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Sciences humaines et sociales



VARIA

coordonné par

RAOUL EHODE ELAH
ERICK SOURNA LOUMTOUANG



Ministère de la recherche
scientifique et de l'innovation

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Torture, frustration and trauma in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis*

Ernest L. VEYU

Abstract

Sarah Kane's characters characteristically deviate from traditional ways of life as seen in *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis*. This is often with the hope of attaining personal indulgence and/or satisfaction that is not reachable with conventional lifestyles. Cases of homosexuality, incest, drug addiction, gender transformation, sexual harassment and suicidal inclinations are rampant. Ironically, the outcome of these deviant acts unfathomable torture, frustration and trauma. This paper sets out to project the hypothetical contention that Sarah Kane's characters, though miserable and desperate, are responsible for their predicament resulting from their deviant acts in *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis* respectively. Their desire to live a life of freedom and ephemeral pleasures, neglecting the beauty and benefits of morality, inviting frustration and misery which are physical, spiritual, psychological, and/or emotional can be better examined from postmodern and psychoanalytic perspectives which better project the in-her-face characteristics of the plays.

Résumé

Les personnages de Sarah Kane ont pour habitude de s'écarter des modes de vie traditionnels, comme on le voit dans *Cleansed* et *4.48 Psychosis*. Ils le font souvent dans l'espoir d'atteindre une indulgence et/ou une satisfaction personnelle que les modes de vie conventionnels ne permettent pas d'obtenir. Les cas d'homosexualité, d'inceste, de toxicomanie, de transformation de genre, de harcèlement sexuel et de tendances suicidaires sont monnaie courante. Ironiquement, le résultat de ces actes déviants est une torture, une frustration et un traumatisme insupportables. Cet article se propose d'avancer l'hypothèse que les personnages de Sarah Kane, bien que misérables et désespérés, sont

responsables de leur situation difficile résultant de leurs actes déviants dans *Cleansed* et *4.48 Psychosis* respectivement. Leur désir de vivre une vie de liberté et de plaisirs éphémères, négligeant la beauté et les bienfaits de la moralité, invitant à la frustration et à la misère physique, spirituelle, psychologique et/ou émotionnelle, peut être mieux examiné dans des perspectives postmodernes et psychanalytiques qui projettent mieux les caractéristiques de ces pièces.

Introduction

Kane's artistic world is characterized by perpetrators, victims a bystanders of various forms of despair for which they are ironically responsible and whose consequences oblige them to engage in a continuous search for solace to no avail, thereby living in despair: Their minds are pre-occupied with suicide and memories of vicious acts which haunt them, provoking a pessimistic outlook towards life. Hypothetically, this paper will project Kane's characters are responsible for the torture, frustration and despair that they find themselves in. It is for this reason that the nameless character in *4.48 Psychosis* out of nervousness, despair and frustration declares that she is:

*...the child of negation
out of one torture chamber into another
a vile succession of errors without remission
every step of the way I've fallen*

*Despair propels me to suicide
Anguish for which doctors can find no cure
Nor care to understand ... (4.48 Psychosis 28)*

The protagonist as seen above metaphorically summarises her existence to be marked by different forms of agonies, or despair likened to the movement "from one torture chamber to another". In this state of frustration, the only recurrent thought is that of suicide through which they hope to escape from these apocalyptic realities, yet they ironically leap from one tragedy to another. The thematic concerns as well as the style that dominate the plays make them principally Postmodern and Psychoanalytic in nature thereby making Sarah Kane not only a postmodern playwright but an extreme in-her-face theatre artist.

The fragmentary unconventional nature of Kane's works empowers this study to be carried out from postmodern and psychoanalytic perspectives, respectively. Postmodernism is considered suitable for this study due to its diverse yet encompassing nature as there is the idea of unity in diversity transcending literary and critical boundaries. In like manner, the manifestation of the human psyche as Kane represents it in her characters also shows that she was obviously influenced by her psychological state. This is justifiable in that Sarah Kane might not only have read psychoanalytical texts, but also in that like most artists who are influenced by personal experiences, she had clamorous instincts which she yearned to express through her artistic representation.

Environmental Sequestration

The physical setting or atmosphere of both plays already signal doom or frustration as well as torture reserved for the characters, making it typically in-her-face theatre. The plays have both physical and psychological settings which contrast with the conventional activities normally carried out in such places. *Cleansed*, is set in a university campus, while *4.48 Psychosis* is set in a psychiatric asylum. Each of these spheres is presented as grim, with the different characters seemingly trapped wherever they find themselves. The characters live the realities of their present site, because they either cause pain or are subjected to painful treatment from others. These characters, in the prison-like university in *Cleansed*, and the battlefield-like asylum in *4.48 Psychosis*, are not visited by friends or relatives, nor have any hopes of ever leaving these torturous environments.

Cleansed, turns out to be a torture chamber for its supposed students or occupants as it is a university without conventional lecturers nor established structure. The different rooms, not amphitheatres or lecture halls, have bizarre names, insinuating their functions are differentiated in terms of colours and shapes not academic disciplines, departments or faculties. They are rather divided into rooms which are named as follows: "The White Room", "The Red Room", "The Black Room", and "The Round Room" which all signal despair. For instance, "The White Room", serves as the university sanatorium for the patients.

Yet, Tinker transforms it into a drug production centre, while “The Red Room”, which is said to be a sports hall, is used as a torture chamber for the different characters whenever they commit any crime and are spotted by Tinker who sees every action or movement. Similarly, “The Black Room”, which served as university shower halls have become peep-show booths for erotic and lustful commercial purposes whereby an unnamed prostitute dances naked for sexual pleasure in exchange for money. Moreover, “The Round Room”, which is supposed to be a library also serves as a meeting place for Grace and Robin who aspire to solve each other’s emotional traumas through the exchange of gifts and cloths. It later becomes Tinker’s torture chamber wherein he makes sure that Robin does not take advantage of Grace. The activities in Kane’s supposed University sharply contrasts with Bernard Fonlon’s views or definition of a University in his book entitled *The Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies: An Academic Testament*, when he notes:

...this institution (the university) has a twofold task, namely, Teaching and Research. Teaching and Research are the sine qua non, the very raison d’etre of the University. The teacher must be steeped in scientific and philosophical knowledge if he is to teach effectively and with authority. Yet no teacher is a living encyclopaedia even in his own specialised field, whatever that field may be... (24)

Evidently, Bernard Fonlon’s definition of a University makes Kane’s cleansing university a torture chamber and not a citadel for learning. This is evident in that while the conventional university is involved in the teaching learning process for a better society, Kane’s university setting projects a world where there is the conspicuous absence of teaching and learning as well as research. The lone teacher – Tinker, is more of a sadist than a scientist who tortures, amputates and kills not for any research purposes but for pleasure.

The setting of *4.48 Psychosis* can only be inferred as there are no overt stage directions of where the actions take place. We infer that the actions take place in a psychiatric asylum due to indicators like “Doctor this” and “Doctor that” as well as the drugs and the three muscular nurses who restrict her whenever force is needed. These all call to mind a violent

character in a hospital structure. The setting then signals an enclosed environment with limited access to light and ventilation, making the occupants to choke. This further explains why in the end, the patient humbly requests, “please, open the curtains” (4.48 *Psychosis* 35), which may imply that there is little light in the room. The nameless character here is obviously frustrated and in despair attempts severally to escape from this tumultuous environment only to be restricted by muscular nurses sleeping portions. We can discern that even if the settings of both *Cleansed* and 4.48 *Psychosis* were a hospital or hospitals, their awkward states greatly contribute to the characters’ frustration.

4.48 *Psychosis*, has characters who feel secluded in the supposed medical asylum. This environment restraints them physically, emotionally, and psychologically, with the medical doctors using both manual and therapeutic means to contain and control them. Ironically, while the patients on the one hand feel frustrated and disappointed in the medical doctors, the medical doctors themselves are astounded by the inefficiency of their efforts. As a result, the psychotic patient yearns to leave the vicinity of the hospital, and be free, “to belong, to be accepted, ... supported, nursed or healed to form mutually enjoyable, and enduring, relationships (4.48 *Psychosis* 25). Her present environment stands as a hindrance to all her wishes and aspirations, making her more desperate. Her desires to belong, be accepted, to love and be loved, as well as perform moral duties towards others remain a dream that never comes true.

Paradoxical Torture and Punishment

Sarah Kane presents the human body as a laboratory for the experimentation of all forms of torture in her plays as the various characters are victimised variously and their bodies suffer multiple forms of violations. Sexual harassment, amputation, corporal punishment and psychological trauma are also markers of despair in both plays and equally serve as consequences of the characters’ unethical choices and actions. These experiences are termed paradoxical as on the one hand, the characters are helpless before their predicaments although these result from the choices they make. On the other hand, their powerless state makes them vulnerable to the powerful and violent opportunist like who

molest and kill them. For instance, Tinker amputates Carl for practising homosexuality; a pole is pushed up his anus and his tongue is cut off in Scene Four. The scene takes place in a torture chamber of the university campus referred to as “The Red Room”. The description of the room already signifies danger and the scene unfolds between Carl and Tinker as follows:

Carl.'s trousers are pulled down and a pole is pushed a few inches up his anus.
Carl.Christ no
Tinker.What's your boyfriend's name?
Carl.Jesus
Tinker.Can you describe his genitals?
Carl.No
Tinker.When was the last time you sucked his cock?
Carl. Please I
Tinker.Do you take it up the arse?
Carl.Please
Tinker.Don't give it. I can see that.
Carl.no
Tinker.Close your eyes and imagine its him
Carl.Please God no I
Tinker.Rodney Rodney split me in half.
Carl.Please don't fucking kill me God
The pole is removed. (Cleansed 11)

The above is a display of Tinker's hard-hearted and barbaric justice whereby he pushes a pole up Carl's anus as a punishment for practicing homosexuality and goes on to question him as to who his boyfriend is. The grim humour is further flavoured by verbal ironies in Carl's responses, that his boyfriend is “Jesus”. Tinker goes further to find out if Carl can describe his genitals and Carl says “no”. The irony here stems from the fact that Carl calls the name Jesus not as his boyfriend or refers to Tinker as “God” in the true sense of the word. It is, therefore, evident that his mention or call upon God is a display of adrenaline, that is, because of his pains and with the hope that Jesus will save him from Tinker's grip.

Tinker's activities are synonymous with the activities of the Nazi doctors who were hired by Adolf Hitler to execute the Jews in concentration camps at Auschwitz (Trovo, Doc.). The representations in

Kane's plays are, therefore, historically motivated to show how history failed to set the pace for a better world thereby establishing relationship between history and literature. This view corroborates Hayden White's notion of history in *Tropics of Discourse* that a historical text is a literary arte fact when he says —historical narratives... are verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences (Qtd in Butler 33). Meaning historical realities cannot be considered as absolute or unquestionable, the same way literature cannot be subjected to a single interpretation. Hence, the relativity of creative works equally extends to historical texts because every literary text or account of any event is only a version of reality or truth.

Kane's characters are equally tortured by metaphysical forces variously and are represented in the texts simply as voices which communicate penitentiary messages to the unrepentant characters. Through this technique, the different characters that fall victim to these metaphysical forces are dejected although they remain obstinate to change. The "Voices" in the texts execute retributive justice in this undefined and unlawful world that Sarah Kane creates as she makes these characters to hallucinate as well as visualize metaphysical phenomena that add to their physical torture. Kane's idea of poetic justice manifests here and occurs with the different characters involved in deviant acts punished by flogging although those inflicting the punishment do not punish other perpetrators like Tinker. The characters have visions which permit them to mediate between the metaphysical and the physical worlds. Most of these visions have apocalyptic inclinations as they are pessimistic though resulting from past realities and experiences. Although they are invisible, Graham watches in distress, how Grace's body reacts to the torture and he also listens to the Voices which accuse him of incest and homosexuality. Ironically, Grace is flogged, raped and later shot at by these Voices as a form of cleansing. This technique can be considered to be Kane's metaphorical representation of the human conscience, which torment the individuals. This view corroborates Gaelle Ranc's view in *The Notion of Cruelty in the Work of Sarah Kane*, when he notes that:

...we are all guilty but some do not want to face it. And for those who dare to face the truth, this guilt is unbearable and that is what Kane's plays are about: characters struggling to live with it. But redemption is possible, the numerous images of fire, such as Graham's incineration, symbolise purification. (31)

Ranc is concerned with the torture of the different characters who are obviously guilty in one way or the other and must be punished so as to be cleansed. This to him is because these characters live in guilt and it burns in them, making it unbearable to continue living with it. Hence, for them to be redeemed, they must succumb to all forms of torture, be it by fire, by flogging or by gunshot. Through her skilful stage directions, choice of words, and the purging of emotions, Kane is obviously suggesting that every human act has both physical and metaphysical amends.

Apocalyptic Pessimism

Sarah Kane in *4.48 Psychosis*, adopts a completely apocalyptic approach whereby her characters are not only metaphysically inclined, but are also pessimistically prophetic about life. She uses pastiche and parody to fuse biblical ideas into her work making her nameless characters to be more of a propitiators mediating between the physical and the metaphysical worlds. The play constitutes more of apocalyptic literature which according to Adela Yarbro is a form of literature that presents the authors as prophets, much like the Biblical John, Joshua or the preacher in Ecclesiastes who distance themselves from the society's realities though not by physically moving away, but by projecting a psychological stance that gives the reader a feeling of being apart from others in a given community and even from the self (Qtd in Labang, 53). Sarah Kane's nameless character claims to have had visions from God and is convinced that all what she saw shall come to pass. This character warns the readers against appearances and falsehood, thereby influencing the reader to believe and follow the said truth. This technique of fusing Biblical and historical notions in literary writing is referred to in postmodern writing as pastiche and parody. These also define her dramaturgy, projecting its postmodern qualities which Richard Murphy in *Theorizing the Avant-Garde*, considers as a postmodern artistic technique which questions "the

possibility of originality within this all-embracing pre-written world, primarily by means of pastiche or parody, through their foregrounding of intertextual relations, art leading to a vision of interconnectedness which acknowledges history... (262). That means that a representation of prewritten forms as Kane does establishes a link between what was written in the past and what is written in our contemporary society. This equally means that postmodern writers acknowledge the role history plays in the conception and execution of creative works.

In the text, the said truth is symbolised by the light and the narrative voice which asks the reader to remember the light, as she insists, “Remember the light and believe the light/ Christ is dead” (4.48 *Psychosis* 20) thereby making the prophecy more ambiguous. The ambiguity stems from the confusion whether the “dead Christ” is the messiah or is it an artistic Christ, that forms part of her blasphemy. She calls on all to behold the light of despair which is obviously a symbol of destruction, after which the names of all defaulters will be read from rooftops to cause them to fear God. Paradoxically, she considers God as a wicked God who will summon offenders and imprison them in fire, and further cautions the reader to “Remember the light and believe the light”, since “Christ is dead”, which highlights her blasphemy. The reason for this atheistic stance obviously stems from the fact that characters like Carl and Rod in *Cleansed* cry out for Christ’s help in agony and despair, yet, there is no response, hence, her conclusion that “the Christ” is dead.

It is, therefore, evident that the speech is a parody, and at the same time a pastiche of Revelation Chapter One, in which the Apostle John presents his encounter with a muse of eschatology. This spirit being claims to be the “...first and the last...that lived and was dead, [and is] alive forevermore, Amen; and [has] the keys of hell and of death” (Revelations 1:17-18). The notion of God as per this character is anti-Christian, concretized by her declaration that Christ is dead whereas the Christian Christ, it is believed, died, was buried and resurrected on the third day, ascended to heaven, and is promised to come back (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The aesthetics of her parody here lies in the fact that though it is ambiguous, it carries the same authoritative tone as that of its original source, the Bible, and she emphasizes the authenticity of her version

through repetition, thereby instilling the fear of God and the messenger in the reader.

Psychological Trauma

Sarah Kane's plays reveals the nature of and torture that the human brain inhabits as she projects the different psychological traumas that humans go through on a daily basis. Paradoxically, while some of these traumatic experiences are stimulated by the individuals, others are inflicted on them by their different environments. These characters epitomize mind sets of victims, perpetrators or bystanders of psychological traumas especially given that Sarah Kane was obviously inspired by psychological experiences of people from different parts of the world as well as her own distress to write her plays.

In *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis*, psychological despair is stimulated by illiteracy and psychosis, respectively. Robin in *Cleansed*, is a 19-year-old illiterate and he is condemned to live on the prison-like campus, under Tinker maybe as a cleansing process that requires education for his emancipation. His inability to neither read nor write traumatizes him as he cannot send nor receive letters from anyone to communicate the predicament of his existence in such a place. Worst of all, he cannot count from "one" to "forty-five", and this turns out to be his greatest assignment and nightmare. The reason being that he was obviously condemned to be in this prison-like environment for obviously forty-five years.

He is also a delinquent and obviously mentally deranged, reason for which he is condemned to remain in this secluded environment and he is showing no signs of coalescence. This causes his despair, especially when he is asked by Grace to write for her a letter so she can send to her father, to inform him that she is now living within this awkward university campus. His inability causes Grace to pity him instead of loving him, and the pity which results in remedial lessons for him to learn how to read and write as well as count. It is hyperbolic that he cannot even write his own name, and when he is finally able to count from one up to fifty-two, he is shocked by the number of digits one must master before getting to forty-five. This illiteracy and lovelorn state cause him to commit suicide as the

only means of to attain personal emancipation. Robin's predicament turns out to be a historical allusion to a similar incident which according to Sarah Kane in one of the numerous interviews she granted, Robin's story is based on reality as she states:

His [Robin's] story is based on the true story of 'a young black man who was on Roben Island with Nelson Mandela'. He was eighteen years old. He was put in Roben 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 to read and write. He learnt to count, realized what forty-five years was and hung himself. (Qtd in Aleks Sierz 117)

Kane's reincarnation of historical echoes, blends well with her text as it is postmodernist, especially when postmodern critics like Hayden White in *Tropics of Discourse* views the historical text as a literary artefact when he says "historical narratives . . . are verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (Qtd in Butler 33). This means that there are connotations between historical texts and literary works. Robin's suicide is, therefore, a manifestation of his psychological despair and his inability to persevere for forty-five years in this prison-like university aggravated by the unreciprocated love he has for Grace.

Meanwhile, *4.48 Psychosis* focuses on the traumatic experiences of a nameless character who suffers from mental disorders or neurosis. This patient's despair stems from the inhospitable nature of the psychiatric asylum, to the lackadaisical attitudes of the different psychiatrists found therein. Kane uses neurosis as a tool with which she projects psychological despair, that is, experiential and creative in nature. In other words, the psychotic crises displayed by some of Sarah Kane's characters are part of her experiences as well as the experiences of other patients she might have met in a psychiatric asylum, although she embellishes these experiences with creativity. To achieve this, she creates characters that hallucinate, sleep-walk, and envision apocalyptic phenomena. The experiential aspects of her plays begin with *Cleansed* which is dedicated to "the patients and staff of ES3", an indication that Kane obviously interacted with the

patients and staff of this hospital for some time and they influenced or inspired her in a particular way. As for *4.48 Psychosis*, Carolina Sanchez-Palencia opines that:

4.48 Psychosis [is] experiential, that is, the author did ‘experience’ mental illness and social exclusion and, therefore, many of the stories and traumatic scenarios she acts out might have taken place; which does not allow spectators to just sit back and contemplate the play self-indulgently, but forces them to confront the reality of the feelings shown to them (6).

Sanchez-Palencia from the above is quite categorical about the fact that Kane was a psychotic patient and suffered for it. The only way to relieve herself of the clamorous instincts or project her psychological state was to represent them in creative writing, which she did through drama. It is for this reason that most of Kane’s plays are read with autobiographical undertones with instances that communicate suicide notes as the characters seem to communicate the author’s pain and misery that her contemporaries never noticed. David Greig equally notes that Sarah Kane suffered from depression and was hospitalized several times.

As a result, inevitably, the shadow of her ailing health has fallen across her plays and one can find oneself reading them as if they were her diagnoses, listening out for unheard cries for help by someone who feels disappointed about life (Qtd in Aleks Sierz 91). This is the case with the nameless character in *4.48 Psychosis* who plans to commit suicide and does not want any autopsy to be carried out on her corpse. She meticulously presents how she will kill herself when the time comes, in the following words:

Please don’t cut me up to find out how I died
I’ll tell you how I died
One hundred Lofepamine, forty five Zopiclone, twenty five
Temazepam, and twenty Melleril
It is done (*4.48 Psychosis* 30).

She tells the future in the past tense in order to make anyone who cares not to be shocked by her actions when the time comes. Politely, she calls on, especially the doctors, not to carry out any post-mortem

examination on her when she finally kills herself, for she is willing to tell everyone how she intends to die. She gives a litany of the drugs she intends to swallow, after which she will slit, probably her throat or wrists, and then hang herself afterwards. All of these are a presentation of the psychological state of the character not the actual realization of these thoughts. She is polite yet very resolute in her tone with regard to her decision to commit suicide. The fact that Sarah Kane variously attempted suicide, and finally killed herself in ways similar to what is described here, is what made many critics to conclude that Sarah Kane's last play is a suicide's note.

Antoon Leenaars in his famous book entitled *Suicide Notes* points out that "suicide notes are probably the ultra-personal documents...the unsolicited productions of the suicidal person, usually written minutes before the suicidal death"(9). This means that they are the most reliable testimony left behind by any suicide victim that can either help to trace the cause of the suicide or its process. In this light, therefore, the literary works of suicidal authors written in the time before their death can be read as such suicide notes, *4.48 Psychosis* inclusive. This can further be proven by the fact that the play happens to be Kane's last play before her death by suicide in a psychiatric asylum after several failed attempts. Through the play, therefore, one sees the frustration of a psychotic patient and a willingness to die due to various forms of fears and anxieties.

However, the length and numerous thematic issues handled in the play apart from neurosis far transcend the limits of a suicide's note. While certainly autobiographical, *4.48 Psychosis* fits variously as a text that equally represents the postmodern condition in general through the pastiche, parody, fragmentation and violence represented therein. As such, Kane's last play is more of a creative exercise than a suicide note, especially given that Kane's suicide in real life did not make use of the meditations or take the suicidal processes of the characters in her texts. Incidentally, in all her plays, suicide is a thematic concern that has various causes and these plays were written over a long period of time.

Sentimental Despair

Unreciprocated love and the intolerance of unconventional relationships in Kane's plays equally result in emotional torture. Forbidden heterosexual relationships, homosexual and incestuous love relationships are rife among the different characters in Kane's plays. Her plays can equally be termed relationship plays as they each rotate around conventional and unconventional relationships. On the one hand, some of these characters are desperately ready to show to what extent they can go just to prove their love for one another, only to ironically turn to pain and tears. On the other hand, some pine and weep in loneliness due to unreciprocated love and the environment in which they find themselves, hence, emotional desolation. In another dimension, some characters are ready to die for the relationship choices they make, be they forbidden or immoral. Given that they are all in a secluded environment where there is no law the success of these relationships is farfetched.

In *Cleansed*, the results of decadent or forbidden relationships is torture and/or homicide. One of the characters who suffer most from this misfortune is Robin, and although he is still nineteen years old, he desperately needs some emotional consolation which is hard to come by. Robin does not understand why other characters are promiscuous, yet refuse to satisfy his libidinal urge no matter how humble he is. Robin in earnest uses several pleasantries such as "if I had to get married I'll marry you, I've never kissed a girl before, be my girlfriend, I'm in love with you, I won't strangle you, I only want to kiss you, I won't hurt you, I swear" (*Cleansed* 21), and many others, yet Grace is still very adamant. She tries not to be rude to Robin by telling him; "you are a lovely boy,...If I was going to kiss anyone here, it would be you, Tinker knows, lots of people know me, they're not in love with me" (*Cleansed* 21).

Apart from the fact that Grace personally does not want to reciprocate Robin's advances, Tinker equally frustrates his attempts at winning Grace's love in several ways. For example, Tinker smashes the flowers and chocolates which Robin and he is forced to eat them like a dog in tears. Ironically, Tinker, faces the same problem of unreciprocated love with the peep-show dancer, he masturbates in front of her,

intimidates and harasses her sexually. The idea of love seems too boring to be special or worth the sacrifices people are often ready to make. This explains why Rod tells Carl that whenever anyone thinks of falling in love with another, it is always possible that this new lover is a lover who's former partner "got bored with fucking them" (Cleansed 5).

Similarly, forbidden love is the experience of characters like Carl and Rodney on the one hand, and Graham and Grace on the other, who are pairs that struggle to sustain a homosexual and an incestuous relationship respectively. These relationships can be termed unlawful although the author only represents these characters in action while even the cleansing they go through is unethical. Carl and Rod struggle to establish a relationship that obliterates gender boundaries, while Grace and Graham are involved in an incestuous relationship which neglects family ties. In other words, the total absence of love results in despair which comes through solitude as well as the fear of being lonely. Caught up in a lovelorn situation like Robin or taken down memory lane about the departure of the nameless character's lover makes them to be emotionally traumatized and desperate for love. As loneliness is unavoidable, these characters are agitated, though helpless, in that condition. While in others, where loneliness is the order of the day, bitterness takes control of the characters.

In *4.48 Psychosis*, the protagonist is a victim of these two extremes of loneliness and abandonment making her to be repulsive. We notice that this character is desperate about her love as she is ready to sacrifice her body parts, just to have her love safe and sound. The sacrifices she is willing to make, call to mind images of some terrible flagellation reminiscent of Tinker's treatment of his patients in *Cleansed*. When it becomes evident that she cannot have the love she desires, she consoles herself, curses and sings dirges to love and to her unknown lover. In regret, she notes; "I'm dying for one who doesn't care, I'm dying for one who doesn't know, [he is] breaking me" (*4.48 Psychosis* 31). These are all declarations of emotional frustration, signalling the absence of love. The nameless character further communicates her readiness to love and to sacrifice for love as love seems to be a source of livelihood, nourishing the dreams and hopes of the characters who for no reason will want to let go

of the ones they desire. In cases where loneliness is imminent, these characters are agitated though helpless in their present environment. As loneliness is the order of the day, bitterness takes control of the characters. Ironically, the nameless character in 4.48 Psychosis is a victim of two extreme; loneliness and apprehension. In her frustration, she declares her readiness to sacrifice for love which is equally her fear of loneliness when she says;

Cut out my tongue
tear out my hair
cut off my limbs
but leave me my love
I would rather have lost my legs
pulled out my teeth
gouged out my eyes
than lost my love (4.48 *Psychosis* 22-23)

From the above quoted excerpt, we notice that this character is so desperate about her love that she is ready to sacrifice her body parts just to have her love safe and sound. The sacrifices she is willing to make, call to mind images of some terrible flagellation reminiscent of Tinker's treatment of his patients in *Cleansed* which can be related to the treatment the Jews are believed to have gone through in Hitler's Germany. These images are, therefore, a means through which Sarah Kane rewrites history to project the apocalyptic aspects within history itself. Veronica Hollinger in her book: *Apocalypse Coma. Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation*, opines that in the postmodern world, apocalypse is not the end of history, rather it is the apocalypse within history which is not singular and at the same time not absolute (143). That is to say every historical period has its own destructive realities which cannot be particularized or generalized. Rather, the pains and suffering a people go through defines their being at a particular time and differentiates them from other people in other places and at other times. The imageries here therefore display the character's willingness to sacrifice for love, and although we are not told who this lover is, she is obviously in a lovelorn situation like Robin in *Cleansed*. Kane uses these horrific instances to show to what extent some individuals are ready to go

for the sake of love which they are not even so sure will be reciprocated. Her despair heightens when she finally realizes that her love cannot be reciprocated and these promises of a willingness to love turn out to be curses resulting from rejection and denigration.

Summarily, this paper has projected that in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and *4.48 Psychosis*, torture, frustration and trauma are the hallmarks of her creative endeavour wherein all the characters are either victims or perpetrators. The characters are oppressed wherever and whenever they find themselves either because of their immoral or unlawful choices or their vulnerability. The different characters live in deviant and traumatizing circumstances thereby facilitating the desolation they find themselves in. The torture they experience is environmental, psychological, spiritual and emotional in nature. Through these plays Sarah Kane tactfully represents postmodern realities like homosexuality, drug addiction, violence and terrorism, as well as retributive justice that characters and by extension humans experience in our contemporary. Kane's style is seen as undoubtedly in-her-face through the undaunted portraiture of violence, immorality and decadence.

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