object. This sort of power relation is reflected in Kane’s play. Here Tinker plays the role of Knower and the others operate as the object or what the Knower knows and studies. It is worth notice that Tinker’s claims of knowledge (his discourse) matches Foucault’s view. Bertens (2001) to elaborate it asserts: “The truths of the human sciences are the effect of discourses, of knowledge. Their knowledge does not derive from access to the real world, to authentic reality, but from the rules of their discourse” (155). Tinker’s frequent doubt and confusion to respond to the students/prisoners’ question concerned to the truth of their problems and even to the truth of his own identity, wondering who he is, a doctor or a torturer, a lover or a dealer, approves of his baseless claims of knowledge/power. The distinction between taut truth and false truth to Tinker is as much irrelevant as to Foucault. What matters to Tinker as the owner of dominant discourse is to persuade the others, in a way possible, to accept his disciplinary discourse as the truth. Tinker’s discourse counts as knowledge since it is sufficiently powerful to have the others believe it and act accordingly. This submission to rules, on part of objects is observed in scene three as with the thrilling obedience of Robin to take off his [of course Graham’s] clothes and give them back to Grace.

Tinker: Do it.
Robin: *(Takes off his clothes, down to his underpants)*
Grace: All of them
Robin: *(Looks at Tinker)*
Tinker: *(Considers, then nods.)*
Robin: Removes his underpants and stands shivering with his hands over his genitals. (CL. III.)

In Foucault’s scenario knowledge and power take benefit from each other through their mutual relation. Initially knowledge is nourished by certain set of rules named discourse and then enriched by power to get it credibility. Furthermore, we read of his another axiom that “the
exercise of power—the system with “the upper hand”—is always oppressive” (2000, 15), which implicitly indicates the inevitability of violence in process of establishing power relations.

Back to *Cleansed*, frequently we find Tinker perpetuating the violence. He not only commits the atrocities but orders the unidentified voices to do violence also. In his exercise of power he follows Foucauldian strategic and war-like format, for example, in his confrontation with homosexual Carl, he uses torture apparatus, and the plan he sets up to confirm his errand over him resembles a war-like case. To punish Carl for his unusual love to Rod he performs a bloody violence against him by his unseen group of man in *The Red Room*. Tinker’s action counts as a reaction of him against love relation in general and in particular that of Carl and Rod as a way of communication between men. He continues the methodical violence till having Carl ignore his true passionate love and confess on his self-seeking intention in it.

Carl: Please. Doctor. Please,
Tinker holds up his arm. The beating stops.
Tinker: Yes?
Carl: I can’t—
Anymore.
Tinker: I love you Rod. I’d die for you.
Carl: Not me please not me don’t kill me Rod not me don’t kill me
ROD NOT ME ROD NOT ME. (CL. IV.)

After a while he orders Carl: “show me your tongue”; Carl sticks out his tongue and Tinker cuts it off by a large pair of scissors. Then Tinker takes the ring from Rod’s finger, puts it in Carl’s mouth and says to him: “Swallow”. Carl does do (Cl. V.).

Basically the concept of discipline joins with institution and the way of acting. It is known as a set of strategies to bring about regulation or normalization. Barry Smart (2002) puts the meaning of discipline as:

… a technique of power which provides procedures for training or for correcting bodies (individual and collective). The instruments through which disciplinary power achieves its hold are hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination. (80)

Viewed as a technique/strategy which is concerned with the matter of control, internalized by bodies, discipline is to control any activity and movement of body as subject of power; that is, his body along with all characteristics of the body is subject to disciplinary external codes which are imposed on individuals to harmonize their behavior with.

One of the occasions whereon Tinker dictates his disciplinary power occurs in scene fifteen at *The Round Room* when we find Robin asleep among a pile of books and papers, having a box of chocolate next to his head. Then Tinker enters and as he finds Robin still having a pen in his hand he gets angry, puts a knife to his throat and using rude words he insults Robin and makes him eat all the chocolates he saved for his love, Grace, till he wets himself; at the end he orders Robin to clean the board with his books and finally burn them all (the books). Taking up the connotation of Robin’s books and the chocolates he bought for his mistress as epitome of knowledge and love, two media with which he hopes to change his way of living and identify his being, Tinker’s commanding treatment with him is interpreted abolishing of his hopes and transforming him to a docile, abject body.
Regarding Paul Rainbow’s attitudes about docile body which reads: “a body is docile that may be subjected; used, transformed, and improved … the human body is entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and arranges it” (1984, 180), the whole scene dramatizes the completion of the three partite stages of Robin’s docile body in that he is objectified, then controlled and finally disciplined. Here, Robin, the objectified figure, not only submissively follows the coercive dictates of the Power —Tinker— in eating the chocolates one after another, symbolically ignoring his tendency to love, but also obediently goes on cleaning the floor with papers and books which signifies defying and cleansing his merely hope of change. When the scene gets to the ending, we see Robin turned into a conformist who has internalized the regulatory regime of Tinker’s disciplines; quoting Mills’ understanding of discipline ( Michel Foucault, 2003), that it is “a procedure which comes from outside of [individuals] themselves but whose aim is disciplining of the self by the self” (43), explains Robin’s submission to burn his books and more important to figure out the root of his dishonesty to him and to Grace when he lies with her saying he felt cold so set fire to books. In this way, to adapt himself to Tinker’s ideas and perception of reality, he lets go of his unorganized personal identity and undertakes to be transformed and improved to an arranged subject of power.

Robin Burns as many books as he can and watches them go up in flames.

Grace Enters, vacant, and tranquillized, with Graham. She watches

Robin Smiles nervously

Robin: Sorry I was cold.

Grace: Lovely (Cl. XV.)

The last point but not the least in the analysis of Kane’s play goes to the matter of the body and sexuality, as if not the most crucial subject but one of the most challenging issues in the structure of the play. Under the light of Foucault’s philosophy, the individual is an effect of power rather than having an independent essence. As Gray Wickham puts it: “The notion of bodies as the target of power is part of Foucault’s attempt to avoid the liberal conception of individuals as unconstrained creative essences” (1986, 155). To him, individuals are the outcome, product of discursive processes. In his essay, Nietzsche, genealogy and power, (1986b) Foucault writes of his observation on the body as “the inscribed surface of events”, either political events or the decisions affected the body. He argues that the body is “the illusion of a substantial unity, a volume in perpetual disintegration” (83). It indicates that what has traditionally considered solid and unchanging is always subject to change and constructed through different social meditation.

Since the nineteenth century the body in Foucault’s framework has always been in the attention of authorities because much of the regulation is enacted on it, and in this way not only knowledge is constituted but populations are monitored and surveyed. As the critics Hreyfus and Paul Rabinow put: “The individual was of interest exactly insofar as s/he could contribute to the strength of the state. The lives, deaths, activities, works and joys of individuals were important to the extent that these everyday concerns become politically useful” (1986, 139). One reason for Tinker’s occasional willingness to help the others in the university or the microcosmic universe
he is manipulating is the continual contribution of his subjects, from Graham to Robin, to strengthen the stability of his governmental supremacy, and the security of his dominance over the people. Put it another way, as long as the students tend to be bending to the Tinker’s commands he gives them what they demand in their life. This sort of the give and take bargain between the [man] of power and the subjects is represented by the enigmatic dark love case of Tinker and the unknown woman happening in *The Black Room*, scene nineteen. Tinker loves Grace not like anyone else, but she has gone, and the unnamed woman needs Tinker, mostly for his protections. Therefore to respond to her own need the unknown subject (woman) brings herself to forget her own identity and turns into a fake one to delight Tinker. She calls herself Grace to receive Tinker’s supports. It is then they make love, a gesture of them to represent their interconnected relation.

Tinker: What’s your name?
Woman: Grace.
Tinker: No, I meant—
Woman: I know. It’s Grace.
Tinker: (smiles.) I love you, Grace. (CL. IXX.)

Besides, concerning with the analysis of population, stating that the constant supervision of the government on the population in fact tightens the disciplinary regime and brings the people more under control, Foucault deals with the analysis of sexuality. His analysis, for certain, has challenged the common notion of sexual identity. In *History of Sexuality*, the lime light of his analysis is that while traditionally there has always been an attempt, especially in the nineteenth century, to silence any discussion of sexuality and put restrictions on sexual practices, as Sara Mills (2003) explains, this repression has not always been effective to the advantage of governor, but sometimes had left unintended effects; that is, to arose the desire of talking about sexuality and enhance the pleasure of deviating the related taboos (84). Foucault explains more:

If sex is repressed, that is condemned to prohibition, non-existence and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself [/herself] to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he [she] upsets established law; he [/she] somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (1986c, 295)

So instead of repressing the other possible forms of sexuality, Foucault’s analysis stresses the feasible liberalization of common views of sexuality, convincing the constitution of so-called perverse forms of sexuality not only possible but also desirable. To stay with the double effects of repression of sexuality, the formation, development and catastrophic ending of Carl and Rod’s homosexual love reveals their faith, at the least their imagination, that to escape from unaffected sexual expression and trying the odd ones help to fulfill their individuation in freedom. Their masochistic insistence on their love proves their claim to independency from the current sexual constraints, and negating any assumption of stability to their individuality. Their mutual consistency in love that stands against Tinker’s orthodox views of sexuality credits Foucault’s ideas that “it is in negotiation and play that identities are formed” (Milles, 91). To make a reciprocal pledge to stay faithful to each other which dramatically acted out by them both (when
Rod takes off the ring and puts it in Carl’s mouth, he, on his part, swallows it) symbolizes a gesture of the unification of their desire of distinct suicidal love (CL. XVI.). Using the Foucauldian terminology, what they do is seen as constructing a counter-discourse and counter-identification that defies their assigned stigmatized individualities. Remarkably what they endeavor responding to show their love is done all under the policing and the surveillance of dominant discourse, represented by Tinker. It is in scene thirteen that Rod expressing his fidelity in love warns his love, Carl, that to die for their love is in no case worse than allowing the ruling power—Tinker—to deprive them of life. He encourages Carl to exercise their so-called perverse sexuality and to celebrate it like revelers rather than to bear the condemnation of their true identity.

Rod …He [Tinker] 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. Tinker made a man bite off another man’s testicles. Can take away your life but not give you death instead Carl stands, wobbly. He begins to dance—a dance of love for Rod. Tinker is watching He forces Carl to the ground and cuts off his feet. (CL. XIII.)

In addition to analyzing the construction of homosexuality, Foucault deals with the ways with which women’s bodies and their sexuality are formed by social disciplinary regimes. A disciplinary regime, in the eyes of feminists, works as an apparatus to overlook everyone’s behavior and makes a simple subject of him/her through its regulating norms related to any aspect of their lives, from heart to mind. In this regard, femininity seems to be the outcome of capitalist production. As a normalizing regime, it is set up by means of forcing the body to be pleased with feminine ideal, either by depilation, cosmetics, exercise or even dieting, (Mills, 94). In terms of Foucault’s microphysics of power, here we observe the intrusion plus the operation of power upon the body in minute details, such as: regulating exercise of routines of body and object co-ordination that finally transforms the body to ‘become docile’ (Barky 1988, 61). Back to Cleansed, Grace’s wish to change her body (my body, so it looked like it feels, CL. VII.) and her attempt to undertake the surgery, to let Tinker server her breasts and instead get a phalloplasty of Carl’s genitalia (scene, 18) suggests an action of liberation taken by her to free herself from all that negative stereotypical portrait of feminity established and smoothly run in Tinker’s institute, and to create her own individuality based on her own true self, now liberated from all masculine constraints.

Drawing on Foucault’s notion, instead of considering the fixed identities we supposed to have at the moment, it is possible to take a different perspective to find and form our identity, that is, we can subversively use our seemingly stable positions which is designed for us by invisible others. Grace’s sexual transformation, her ironical deformation, looking like her apparently dead brother, can be analyzed as her decision on a new identity, an invitation to see her practicing a different performative. According to Butler’s perception (1990) identity is just performative; “it is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a
verb rather than noun, a doing rather than a being”(31). To Grace, to be seen, to be conceived as an individual, not to be considered as a woman (with nice body, scene, 12) is what she desires, a demand which is repressed within the dark world of Tinker’s concentration camp. To be understood and to be loved in her view are the same; put it differently, Grace needs people especially men to know her, to be responding to the validity of her new position, cleansed of any stereotypical assumptions, and when she finds that her demand is doomed to failure she decides to safeguard her ideal picture of love within her, an action embodied by receiving, through surgery, Carl’s extracted genitalia.

Robin: Be my girlfriend?
Grace: You’re a lovely boy—
Robin: I won’t stangle you.
I’m in love with you.
Grace: How can you be?
Robin: I just am. I know you—Grace: Tinkers know me. Robin: And I love you.
Grace: Lots of people know me, they’re not in love with me. (CL. VII.)

4. Conclusion

The enigmatic universe/university of Kane’s play —Cleansed—dramatizes the difficulty and inevitability of man’s need for communication and his desire of love. Kane gives an account of how these issues in a postmodern world seem to be problematic so much so that in the watchful eyes of power, here represented by the central figure Tinker, they are considered as contagious diseases needed to be banned or in case of existence to be surveyed and controlled. With regard to the confinement of the plague-like effects of love and friendship, which has easily affected a good many of population through human’s civilization it requires some drastic measures such as: constant surveillance done by the ruling power. Drawing on Foucault’s idea, the security of power and the smooth running of its related institutes demands “inspection [that] functions ceaselessly (1977, 195), that is, a typical imprisonment as a precautious measure must be run. The setting of place in Kane’s play resembles a panoptical imprisonment of all characters involved except the unrestrained dictator, Tinker. Every scene represents a distinct yet integrated part of the university; ‘On the college green’ (CL. III.), ‘The White Room’ (6) ‘The Red Room—the university sports hall’ (10), etc., each of which associates a cell within which every individual is supervised and inspected. As it was discussed previously, what is dreadfully surprising is that some of the inhabitants/prisoners monitor themselves as much as their supervisor —Tinker—overlooks them. Except the penultimate scenes, 18-20, throughout all other parts characters present themselves as hopeful obedient of Tinker, whose words echo the dominant discourses of power. Kane panoptican, in terms of Foucault’s theory, stands for the world in which the dwellers picture the sufferers of their own self-made mental imprisonment; quoting Althauser, they are complicit in their own confinement (Bertens, 251). The ever-presence of Tinker makes the others be the permissive subject to his gaze of surveillance; it forces the students/prisoners to internalize the regulatory norms of Tinker’s worldview; it leads to the
penetration of his disciplinary regulation within the innermost depth of their mind and into the minute
details of their life in so far as they are perceptive to their assigned name(lunatic Grace, 12),
body(you are a woman, 14), docility(Robin case, burning his books, 16) and
destiny (penalty of death to Rod, 17).

But as Foucault argues the function of power along with its resources, discourse and
knowledge is not always negative and destructive. Though the imbalanced practice of power
over its subjects most of the time ends in the formation of docile body through the normalization
of disciplinary regimes, sometimes it causes positive, productive results for its subjects. To stay
with the instrumental binary division, exercised by Tinker in Cleansed, to distinguish the people
to mad/sane, heterosexual/homosexual, and etc. to set up his ideal social regulation in the
universe—ity, the condemnation of Carl’s homosexual love to Rod and Grace’s irredeemable
insane quest of her dead loved brother approves of their own independent personality, even
though considered anti-categorization of identity by power, and so partially normalized and
stigmatized. In this regard, the ending of the last scene is of crucial significance. Carl’s
persecuted relationship with Rod and Grace’s non-stop search for Graham work as a trigger that
puts in action the plot and current violence on the stage, since in essence they stand in opposition
to Tinker’s expectations. As before mentioned, Tinker is both the doer of atrocities and the
commander who orders its agents, unknown voices, to commit violence. Though, like any other
character, the victim of violence they are, Carl and Grace never retaliate against it through their
resistance. Due to their love, which revives their hope, they avoid hitting back. Understanding of
the injustice of their situation, and of course, their love of communication helps them to resist the
dehumanizing discourse and have their contribution to the formation of a reverse discourse, a
distinct community. The last scene begins with the cross-dressing of the new formed couple, Carl
and Grace. Grace “now looks and sounds exactly like Graham. She is wearing his clothes”, once
Robin tried, and “Carl wears Robin’s clothes, that is, Grace’s (women’s) clothes” (CL. XX.).

This unifying practice accompanied by Grace’s calling for help and Carl’s response to reach his
arm out demonstrate the function of that counter-discourse they set against Tinker’s regulating
one, which in the long run culminates in a supportive relation between them both. The action can
be regarded as a dramatic gesture of them expressing solidarity with personality of every
individual and a collective political action to resist [the] power.

Carl  reach out his arm
Grace/Graham holds his stump
They stare at the sky, Carl crying.
It stops raining.
The sun comes out.
Grace/ Graham smiles.
The sun gets brighter and brighter, the squeaking of the rats
louder and louder, until the light is blinding and sound
deafening. (CL.XX.)
References


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Articles: